



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Thanks to Historic Investments, Shapiro Administration Expands ID/A Services to 4,000 More Pennsylvanians, Reduces Waitlist by 28 Percent, and Raises Wages for Direct Support Professionals

In just over one year, the Shapiro Administration reduced the adult emergency waiting list to enroll in an ID/A waiver by 28 percent, raised wages for direct support professionals by 6 percent, and achieved the lowest DSP vacancy rate in a decade.

Last year, Governor Shapiro secured \$354.8 million in the [2024-25 bipartisan budget](#) to expand home and community-based services and address the shortage of direct support professionals.

Through these investments, new partnerships, and continued collaboration with advocates and families, the Shapiro Administration is delivering real results for Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism — ensuring they have the opportunity to participate fully in their communities, workplaces, and beyond.



Canonsburg, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** and **Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh** joined families, advocates, and community leaders at **Arc Human Services in Washington County** to announce that the Shapiro Administration has made historic progress in expanding access to intellectual disabilities and autism (ID/A) services across Pennsylvania.

From day one, the Governor has made Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism — and the direct support professionals (DSPs) who care for them — a top priority. With funding secured in the [2024-25 bipartisan budget](#) and strong partnerships with advocates and service providers, the **Shapiro Administration** is delivering real results:

- **Reducing the adult emergency waitlist by 28 percent** – the first meaningful reduction in years

- **Raising DSP wages** from \$16.90/hour in 2023 to \$17.85/hour as of October 2024 – a 6 percent increase
- **Lowering DSP vacancy rates** to 14 percent – the lowest since 2015
- **Expanding services to 4,000 more Pennsylvanians**, meaning 40,000 Pennsylvanians are now receiving the services they need – the highest number in state history

“People often underestimate what people with disabilities are capable of – but we’re different here in Pennsylvania because we know that people with disabilities make our communities stronger. That’s why I’ve been so focused on making sure Pennsylvanians with disabilities have the resources they need to succeed and thrive – and to live their lives on their own terms,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “Thanks to historic investments we’ve made, thousands of Pennsylvanians are now finally getting off the waitlist and into services, DSPs are earning higher wages, and vacancy rates among DSPs are at their lowest point in 10 years. This is real progress — and my Administration will keep working every day to ensure Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism have the opportunity to live, work, and thrive in the communities they call home.”

This year, DHS also launched **performance-based contracting for residential services** to improve service quality. The shift has already shown results, with more providers offering supported living and life-sharing arrangements, stronger incident management and health risk screening, and fewer licensing citations.

“For years, the ID/A community and their loved ones have called out for help – and this Administration has delivered,” said **Secretary Arkoosh**. “The waitlist is shrinking, services are expanding, and DSPs are getting the wages they deserve. This is about dignity, independence, and opportunity – and we’re committed to continuing this progress.”

Historic Investments in ID/A are Building Inclusive Communities

The [2024-25 bipartisan budget](#) secured by **Governor Shapiro** invests **\$354.8 million in state and federal funds** to expand services and strengthen the ID/A workforce:

- **\$280 million in rate increases** to raise wages for DSPs, helping providers recruit and retain staff and ensuring higher-quality care for people with intellectual disabilities and autism
- **\$74.8 million** to transition 1,500 individuals off the emergency waitlist and begin the process of eliminating the list by enrolling them in ID/A waivers so they can receive needed services

For many years, families and advocates have called for these investments as waitlists grew and DSP wages lagged behind. Thanks to **Governor Shapiro’s** leadership, Pennsylvania is reversing those trends — expanding access to services, supporting

DSPs, and ensuring more Pennsylvanians with disabilities receive the care they deserve.

"Direct Support Professionals are the very beating heart of everything we do at Arc Human Services," said **Ed Picchiarini, CEO, ARC Human Services**. "Because of Governor Shapiro's unrelenting efforts to improve the direct support care workforce in last year's budget, we were able to give significant, well-deserved raises to our DSPs. His commitment to addressing job quality for employees on the front lines of our industry allowed us to improve our recruitment efforts and boost our overall employee retention — and with the increased funding championed by the Governor, we're not only retaining more DSPs — we're also able to create a stronger career path for them. By tying raises to credentialed training, we're building a more skilled, stable workforce that ensures better support for the people we serve."

The Governor's visit to Arc Human Services — a nonprofit serving more than 200 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across 10 counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania — highlighted the organization's leadership in expanding opportunities and innovative support. In May 2025, Arc opened a **first-of-its-kind Smart Living Demo Home** showcasing assistive technology that empowers people with disabilities to live more independently. This model reflects the **Shapiro Administration's** commitment to building communities where every Pennsylvanian has the resources and support to thrive.

"You know, we say in my family, really, the greatest days of our lives were the day Sydney was born and then the day that she was accepted into college. And then the other greatest day—you were instrumental in providing to us—it's the day that we came off of the emergency waiting list, which was just a couple of days ago," said **Mike Smith, a parent of an ARC Human Services participant**. "That means for us, for our daughter—that ensures the opportunity for her to go out and work, to give back, to volunteer. We came out here to the ARC and we were so impressed with the staff and the tech tools that Sydney will soon utilize, so that she can live safely and independently in the community."

"I just want to say, this is a wonderful company – and I want to thank everybody, especially the boss, thank you [for] helping everybody," said **Eugene Willis, a participant and board member with ARC Human Services**.

Expanding Opportunity for all Pennsylvanians

Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro** has [met](#) with families, advocates, and service providers across Pennsylvania to understand the challenges facing the ID/A community. Through historic investments, innovative partnerships, and close collaboration with the disability community, Pennsylvania is moving in the right direction.

The Governor's commitment extends beyond ID/A services to broader disability inclusion and workforce opportunities. In 2024, the **Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)** placed 6,000

Pennsylvanians with disabilities in jobs at more than 3,500 businesses. At **First Lady Lori Shapiro's** [encouragement](#), employers like Sheetz and Wawa are partnering with OVR to expand access to good-paying jobs for Pennsylvanians with disabilities. OVR also launched the **MY Work program** in Allegheny County in 2016 and since expanding it statewide in 2021 has connected more than 2,500 high school students with disabilities to paid summer jobs — including over 500 [this summer](#) at 100 worksites in 57 counties — building skills, confidence, and career readiness.

Governor Shapiro's **2025-26 budget proposal** builds on this progress by:

- Sustaining historic ID/A funding to continue reducing the emergency waitlist
- Investing **\$21 million to raise wages and provide benefits** for 8,500 direct care workers supporting older adults and Pennsylvanians with physical disabilities
- Increasing OVR funding by **\$5 million** to expand job placement services

Through these historic investments, **Governor Shapiro** and his Administration are delivering meaningful change for Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism and building a stronger system of care that values workers, supports families, and ensures more people can access the services they need. The **Shapiro Administration** will continue working alongside advocates, providers, and community partners to expand opportunity, strengthen the care workforce, and make sure every Pennsylvanian can live with dignity, independence, and respect.

Read more about [Governor Shapiro's 2025-26 budget proposal](#). Explore the Governor's 2025-26 Budget in Brief [here](#), or visit shapirobudget.pa.gov to learn more.

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