



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

M. Jodi Rell
Governor

Peter H. O'Meara
Commissioner

Kathryn du Pree
Deputy Commissioner

May 14, 2009

Dear Legislators:

In light of state budget concerns, the hiring freeze, and the anticipated retirement of several hundred employees, it has become necessary for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to re-evaluate how to best manage its core functions and to make some changes to our service delivery system. I am writing to explain these changes in the event that you receive inquiries from your constituents.

RESPITE CENTERS

Due to a reduction in the number of approved summer workers, the anticipated departure of many direct support staff through the Retirement Incentive Plan (RIP) and overtime costs, DDS will not be expanding the current five-days per week respite schedule this summer to seven days as we have done in past years. Given the popularity of the program, this was a difficult decision to make.

DAY PROGRAMS AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

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. However, DDS will not know the surety of this funding until a final budget for the biennium is passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Rell.

CASE MANAGEMENT- *impact on consumers*

Because of the anticipated retirement of several case managers, DDS will no longer continue to provide case management to individuals who are not enrolled in Medicaid, individuals who are enrolled in Husky Medicaid Managed Care, and individuals who live in Private ICF/MR Community Living Arrangements (CLAs). Families of individuals affected by this change are being notified by mail this week. This is a final administrative decision and families will not be able to appeal the decision through the regular Programmatic Administrative Review (PAR) process. Those individuals who live on their own or with their families will still have access to the family support services the department offers but will have to make arrangements for these services through a contact person in the Individual and Family Supports (IFS) division. Contact information will be made available to families.

CASE MANAGEMENT- *impact on employees*

As a result of the changes described above, case management caseloads will be impacted. In some cases, case managers who remain will have cases added to their caseloads; in other situations, case managers will bid on vacant caseloads. The specific parameters for redistribution of case manager caseloads are being discussed with union representatives and will be shared with case managers as soon as they are finalized. The guidelines for caseload sizes will continue to be based on waiver status and place of residence.

The decision to discontinue case management for certain individuals served by DDS was a difficult decision. We recognize that the coming months will be a time of tremendous transition for our consumers, families and staff. We are having discussions about this change with representatives of SEIU, District 1199 and will use a process for the transfer of cases and bidding of caseloads that is as fair as possible. We know that training and support for staff assuming new responsibilities will be important and we will do our best to address this with our remaining staff and resources.

INDIVIDUAL FAMILY SUPPORT (IFS) GRANTS

These grants are cash subsidies for disability-related expenses incurred by adults who live on their own or caregivers who provide care at home for eligible individuals of any age. IFS grants were provided to 3,729 families in FY 08 at a cost of \$3,280,095. In the past, grants have been distributed through two processes: 1) a flat grant (\$600, \$1000, \$2,200 or \$3,000) provided annually to moderate and high need individuals and their families and 2) one time grants based upon specific needs. As of July 1, 2009, DDS will discontinue the annual flat grant awards and allocate the account to regions to provide one time discretionary grants to individuals and families with emergencies or with high needs. These grants will primarily be made available to families of individuals not enrolled in a DDS Waiver. We anticipate fewer individuals and families will receive grant funding, but those who do will have a greater need and be eligible for more funding than under the current grant system. Individuals and their families who may receive these grants will only be those with high needs and who request funds for specific one time disability-related purposes. The maximum grant allowed from this account will be \$5,000.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

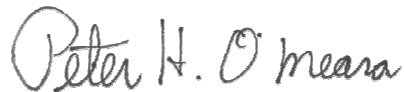
Funding for high school graduates is contingent upon the budget currently under consideration by the legislature and DDS will not know the surety of this funding or of any potential delay in start dates until a final budget for the biennium is passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Rell. DDS will let families know as soon as a budget has been passed.

SUMMER CAMPS

DDS is planning on both Camp Quinebaug and Camp Harkness being open this summer season.

I appreciate the uncertainties that these changes present to our consumers and families and assure you that DDS will continue to do as much as possible to keep the lines of communication open and fully explain any changes to DDS supports and services. You may be interested in visiting the DDS website (www.ct.gov/dds) for recent updates and communications to consumers, families and staff. Thank you for taking the time to read this update and please do not hesitate to contact Christine Pollio, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs, at (860) 418-6066 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Peter H. O'Meara
Commissioner