

**OVERVIEW:
GOVERNOR'S
COUNCIL ON
DISABILITIES
& SPECIAL
ED.**



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State of Alaska

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Mission

To create change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities

Roles

- State Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Special Education Advisory Panel
- Interagency Coordinating Council on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Beneficiary Board
- Governing Board of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Major Accomplishments towards Securing Alaska's Future

Working collaboratively with the State of Alaska and other stakeholders, the Council helped:

- Reduce high cost institutional services and enable individuals and families to stay in their local communities through the implementation of the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Waiver Program
- Contain costs and increase the number of individuals served at the same time through the closure of Harborview Developmental Center and de-certification of Hope Cottages' ICF/MR facilities
- Increase the employment rate of Alaskans with severe disabilities and reduce dependence on State services by leveraging Trust and federal funds and advocating for the passage of the Medicaid Buy-in program for working people with disabilities
- Increase cost-efficiencies and savings to the State of Alaska by conducting an examination of the two waiver programs administered by Developmental Disabilities and convening a workgroup to provide input into the new HCBS waiver regulations.
- Leverage a variety of funds to increase the availability of coordinated, accessible transportation for people with disabilities and low-income individuals to get to work

Current Principal Activities to Secure Alaska's Future

The Council is working with the State of Alaska and a variety of stakeholders to:

- Improve special education services so youth with disabilities leave school with the skills needed to secure jobs in their local communities and reduce their dependence on State government
- Integrate senior and disability services, including the reconfiguring and restructuring of resources
- Implement cost containment within the four HCBS waiver programs without placing undue burden on individuals and families
- Redesign the early intervention/infant learning program to maximize dollars from a variety of sources while increasing the number of children served in a timely manner
- Continue efforts to increase opportunities for Alaskans with disabilities to work and secure transportation to their jobs

Creating Change That Improves The Lives Of People With Disabilities

Cost Containment Recommendations- Developmental Disabilities Program

- There are 1,430 individuals with developmental disabilities on the waitlist for services. The Council therefore strongly recommends that all cost savings resulting from implementation of these recommendations be used to 1) provide minimal stopgap services (Core Services) to everyone on the waitlist; and 2) reduce the waitlist, including the 25 percent who are not waiver eligible.
- DD Core Services help keep families together while they wait for full services. Currently, 500 families receive \$2,550 annually for things like respite care or alarms in case a "runner" tries to leave home; an additional \$450 is provided to service providers to administer the funds. Although some mechanism may be needed to ensure funds are spent within specified guidelines (i.e. a small grant to one administering agency), the State would save \$225,000 annually if these funds were given directly to families.
- Add an option for *Individual/Family Support Home and Community-based Waivers*, thereby drawing down federal Medicaid funds to support Core Services for waiver-eligible individuals; currently, Core Services are funded with 100 percent State funds.
- Identify regular State Medicaid plan services that can be modified or utilized more effectively. For example, the Personal Care Assistance program is limited to *Activities of Daily Living* (bathing, dressing, transferring from bed to chair, toilet assistance, mobility and eating); if the program were broadened to include *Instrumental Activities of Daily Living* (housekeeping, cooking, shopping, medication management, money management and communication), individuals may receive enough support so that more expensive waiver services aren't needed.
- An investment in general fund grant dollars saves the state money; grant-funded services are generally low-cost services, which, if provided at the right time, help keep families together and avert high-cost crisis situations. Although some services were one-time services or did not completely meet people's needs, in FY02 the average cost of grant-funded services was \$6,683 compared to the State's share (\$28,409) of a waiver.
- Institute a "soft cap" for different services, which includes a process for raising the cap when needed. The Council supports State efforts to reduce costs through the development of a reimbursement system that sets specific rates for waiver services as long as there is a mechanism to increase rates in unusual and rare situations.
- The Council cautiously endorses 638 financing, which offers a previously untapped mechanism to reduce the State budget and take people off the waitlist. However, the Council has some concerns and asks that it be involved in evaluating the impact, outcomes and implications of any pilots.

Other Cost Containment Recommendations

- Create incentives for people with severe disabilities to fully participate in the economy and leave the Adult Public Assistance rolls by allowing participants in the *Working Disabled Medicaid Buy-In Program* to save money beyond the current limit of \$2,000 (\$3,000 for a couple). Research shows that people with disabilities who work are healthier and less likely to use medical care. Research also shows that working and saving money is the best way to escape and remain out of poverty. With access to personal savings, these individuals will be less likely to use cash public assistance and other State-funded services.
- Maximize use of public resources for transportation services and facilitate their further coordination with private resources as a matter of good public policy by issuing an administrative order to establish the Governor's Coordinated Transportation Task Force.