

Community Pathways Waiver Amendment #1 – Public Input Process

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) values public input for the development of and changes (amendments) to the Community Pathways waiver program and has initiated multiple strategies over the past two years to assess what is working for people and families and obtain input on ways to improve services and supports.

Various stakeholders and groups were contacted to seek input on priorities for changes and improvements in waiver services included the following: Waiver Participants, Family Members, People on the Go (self-advocacy group), DDA Quality Advisory Council, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition, Maryland Association of Community Services (provider association), Maryland Department of Disabilities, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, The ARC of Maryland, Maryland Disability Law Center, Maryland Employment First Workgroup, Coordination of Community Services Providers, Legislators, and the general public.

Strategies included, but not limited to the following:

1. Establishing a Director of Advocacy Services within the headquarters office and four Regional Advocacy Specialists to build relationships and share and obtain information from individuals receiving services, Self-Advocates and Self-Advocacy groups
2. Establishing a Deputy Director for Programs to work with individuals, families, and providers on ways to enhance service delivery and supports
3. Hiring independently consultants to conduct public feedback listening sessions (see additional information below)
4. Partnering with advocacy organizations to help get word out about feedback listening sessions
5. Posting information about feedback sessions dates, times, and locations in the Maryland Registry
6. Assisting individuals, family members, and other stakeholders with understanding federal requirements and providing the approved waiver application both online and hard copies upon request
7. Consultants reviews of the waiver services, coordination of community services (case management), and self-directed services and recommendations related to structure, processes, and regulations
8. Technical assistance from a CMS consultant on person-centered planning which included information gathering meetings with self-advocates and coordinators of community services
9. Emailing consultants' reports to stakeholders with hard copies available upon request as well as posting the reports on the DDA website
10. Sharing presentations on consultants reports including with Self-Advocates and the DDA Advisory Council, DD Coalition
11. Sharing presentations on the proposed Amendment #1 including with Self-Advocates, the DDA Advisory Council, DD Coalition, Regional Provider Meetings, Legislative Briefing, and other stakeholder meetings (see list below)
12. Establishing a designated email address, telephone numbers and surveys to capture stakeholder input including whether they agreed with the recommendations and ability to make additional comments

13. Establishing designated DDA web pages to post information about proposed changes
14. Posting information about the final proposed Amendment #1 in the Maryland Registry with formal request for public input which is available electronically and hard copies statewide at the local health departments

FEEDBACK SESSION BACKGROUND/HISTORY

In order to facilitate constructive input for the development of future program changes (waiver amendments), the Department hired independent consultants to conduct public feedback sessions and review the waiver services and structure, coordination of community services, and self-directed services. The Department also obtained technical assistance from a CMS consultant on person-centered planning.

To assess and enhance waiver services, processes, and policies, the DDA contracted with the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) to conduct public feedback sessions and a review of the Community Pathways waiver program.

This project included facilitating discussions with a variety of stakeholders including self-advocates to hear from those most directly impacted by the services provided through the waiver and reviewing the waiver with consideration of best practices employed by states nationally on supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and in consideration of the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) settings regulation.

Independent consultants conducted 15 public listening sessions from around the State meeting separately with groups composed of individuals receiving services, self-advocates, family members, service providers, and advocacy organizations.

Feedback sessions were announced in two issues of the Maryland Register (October 3, 2015 and October 17, 2014) which is available electronically and hard copies statewide at the local health departments. The feedback sessions were promoted on websites and through email by the DDA and its partners including The Arc Maryland, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS), People on the Go, and the Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC).

To maximize participation in the feedback sessions, accommodations to participate in the feedback sessions were offered. The advertisements for the events included a designated email address (wfb.dda@maryland.gov) and toll free number for people to request specific accommodations.

The public listening sessions included:

- 4 In-person Regional Sessions with Self-Advocates
- 4 In-person Regional Sessions with Families
- 4 In-person Regional Sessions with Providers
- 1 Facilitated Phone Call with a Wide Audience (aimed at self-advocates and families)
- 1 Session with the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition
- 1 Session with People on the Go (Self-Advocacy group)

Feedback sessions occurred on the following dates and regions:

October 22, 2014 for the Southern Maryland Region
October 23, 2014 for the Western Maryland Region
October 27, 2014 for the Central Maryland Region
October 28, 2014 for the Eastern Shore Region

A meeting was held with professional advocacy organizations including The ARC Maryland, People on the Go, MDLC, MACS, and the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council on October 29, 2014.

In addition, an operator-assisted call for self-advocates, family members, friends, and guardians of people with developmental disabilities was conducted on October 29, 2014 to give people an additional means to provide feedback.

Comments about the DDA and the waiver were accepted by phone and via email. At each feedback meeting, attendees were informed that the comments would be posted and asked to review the comments and contact the DDA representative if they felt there was inaccurate information or a point of view was missing.

The NASDDDS's report titled "Maryland's Community Pathways Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waiver" and recommendations reflects feedback obtained through the listening sessions with participants, family members, advocates and providers; written comments submitted by key stakeholders including people who receive services and families; and review of the waiver; policy conveyances and related documents and information systems.

