

Preservation of the iBudget Waiver

The Council supports a Medicaid Home and Community Based Services waiver for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The waiver must include services that encourage inclusion in the community, a meaningful life and help the individual avoid costly and/or restrictive institutional care.

ISSUE

This year the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council will prioritize the preservation of Florida's Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiver for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This waiver is referred to as the iBudget waiver, which features the provision that each person's plan of service is individualized to their unique needs.

In 2020, the Florida legislature passed a generous funding package for the iBudget waiver in the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) budget and decided against many managed care options to try reduce costs in the implementation of the iBudget.

While the budget added funding to cover, deficit spending, increases to utilization and funding to transition people off the iBudget waiting list, the increases in provider rates for direct care workers were vetoed by the Governor.

The Governor was forced to make many vetoes to the state budget due to the Covid 19 Pandemic and its impact on reducing tourism to the state, which in turn decreased state revenue. This next session budget estimates indicate a dramatic decrease in state revenue that may force lawmakers to look for further cuts to the state budget.

The state has maintained a large multi- billion savings and has also received \$12 billion dollars in federal aid. Advocates will be working to make sure that vulnerable individuals who rely on the iBudget waiver will not have to endure cuts to their services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This year the Council recommends at a minimum that the iBudget be maintained with the same funding as last year. Ideally the following are recommendations are what is needed to keep the iBudget functioning properly:

- ➔ Service utilization management is a crucial way to predict and contain costs. Currently, the need for more services of existing waiver recipients is the largest reason for a perceived deficit. The biggest reasons for increased service needs are due to aging caregivers, aging waiver recipients, and graduation from high school. The Council supports yearly increases in utilization that accurately reflect the additional needs of individuals on the iBudget waiver.
- ➔ The yearly budget for the waiver should include a regular reduction of the iBudget Waitlist. The Council recommends that at least 10% of the number of individuals on the waitlist be transitioned off the list each year.
- ➔ The Council supports increasing provider rates for all iBudget services included under Personal Supports.
- ➔ The Council recommends steering clear of for-profit managed care. The iBudget recipients have unique long-term care needs that are not compatible with managed care companies that work with acute health care needs. Few states have used managed care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, so there is little data from which to assess outcomes and determine quality.