

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

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Contact: Kim Deti

Phone: 307-777-6420

Updates Made to Planned Disability Program Changes

Updated Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) plans for changing developmental disabilities programs, which are funded by Wyoming Medicaid, are now available for review.

A law approved by the Wyoming Legislature and the governor earlier this year called for a redesign of developmental disabilities programs within the existing budget slated for these programs. The Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver program serves about 2,300 individuals with an annual budget of \$103 million (not including medical costs.)

“Our process for changing these important ‘waiver’ programs has included several steps,” said Chris Newman, Behavioral Health Division senior administrator with WDH. “At each point, we have involved folks affected by the programs and have taken their ideas and concerns into account.”

Newman noted there are nearly 600 people on waiting lists for the current programs. “These individuals receive no funding for services, and some have been waiting nearly six years for help,” she said. One of the goals under the new law for the redesign effort is to find savings that can be directed toward reducing the existing waiting list.

Two new waivers have been developed: a “Supports Waiver” to cover some supportive services to keep people living in their current home and a “Comprehensive Waiver” to offer more frequent and intensive services to people with a higher level of service need.

Current waiver recipients may choose to be grandfathered onto the new Comprehensive Waiver or may opt for the flexibility of the new Supports Waiver. “We believe this decision shows we have been listening to the feedback many families have shared with us,” Newman said.

Waiver participants each receive an “individual budget amount” to pay for services. “These individual budgets are determined based on their needs, age and living arrangement. We are adjusting our methods for determining these individual budgets and believe we have come up with a fair method and plan for its use,” she said.

Newman said another improvement to the overall system will be a switch to what is known as “conflict-free case management” with regional agencies instead of case managers who may be employed by the same organizations providing the services to the clients they oversee.

“We plan to move individuals currently on the waiting list onto the Supports Waiver as funding allows,” Newman said. “We do expect some savings to result from the changes we’re making.” The proposed changes will not reduce the total amount of money budgeted for Medicaid-supported disability services in Wyoming.

Updates and details about the waiver redesign project are available online at <http://www.health.wyo.gov/DDD/index.html>.

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