Synopses of all listening sessions and consultant report were posted on the DDA website on a designated page titled "Waiver Feedback" at <http://dda.dhmh.maryland.gov/Pages/Waiver%20Feedback.aspx>.

On January 26, 2015, the DDA sent out an email blast seeking additional input from stakeholders on the NASDDDS report and recommendations with a requested response by February 15, 2015. Public comment and input could be submitted to the designated email address (wfb.dda@maryland.gov) or by calling a toll free number.

Presentations on the consultant reports and recommendations were shared with stakeholders for additional input to include presentation to self-advocates and the DDA Quality Advisory Council. Surveys were developed to assist stakeholders in sharing input as to whether they agreed with the findings and recommendations and to also share additional comments. The survey related to the review of coordination of community services was shared with the DDA Quality Advisory Council on April 30, 2015 with responses requested by May 15, 2015. Survey related to the person centered-planning was sent out via email blasts to individuals receiving services, family members, service providers, and advocacy groups on August 5th with a responses requested by August 19th. DDA partners also assisted with sharing information about the surveys.

Based on feedback received and consultant recommendations, Waiver Amendments will occur in stages to (1) provide time for public input on the specific changes being made in each Amendment, (2) address the new federal rules (including the Department of Labor and CMS Community rules), and (3) develop processes, policies, regulations, and new service rates as applicable.

Information obtained from the feedback listening sessions, consultant reports and recommendations, and stakeholder input on the report will be considered for future changes (amendments) to the program. Prior to submission, public input will be requested for each Amendment proposal.

INFORMATION SPECIFIC TO AMENDMENT #1, as further detailed in the “Purpose(s) of the Amendment”, was shared with stakeholders including participants, families, self-advocates, providers, and advocacy organizations including the following dates:

1. DDA Quality Advisory Council (September 16, 2015, December 2, 2015, January 28, 2016, and March 23, 2016)
2. DDA Regional Provider Meetings (ESRO October 15, 2015, CMRO October 22, 2015, WMRO November 19, 2015, and SMRO December 8, 2015)
3. St. Peters Presentation on October 19, 2015
4. Spring Dell Parent Meeting Presentation on October 19, 2015
5. MCTrans and Transition Times Joint Meeting on October 21, 2015
6. MACS Fall Conference on October 28, 2015
7. Meeting with Self-Advocates – People on the Go on December 5, 2015
8. MD Health and Government Operations Committee January 26, 2016
9. Maryland Urban Indian Organization (UIO) for Tribal Consultation on March 1, 2016

A designated webpage was established titled “COMMUNITY PATHWAYS WAIVER AMENDMENT #1 – PROPOSAL” at <http://dda.dhmf.maryland.gov/Pages/Waiver%20Amendment%201.aspx> which includes a pdf summary of changes proposed, language deleted, and reference pages. Information is also posted per topic to support ease of stakeholder review of specific interest area such as: Purpose; Personal Supports Changes; Program Capacity Changes; Reserved Capacity Changes; Projected Services Cost Changes; Active Treatment Changes; Personal Support Unit Change; Terminology and Language Changes.

OFFICIAL PUBLIC INPUT REQUEST ON AMENDEMENT #1 included:

1. Email blast to stakeholders and partners regarding Amendment #1 was sent out on December 18, 2015
2. Request for public input was posted in the Maryland Register (Issue Date: December 28, 2015, Volume 42, Issue 26 on Page 1652) which is available electronically and hard copies statewide at the local health departments, DDA Headquarter Office and DDA Regional Offices.
3. Public comments were accepted from December 18, 2015 through January 31, 2016.
4. Input requested from the Maryland Urban Indian Organization (UIO) on March 1, 2016.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FOR AMENDMENT #1

All input on Amendment #1 was considered prior to final submission to CMS. The DDA received input from 19 individuals including:

1. Two of the 19 individuals had specific recommendations related to self-directed services.
2. One individual supported changes to active treatment, personal supports, and initial opposed changes to number of slots. They requested additional information to be in DDA QA Advisory Council meeting which was provided and further opposition was shared.
3. One individual supported changes to personal supports.
4. One individual supported changes and made recommendations for language changes to the waiver description which was accepted.
5. One individual had several questions about the previous waiver renewal and comments on various information noted in the waiver that was not changed. A DDA staff member is sharing additional information, responding to questions, and providing clarifications.
6. 13 of the 19 were supporting a specific provider agency's service delivery model with request to continue to fund the sheltered workshop and service model. Information was received from a few individuals receiving services, family members, staff member, board members, and the Republican Women of Worcester County opposing the CMS Community Settings Rule and seeking an exception for this provider.
7. The UIO responded with no comments.

Suggested changes to the "Waiver Descriptions" was accepted and reflected in the Amendment.

Suggestion related to self-directed services was shared with a designated stakeholder workgroup exploring options to enhance this service model which will be proposed in a future amendment.

Suggestions related to increase the cap for Transportation services was shared with a Transportation stakeholder group and not accepted.

Suggestion to create a reserved capacity for individuals transitioning from the Autism Waiver was not accepted as this group is included in the Transitioning Youth Reserved Capacity.

Clarification was provided related to program capacity, terminology changes, and how to receive information about and participate in the DDA Quality Advisory Council meetings.