



OPWDD 1115 People First Waiver

Background

The Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (“OPWDD”) is planning significant changes to how individuals with developmental disabilities receive services and to how the State pays providers for rendering those services. Through a federal 1115 waiver, OPWDD intends to obtain funding from the federal government to improve care for individuals with developmental disabilities in the community. Specifically, OPWDD states that it plans to do the following:

- Provide care coordination through specialized care management,
- Transform long-term care, and
- Create a new reimbursement model to increase efficiency and accountability, while decreasing costs.

OPWDD intends for this waiver to promote a person-centered model of care, where individualized care plans shaped by strengths-based needs assessments drive the provision of needed services, rather than slotting individuals into the programs that are available. In practice, this appears to mean creating a broader range of community-based service options, including more supports for care at home and shared living arrangements, while maintaining some site-based residential facilities and day facilities.

OPWDD has not yet announced a complete, detailed proposal. But, even with only limited details about the proposed initiatives, it appears that most individuals with developmental disabilities will enroll in managed care-like entities and that the State will implement dramatic changes in care coordination and case management for this population. In short, the proposed initiatives will likely have a significant impact on medically fragile children with developmental disabilities.

Waiver Development Process and Timeline

OPWDD has involved stakeholders in the waiver design process through listening sessions, public forums, and a public survey. Additionally, OPWDD invited a wide array of providers, policymakers, and advocates to participate in either the Waiver Steering Committee or one of five waiver Design Teams. Each Design Team drafted recommendations regarding one of the following five core areas: (1) access and choice, (2) benefits and services, (3) care coordination, (4) fiscal sustainability, and (5) quality. A timeline of the waiver development process is outlined below:

- **April – May 2011:** OPWDD hosts stakeholder listening sessions.
- **May – June 2011:** OPWDD holds public forums and launches public survey.
- **June 2011:** Waiver Steering Committee hosts first meeting.
- **July – August 2011:** Design Teams meet and draft recommendations.
- **August – September 2011:** Design Teams submit recommendations to Steering Committee
- **September 2011:** Steering Committee publishes report.



- **October – November 2011:** Five year plan published and OPWDD holds public hearings.
- **November 2011 through Summer 2012:** OPWDD drafts waiver application and begins implementation planning and evaluation.
- **Late 2012:** OPWDD to launch pilot projects and test DISCO operations
- **2013-2015:** Roll out successful models.

Developmental Disabilities Individual Support and Care Coordination Organizations (“DISCOs”)

OPWDD proposes creating a new type of entity to coordinate care and reimburse providers—the DISCO. OPWDD plans to enroll individuals in DISCOs over the next five years. OPWDD has not outlined the exact structure and responsibilities of a DISCO, but the key features of a DISCO are as follows:

- DISCOs will be not-for-profit organizations with experience providing support and services to people with developmental disabilities.
- Each DISCO will perform two distinct functions:
 - a. *Care Coordination:*
 - DISCOs will coordinate all care and services funded through Medicaid, including health care, OPWDD services, mental health care, long-term, care and substance abuse services.
 - DISCOs will work with the Department of Health, Office of Mental Health, and OPWDD.
 - b. *Fiscal Intermediary:*
 - DISCOs will receive a monthly capitation to pay for all Medicaid-funded services (including services through DOH, OMH, and OPWDD) and to coordinate non-Medicaid services. It is not yet clear which, if any, of the proposed new or modified community-based services will be added to the current Medicaid benefits package and/or otherwise capitated under this waiver.
 - The capitation amount will be based on the results of an independently administered needs assessment tool, meaning that each individual will have his or her own capitation amount.
 - DISCOs may pass the risk along to providers by entering into capitated contracts with those providers.
- DISCOs may also be direct care providers, in addition to acting as care coordinators and fiscal intermediaries.
- Individuals will have a choice between at least two DISCOs.
- Pilot projects will be implemented and tested before the entire OPWDD population is transitioned to DISCOs.



Waiver Services

OPWDD proposes to provide four categories of services through the People First Waiver:

- Family and Individual Support, Integration and Community Habilitation, which will include habilitation services, employment related services, and respite services, provided in whatever setting is appropriate and including self-hire of friends or relatives if desired.
- Flexible Goods and Services, which will include simplified self-direction options and which may cover assistive technologies, environmental modifications, recreational activities, and necessities for moving into a individual living arrangement.
- Home and Community-Based Clinical and Behavioral Supports will include all clinical services currently provided through Article 16 and Article 28 clinics, but will be available in a variety of settings and respond appropriately to the current level of need, including intermittent or crisis support.
- Health, Medical and Dental Services will include all such services currently covered under Medicaid.

OPWDD proposes to create quality metrics that focus on quality of life as well as health and safety outcomes and that will be used to evaluate the success of the waiver programs. OPWDD will also initiate public quality rating systems for service providers and for DISCOs to assist OPWDD in directing their oversight activities and system users in selecting providers and DISCOs.

Additional Resources

OPWDD 1115 Waiver Information Page

- http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/2011_waiver/index.jsp

OPWDD Statewide Comprehensive Plan: 2011-2015

- http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/507plan/images/waiver_507_comprehensive_plan.pdf

OPWDD Waiver Design Team Pages and Reports

- http://www.opwdd.ny.gov/2011_waiver/waiver_design_teams.jsp