

Office of Developmental Disabilities

A message from Lilia Teninty, Director



June 20, 2016

To: All ODDS Staff and Stakeholders

Why is sustainability important?

Over the past year we have spent a great deal of time talking about the sustainability of the I/DD service system in Oregon. In my work at ODDS, it's a daily topic of conversation and the focus of many of the discussions and meetings I have with DHS staff, Legislators, individuals, families, advocates, providers and other stakeholders. For individuals and families of children with I/DD who receive services, it may be confusing and concerning to hear about potential changes as an outcome of these conversations.

It is clear that implementation of the Community First Choice Option, or k plan, in Oregon led to many good things. It opened the door to providing services to children with I/DD who meet eligibility requirements, keeping families from being pushed into crisis situations before being able to access services. We now serve over 2,600 children with I/DD in their family homes. It also expanded access to in home services for adults so those that want to continue to live with family or in their own homes may do so, even if they have a high level of need. There is no question that these have been positive benefits of the k plan.

There have also been a number of challenges that have resulted from implementation of the k plan. Foremost in those challenges, is that we now continue to outspend the Legislatively Approved Budget (LAB) for I/DD services. Every biennium, the Legislature approves a budget that sets the amount of funding available for ODDS services for the next two years. We appreciate that the Legislatively Approved Budget for the 15-17 biennium was considerably higher than the budget for 13-15. Even with that, we are exceeding the amount of funding for services in the LAB and the Legislature has directed us to take steps to address sustainability in Budget Notes passed with the budget.

At the same time, DD provider agencies are struggling on a daily basis to hire, train and retain staff. I hear from provider agencies and families that rely on provider agencies to support their loved ones on a daily basis about the struggles they have retaining current staff and hiring well qualified staff. There are many reasons for this including increasing demand and more competition for direct care workers, increasing wages in other sectors of the economy and other factors. The reality is that many people served in our service system need, and will continue to

need, the services provided by provider agencies in group homes, day service and other settings. We can't ignore this important part of our system.

I expect that for some individuals and families that have benefited from k plan services, this probably sounds like a very bureaucratic problem, not something people who aren't working in government should be concerned about. While I wish that were true, it is not. Sustainability and the budgetary challenges we face are something I hope everyone recognizes and is willing to think about and understand.

The reality is that if we as advocates for our service system, guided by a vision for supporting people with I/DD in their communities, aren't able to thoughtfully address our budgetary challenges, we will be forced to undo many of the good things that have resulted from implementation of the k plan.

It wasn't that long ago in Oregon that very few children were able to receive DD services. Only those children and families with the highest level of need were able to access vital services. Other children and families had to wait for services, or weren't able to access services. It also wasn't that long ago that adults with I/DD whose needs couldn't be met by a capped amount of funding, only had the option of moving into 24 hour service settings. Other states continue to operate with lengthy waiting lists for services and crisis driven processes for accessing services. Individuals, families and DD stakeholders have spoken loud and clear about not wanting to return to that in Oregon.

All of this means we have to act sooner, rather than later, to begin to get our budget back within what has been approved in the LAB and what the state of Oregon can afford to fund for these services now and in the future. As a first step, we are moving forward with realigning authorized hours for in home support by adjusting the calculations in the Adult Needs Assessment (ANA) and Children's Needs Assessment (CNA) to better reflect the needs of children and adults, as demonstrated by actual usage and other information we have gathered since implementing the ANA/CNA. The assessment questions that are asked won't change, but the internal mechanisms that generate authorized hours will change.

The ANA/CNA was rolled out quickly in 2013, with implementation of the k plan with little ability to test or understand how the tool worked. After several versions of the tool and many hours spent analyzing the utilization of what people are truly using, we now see that there is a significant difference between what is authorized and what is used. We have also heard about this issue from individuals and families expressing confusion over why individuals were approved for more support than is needed. This change is intended to bring what we are authorizing more in line with what, in general, is needed by children and adults with I/DD.

As we move forward, anyone who thinks that what is authorized is not going to support them, may work with their case manager to ask for an exception. Your case manager (Service Coordinator or Personal Agent) will work with staff within ODDS to determine if additional hours of support will be granted. Once the exception is reviewed by ODDS the case manager may either

amend the original plan to increase the hours, or the person will receive a written notice letting them know that their request for more supports was denied. Anyone denied the additional supports/hours may request an appeal.

I want to be clear that this is a first step. This process alone won't generate significant savings at the level needed to make the overall program sustainable. It will start the difficult process of bringing our total spending back in line with the LAB and what we expect the state can afford in the future. Discussions about long term changes that may be needed will continue with the I/DD Vision Advisory Group, individuals, families, other stakeholders and Legislators.

The original planned implementation date for this effort was July 1, 2016. After reviewing updated data, talking with stakeholders, and considering the changes that will need to be made to the assessment tools, we are pushing the implementation date back to September 1, 2016. This means new individuals coming into services as of September 1, 2016 will be assessed with the revised tool (ANA Version D/CNA Version D). Children and adults currently in services with Individual Support Plan dates that start November 1, 2016 and after will have the ANA version D/CAN version D used as part of their planning process. Over the next year, the ANA version D/CAN version D will be used for assessments and planning as each individuals' ISP date comes up. Additional information related the transition process will be shared with case managers in August.

We are working with key stakeholders to develop information for people and families explaining the assessed hour realignment efforts. We are also working with Service Coordinators and Personal Agents to develop tools to use in the planning process to explain the changes and help individuals and families as the process moves forward over the next year.

As this is happening, we will also continue efforts to pilot, test and implement the *Oregon Needs Assessment (ONA)* for Oregon. For those of you who have not been involved in the discussions and training efforts around the ONA, this is the new Oregon assessment tool that will be used for all individuals receiving supports in our program. This means that it will be used to assess need regardless of the setting that the person is or will be living in (group home, foster care, own home etc.). The ONA will eventually take the place of the SIS, ANA, CNA and eventually the SNAP. This was something that the legislators required during a previous legislative session. I know that will be confusing, but we need to move forward with both efforts to keep on track with direction from the Legislature and our efforts to streamline processes by developing one assessment tool for all services.

I want to stress that we have not changed the assessment tools used today, the ANA or CNA version C, to address the hour realignment efforts. Any results from the current ANA Version C or CNA Version C that are less than what was authorized previously are a result of changes in the needs of the individual and/or changes that were made to that version of the assessment over a year ago. As mentioned above, anyone who thinks they need more than what is authorized to meet their needs can go through an exception and/or appeal process.

Finally, starting June 20, 2016, I and other DHS Program Directors are holding meetings across the state to share plans and get input for the coming biennium, 17-19. A list of these presentations can be found at:

<https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/DHSNEWS/NewsReleases/town-hall-meetings.pdf>

These meetings, as well as our I/DD Vision Advisory Committee meeting next week, will focus on sustainability so that we can continue to support Oregonians with I/DD and their families.

Please stay tuned for more information on the hour realignment project and our broader efforts on sustainability.

Sincerely,
Lilia

Lilia Teninty
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