



The Connecticut Family Support Network

Update on DDS Pending Changes

May 2009

As families are expressing questions and concerns, here are some facts as to the pending DDS changes:

- Connecticut currently has a \$1.1 Billion deficit for this year (ending 6/30/09). The predicted deficit for the next two fiscal years is something like \$4-5 Billion. As such, the Governor and legislators are making huge cuts all over the place. The Governor has put a freeze on hiring any new staff in state agencies. There is also a policy that when a position is vacated, that position is eliminated all together (leaving no position to be refilled).
- DDS is expecting 300 - 400 employees will qualify for the early retirement incentive. People choosing to take early retirement have to announce their plan to do so on or before 6/30/09.
- Among DDS Case Managers eligible, it is expected that 30 - 40 case managers will retire. As such, there will be a problem with what to do with all of those clients. DDS has established caseload standards with input from the labor unions that set limits on caseloads for case managers. Exceeding these standards and distributing all existing clients from those who retire would not allow case managers to be effective in providing quality service to clients. As such, the decision to make changes in who has case management was made.
- Families who have received certain funding sources will continue to be able to receive some even if they no longer have a case manager, and there will be a central person or team in each region that will manage those requests. It is impossible to assign who that person or people will be right now - because DDS has to wait until after 6/30 to see who is still working after retirements are announced, and in what positions folks are working after some necessary shuffling is done. So, though I asked at the DDS Council meeting Thursday night for a phone number to give to families, I was advised that phone calls should be directed to regional offices for now.
- Some of the Individual Family Grants that have been distributed in the past will no longer be distributed in the same way as of 7/1/09. Annual grants that are called "flat funds", varying in value from \$600 - \$3,000, will no longer be available as automatic annual family grants. However, families will still be able to apply for "one-time" discretionary grants for specific purposes, through these centrally located folks at the regional offices. The maximum allowed per person for these one-time grants will be \$5,000.

- The respite centers will remain open for 5 days a week. In the past they have opened for 7 days a week in the summer, but that will not be the case this summer.
- Summer camp at both Camp Quinebaug and Camp Harkness will be open.
- High School Grads and age-outs will be funded this year, as long as their funding remains in the budget at the end of the session. Currently the funds are still there - but families should pay close attention – and if the funds remain in the budget, there may be delays in use of the funds until October, based on legislative recommendations.
- Due to budgetary concerns, DDS must close referrals and admissions to all day programs and employment support services until further notice. Any anticipated placements requiring new funding are dependent on the budget currently under consideration by the legislature, and DDS will not know the exact amount of funds until the end of the session. High School grads are an exception, as long as their funding remains in the budget.

Finally, I want to give you the exact list of who will no longer have case management as of 7/1/09:

- Individuals who are not enrolled in Medicaid.
- Individuals who are enrolled in HUSKY Medicaid Managed Care
- Individuals who live in private ICF/MR Community Living Arrangements (CLAs)

Families have received a letter if they are being impacted by these changes. Contact information within the new structure will be made available to families as soon as possible. Important - if a child loses a case manager and soon becomes an adult, and applies for and qualifies for Medicaid, they will then also qualify to apply for a case manager again.

If families have any further questions, please feel free to contact the Connecticut Family Support Network Coordinator in your area.

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