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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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In Allegheny County, Shapiro Administration Highlights Governor's Plan to Invest in Intellectual Disabilities and Autism, Behavioral Health Services



McKees Rocks, PA – Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh today visited Partners For Quality, a provider serving Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism (ID/A) as well as people with behavioral health needs, and talked with self-advocates, parents, employers, and direct support professionals in the ID/A and behavioral health communities about the historic ID/A investments and continued support for county behavioral health programs in [Governor Josh Shapiro's 2024-25 proposed budget](#).

“All Pennsylvanians deserve access to the services and supports they need to live well and participate fully in their communities. For decades, Pennsylvania’s ID/A services system has resulted in years-long waiting lists instead of providing the right supports at the right time. This is unacceptable and requires people to fit into the system instead of the system doing what is best to serve the individual,” said **Secretary Arkoosh**. “Under Governor Shapiro’s proposal, Pennsylvania will work to eliminate the ID/A waiting list, invest in the value and importance of ID/A service providers and direct support professionals, support access to life-saving behavioral

health care for people with mental health or substance use disorder needs, and, most importantly, demonstrate our commitment to dignity and quality of life for all Pennsylvanians. The time to invest in these services and supports is now so that we can help individuals, families, and even entire communities grow, be healthy, and thrive.”

Governor Shapiro’s proposed budget would invest **\$483 million** in federal and state funding to provide more resources for home and community-based service providers so they can increase the average starting salary from approximately \$15/hour to \$17/hour so they can pay competitive rates to both attract and retain the qualified staff who provide these essential services. [Governor Shapiro announced late last year](#) that DHS would re-examine rates earlier than required to better support ID/A service providers and the direct support professionals who dedicate their careers to helping Pennsylvanians with ID/A. 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. In addition, service providers also will receive a one-time supplemental payment later this spring to assist with workforce recruitment and retention.

Earlier this year, Governor Shapiro directed DHS to immediately release additional program capacity to counties, which will allow an additional 1,650 Pennsylvanians to receive waiver services this year. 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.

If passed, **Governor Shapiro’s** budget would increase the number of Pennsylvanians with ID/A who are able to receive home and community-based services, kicking off a multi-year growth strategy to make Pennsylvania a national leader and end its adult emergency waiting list. To support this growth, the budget would increase rates for providers, which will support higher wages for the direct support professionals who care for Pennsylvanians with ID/A. The proposed 2024-25 budget also includes an additional **\$20 million** for county mental health base funding for the second year in a row, an investment that supports access to life-saving behavioral health care across the Commonwealth for **uninsured and underinsured Pennsylvanians**. Last year’s \$20 million investment was the first new money to counties since 2008.

Headquartered in McKees Rocks, Partners For Quality provides administrative oversight for organizations that support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and behavioral health challenges. Serving Allegheny County since 1975, Partners For Quality, through its subsidiaries, serves about 4,000 people annually and employs more than 1,000 across its organizations. Partners For Quality subsidiaries have earned accreditation from The Council on Quality Leadership, The Council on Accreditation, and the Sanctuary Institute (for trauma-informed care).

“Secretary Arkoosh’s visit to our Partners For Quality family of agencies means the persons we support have an opportunity for their voices to be heard,” said **Maggie Rothenberger, President and CEO of Partners For Quality**. “The level

of support our community is receiving from Secretary Arkoosh and Governor Shapiro is unprecedented and the investments proposed in this budget are life changing. It is imperative the legislature passes this budget, so this funding becomes reality.”

The Partners For Quality family of nonprofit agencies includes: Allegheny Children’s Initiative, serving children and families with behavioral health challenges; Citizen Care, which provides residential and community-based supports and services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; Exceptional Adventures, an agency that provides travel and social opportunities to individuals with disabilities; Milestone, supporting individuals with developmental and behavioral health challenges, including two Health Care Quality Units in Butler and Warren which train professionals in 18 counties; and Partners For Quality Foundation, which raises funds for all services throughout the family of agencies.

Governor Shapiro’s proposed investments in ID/A services and direct support professionals have received praise from [advocates](#), [editorial boards](#), and caregivers across Pennsylvania.

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