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Shapiro Administration, ID/A Advocates Highlight Transformative Budget Proposal for Intellectual Disability and Autism Services, Workforce to Ensure Pennsylvanians Get the Services They Need



Philadelphia, PA – Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh today joined leadership from Vision for Equality, self-advocates, and families from across Pennsylvania for a roundtable discussion about the life-changing investments included in Governor Josh Shapiro's 2024-25 proposed budget, which includes major investments in home- and community-based services for Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism (ID/A) as well as reimbursement rates for providers to enable them to increase wages for 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 – a major system change that will make Pennsylvania one of a few states to end their waiting list and provide access to vital services that help individuals with disabilities live more independently, pursue education and job opportunities, receive support for health and safety, and participate in an everyday life like all people deserve.

Governor Shapiro is also proposing to invest \$483 million in federal and state funding to support rate increases to service providers. This new investment comes ahead of schedule following [Governor Shapiro's announcement](#) 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 receive the support they need to live in communities across the Commonwealth. This investment in rates will support recruitment, retention, and increased wages for direct support professionals across this field who make inclusive, enriching lives possible for people with intellectual disabilities and autism.

"The Shapiro Administration believes that every Pennsylvanian with intellectual disabilities and autism should receive the supports they need to achieve an everyday life with dignity and the opportunity to pursue their goals while living and working among their families and peers. When people are waiting for services, we are not meeting this goal," said **Secretary Arkoosh**. "It is time to make a change. Governor Shapiro's transformative budget proposal will position Pennsylvania as a leader in the home- and community-based services space. This is a much-needed reprieve for families and caregivers, an investment in the value and necessity of the work done by ID/A services providers and direct support professionals, and, most importantly, a demonstration of our commitment to our values and opportunity 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. The number of people receiving services was strictly limited by the slots allocated. 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. This shift changes management of ID/A program capacity in a way that will create efficiencies and provide counties with greater flexibilities to address the needs of individuals and families.

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.

"For far too long in Pennsylvania, thousands of adults with intellectual disabilities or autism have waited for years on long waiting lists to receive home and community-based services for which they are eligible. Historically, funding made little impact on the overall waiting list numbers. Governor Shapiro and DHS have taken an unprecedented stance in their 2024-25 budget proposal to end this practice in Pennsylvania," said Tom Carasiti, Community Advisor, Vision for Equality/PA Waiting List Campaign. "Vision for Equality considers this a historic and monumental plan not seen in the 25-year history of long waiting lists for the ID/A community."

We support the Governor's budget proposal, and we strongly encourage the General Assembly to do the same. This long-term vision and the work to support higher rates for providers and wages for direct support professionals will end waiting lists for those in need, and it's time for us to move forward."

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.