



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Deidre S. Gifford
DSS Commissioner

Ned Lamont
Governor

Department of Social Services Department of Developmental Services

Jordan A. Scheff
DDS Commissioner

Testimony before the Appropriations and Human Services Committees

Renewal of the Individual and Family Support Waiver and Amendments to the Employment and Day Supports & Comprehensive Supports Waivers

October 26, 2022

Good morning, Senators Osten and Moore, Representatives Walker and Abercrombie and honorable members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees. My name is Commissioner Diedre S. Gifford MD, MPH and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

In accordance with the provisions of section 17b-8 of the Connecticut General Statutes, we are here today to seek your support for the renewal of the Individual and Family Support (IFS) waiver and amendments to the Employment and Day Supports (EDS) & Comprehensive Supports (COMP) waivers, effective February 1, 2023. As Connecticut’s single state agency for Medicaid, DSS has administrative authority over these three Medicaid home and community-based services waivers, while the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) functions as the operating agency.

I am pleased to be here with Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services and other members of the DSS and DDS team to assist with answering any questions you may have. I will now turn it over to Commissioner Scheff to provide details on the waiver renewal and amendments.

The DDS waivers are designed to support individuals with intellectual disability who may need residential, employment or community-based day supports. The waivers also provide, based on need, ancillary supports such as respite, behavioral supports and transportation. The overall goal of the waivers is to ensure meaningful opportunities for individuals to fully participate as valued members of their communities. As of the end of September, more than 10,800 individuals were active on one of the three DDS waivers.

The departments are recommending various changes to the waivers to improve supports and services to individuals with intellectual disability. The following is a brief summary of the substantive changes being proposed to all three waivers:

- 1) **Adding a virtual component to the Individualized Day Support service** to offer flexibility based on an individual’s need. The virtual option will be an alternative to in-person support in limited circumstances;
- 2) **Increasing the Assistive Technology limit from \$15,000 to \$25,000¹;**
- 3) **Increasing the Vehicle Modification limit from \$15,000 to \$25,000¹;**
- 4) **Increasing the Environmental Modification limit from \$25,000 to \$35,000¹;**
- 5) Adding language to the Individualized Home Supports service, Individualized Day Support service and the Adult Companion service **to allow for such supports to be provided during a short-term acute care**

¹ All increases are per waiver participant and do not result in a fiscal impact, as limit increases must still fall within an individual’s approved budget.

hospital stay for the purposes of supporting the participant’s personal, behavioral and communication supports not otherwise provided in that setting;

- 6) **Removing the Prevocational Support service** as this service is not utilized and focuses on an outdated model of day support that no longer aligns with the agency’s mission;
- 7) **Adding a home delivery meal service** for participants who are unable to prepare or obtain nourishing meals independently, or when the individual responsible for this activity is temporarily absent or unable to prepare meals; and
- 8) Transcribing the approved Appendix K (temporary emergency preparedness and response amendments) language specific to the approved Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) American Rescue Plan to the permanent waiver authorities, effective upon the expiration of Appendix K, and repealing and replacing an initiative under the HCBS American Rescue Plan effective February 1, 2023 to provide a more detailed plan in which incentive payments can be made to providers for a move to a more independent residential or employment-based setting.

In the original list of proposed changes, DDS suggested combining and incorporating the Independent Support Broker service into the Individualized Goods and Services service. After further review, DDS will not be moving forward with this change.

Specific to the IFS waiver and the COMP waiver, the departments are proposing the following additional change to these waivers:

- 1) **Combining and incorporating the Personal Supports service into the Individualized Home Supports service** as these services already have rates that align, and the services are similar. Combining the supports will allow for more flexibility to waiver participants without having to receive individual authorizations for support changes.

Finally, the departments are proposing the following waiver cap increases:

- 1) **Increasing the Employment and Day Supports waiver annual cap from \$58,000 to \$75,000**; and
- 2) **Increasing the Individual and Family Support waiver annual cap from \$130,000 to \$165,000**.

These increases do not impact the state’s budgeted allotments for DDS supports and services, as the increases take into account the current minimum wage increases, cost of living increases, and benefit pool funding approved through the legislature, as well as potential future cost variables in the forthcoming waiver years. Annual funding approved for DDS waiver participants is allotted based on the participant’s measured need and available appropriations.

Pursuant to section 17b-8 CGS, a Notice of Intent (NOI) for public review and comment on the waiver renewal and amendments was posted on both departments’ websites and published in the Connecticut Law Journal, beginning August 29, 2022, for a period of 30 days. There were six comments submitted in response to the NOI, all generally in support of the proposed changes.

A letter notifying the committees of cognizance of the departments’ intent to submit the waiver renewal and amendments, as well as copies of the waiver applications and the public comments received, was transmitted on September 30, 2022. The departments were later made aware of a technical issue with the email size that limited its receipt to the legislature. The departments immediately addressed this issue and we apologize for any confusion it may have caused.

The departments respectfully request that the Appropriations and Human Services Committees approve the IFS waiver renewal and corresponding EDS and COMP waiver amendments, as described. Staff from DSS and DDS are happy to answer any questions. Thank you.