

“A YEAR OF CHANGE...and more to come”

The Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD) has been through a lot in the last year. We were hit with large, last minute, targeted cuts. We lost our policy-making Board. We have changed our support coordination system in an attempt to preserve service quality and livelihood. Despite these big changes, there are a lot of good things happening.

The Division is working toward a system that:

- Serves people who are carefully assessed and determined eligible
- Is fully person-centered, recognizing and building upon a person's strengths
- Values and enhances a person's natural supports whenever possible
- Establishes services and budgets with an objective, strengths-based assessment tool applied uniformly across the state
- Continually assesses utilization of services to ensure that needs and services match up at every given point in time
- Strives to maximize resources and attempts to eliminate the waiting list
- Creates high-quality standards and consistently enforces those standards
- Acknowledges and preserves the strengths of our provider network but is constantly pushing for higher quality
- Is responsive to the concerns of parents, advocates and other stakeholders

We have done many things to accomplish the vision outlined above. Our eligibility and intake has been streamlined and we have a new toll free number. We have developed and are testing a new strengths-based, objective needs assessment tool. Utilization review has become permanent. Standards for support coordination have been developed. In the absence of our Board, we have formed ad hoc stakeholder groups to provide feedback on key issues, and Division leadership has developed quarterly listening sessions.

Challenges are on the horizon. If funding cuts continue, we will have a very difficult time maintaining the current mix of services offered. Providers are facing a large rate cut as well unless legislative action is taken to restore funding. We hope it will not come to that, and we will make every effort to help the legislature see the value of our services. Regardless, it is likely to be a challenging legislative session.

But there are many good things on the horizon as well. Soon we will develop objective criteria for support coordination that we will publish on our website. It will be in a format so people can tell at a glance who is providing high-quality support coordination. Criteria will also be developed for all providers. Our supervisors' roles will change to provide even better quality oversight and cost containment. Long-term, we hope to amend our waivers in a way that will emphasize early, low-cost interventions and may eliminate the waiting list for people who only need low-cost services.

This certainly has been a difficult year, full of change. Unfortunately, we are not through with the changes. But there is much to cheer as well, and we will continue to strive to successfully implement our mission.