

MEMORANDUM

TO: Autism Task Force Members

FROM: James C. "Charlie" Green

DATE: August 25, 2009

SUBJECT: Autism Waiver

As most of you are aware, the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) is in the process of development and submission to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) a proposed waiver program that would provide early intensive early intervention services to children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders. I wanted to bring you up to date on our actions regarding the waiver application as well as actions needed to distribute allocated funds in the interim period while we are waiting for the waiver to be approved by CMS.

- For State Fiscal Year 2010 (July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010), DDS received a year's worth of state matching funds (\$1.5 million) for the waiver program. This funding is continual in that we should receive this amount every year. The process that DDS is undertaking to apply to CMS for the new waiver program is described below.
 - DDS will hold a meeting to include stakeholders, state agencies and other interested parties to determine the course of action to develop the waiver application. This step has been completed and the consensus was that DDS would enter into a contract with the University of Arkansas School for Medical Sciences (UAMS) for this purpose. Partners for Inclusive Communities (Partners), a division of UAMS, will use their expertise to work with DDS and the Arkansas Division of Medical Services (DMS) to develop the waiver application.
 - DDS staff will work with staff from the Department of Human Services to develop and submit a contract with Partners for review and implementation. This process is ongoing. The target date for having the contract in place is October 1, 2009.
 - Partners staff will work with stakeholders as well as DDS and DMS staff to develop the framework of the waiver to include in the application to CMS.
 - Partners will submit the completed application to DMS for review.
 - DMS, as the Arkansas Medicaid agency, will submit the application to CMS for approval.
 - Once CMS approves the waiver, DDS will make available procedures for applying for services under the new waiver.

- As you can tell, we will likely be into the early part of calendar year 2010 before we are able to get approval to begin the waiver. This would leave quite a bit of our annual funding unused as match money. Any unused portion of the match money will be “lost” at the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2010); unused funds are returned to the state general fund. Rather than turn this money back to the Department of Finance and Administration, DDS plans to use these surplus funds to support people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) by distributing the funds to families who are providing care to children, siblings, etc. with ASD. Distribution would be through the same process as we currently use for Special Needs funds. This distribution would likely only be available during this first fiscal year as we hope to have the waiver fully operational during Fiscal Year 2011 (July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011). Distributing these surplus funds in this manner would have no effect on how many people are eventually served on the proposed waiver nor on the amount of services that would be received through the waiver. The continuing level of funding (\$1.5 million) and the scope of the proposed waiver services (yet to be approved) will be the determining factor on how many children can be served on the waiver. Once the waiver is written and approved, it is estimated that all available funds would be used to provide the state match amount in order to draw down the approximately 73% federal matching funds. Details regarding the distribution of special needs funds are provided below.
- Applications are taken by DDS intake workers. These workers are assigned by regions of the state. A list of these workers and their respective regions and contact numbers are attached to this memo.
 - It is important that families understand that applying for these funds does not constitute making an application to be on the new waiver. The procedure for applying for the new waiver will be made available once CMS approves the process.
- Maximum special needs grants to families are currently capped at \$5,000 per family per year
- Families would need to provide some sort of documentation describing that the eligible member had been diagnosed with an ASD. The intake workers can provide families with guidance as to what form of documentation is necessary.

Feel free to pass this on to anyone who has questions about the new waiver application or the process for utilizing these surplus funds. Thanks for your service to the citizens of Arkansas who have an autism spectrum disorder.

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Attachments: 17 Years of Age and Under Contact List
18 Years of Age and Over Contact List