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Shapiro Administration Highlights Long-Overdue Budget Investment Proposal in Intellectual Disability and Autism Services, Workforce

Governor Shapiro's budget proposal puts Pennsylvania on track to eliminate the emergency waiting list for services and supports rate increases for providers

New Freedom, PA – Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh today joined leadership, staff, and clients from Penn-Mar Human Services to discuss the life-changing investments in Governor Josh Shapiro's 2024-25 proposed budget for the intellectual disability and autism (ID/A) communities. The proposal includes major increases in home- and community-based services for Pennsylvanians with ID/A as well as reimbursement rates for the providers and direct support professionals who provide essential care and support every day.

The proposed budget sets a transformative course to eliminate the emergency waiting list for services for adults and reduce barriers to care for thousands of Pennsylvanians over the next several years. This system change will make Pennsylvania one of a handful of states to end its emergency waiting list and help ID/A community members access vital services to live independently, pursue education and job opportunities, and participate in the Everyday Lives they deserve.

Governor Shapiro also is proposing to invest **\$483 million** in federal and state funding to support rate increases to service providers. [Governor Shapiro announced late last year](#) that DHS would re-examine rates to better support ID/A service providers and the direct support professionals who dedicate their careers to helping Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism. This investment in rates will support recruitment, retention, and wages for direct support professionals across this field who make inclusive, enriching lives possible for people with intellectual disabilities and autism.

"Achieving an everyday life with dignity is a goal for so many of our neighbors, friends, and loved ones in ID/A communities, but when they have to wait for services, we are falling short in helping them meet this goal. Every Pennsylvanian with intellectual disabilities and autism should receive the supports they need when they need them," said **Secretary Arkoosh**. "Under Governor Shapiro's budget proposal, Pennsylvania will become a leader in the home and community-based services space by working to eliminate the waiting list for services, investing in the value and importance of ID/A service providers and direct support professionals, and, most importantly, demonstrating our commitment to Everyday Lives for all Pennsylvanians."

Ending the emergency waiting list will be accomplished through a multi-year program growth strategy that shifts how waiver program capacity is managed. To date, intellectual disability and autism waiver programs were managed by allocating a set number of "slots" to each county, which determines a person's eligibility. Under this model, services they need are covered

through their designated slot. Moving forward, program capacity will be managed under an overall budget for each county, giving more flexibility to local program administrators to serve more people based on current needs, service utilization, and overall costs. This shift will allow counties to serve more people with greater efficiency.

To jumpstart this transition and help counties begin to serve more people, Governor Shapiro directed DHS to immediately release additional program capacity to counties, which will provide services to an additional 1,650 Pennsylvanians this year, and service providers will also receive a one-time supplemental payment later this spring to assist with workforce recruitment and retention. The 2024-25 proposed budget seeks to build on this by investing **\$78 million** in federal and state funds to serve an additional 1,500 Pennsylvanians in the next fiscal year.

Penn-Mar Human Services is a nonprofit that supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live courageously in pursuit of their best life, whether that's securing a job, being an active member of their community, building independence, or developing new relationships. Penn-Mar accomplishes this by supporting people on their own unique personal journeys. Founded in 1981, Penn-Mar operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in southern Pennsylvania and northern Maryland. They support 400+ adults with disabilities daily through an array of customizable services.

"I am confident our elected officials understand the importance and value of the services that organizations like Penn-Mar provide. Many of our local representatives have visited and witnessed the courageous living of those we support and the amazing work of our team members. I am also well aware of the challenges our representatives face in responding to all of their constituents' requests for support," shared **Gregory T. Miller, President and CEO of Penn-Mar Human Services**. "This year I am especially grateful to see significant investments proposed for home and community-based services, which would make an enormous difference in the ability of providers like Penn-Mar to support more people with disabilities and their loved ones. By properly valuing the critically important work of direct support professionals, this funding will have a transformational impact on the lives of Pennsylvanians with intellectual and developmental disabilities and ensure that they are able to live lives of their choosing."

Governor Shapiro's proposed investments in ID/A services and direct support professionals have received praise from [advocates](#), [editorial boards](#), and caregivers across Pennsylvania who have called the proposed investments and strategy a "lifeline."

Read the Governor's full [budget](#) proposal.

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