



Charlottesville Region Autism Action Group

## **CRAAG Advocacy Alerts!**

- ❖ Save Virginia's DD System from collapse -The conceivable post-pandemic collapse of the DD Waiver system based on acute staff shortages; the forced exit of people with DD from their homes because they can't get services (includes group homes and individual homes); and the draining effect of the year-long lack of services for families and individuals.
- ❖ Statewide Candidates Forum for Virginia Governor, Lt. Governor and the Attorney General on August 12th from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
- ❖ The underutilization of Supported Living Waiver Services

### **Save Virginia's DD System From Collapse!**

It is conceivable that Virginia's DD Waiver system could collapse under the weight of a severe workforce and capacity crisis. Just as Virginia emerges from the pandemic, The Arc of Virginia is calling on advocates to urge legislators to address the high number of provider closures due to acute staff shortages; the forced exit of people with DD from their homes because they can't get services (includes group homes and individual homes); and the draining effect of the year-long lack of services for families and individuals. [See The Arc of Virginia's Action Alert dated July 27th](#). The workforce crisis has been building for years, but it took a pandemic to rattle the system to its foundation. The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

We need a massive infusion of funding from the Virginia General Assembly (GA) and U.S. Congress to raise provider reimbursement rates and wages for direct care providers. The current Special Session of the GA has the potential to begin to solve the problem by turning around the

unprecedentedly high rate of staff turnovers, vacant positions, and closures. Providers need relief from the mandated administrative burdens that reduce capacity and drain time and energy away from delivering services. Virginia's community based system has been lacking for years due to underfunding, and now the acute workforce crisis threatens the full-scale collapse of services and supports for community-based living.

Help may also arrive in the form of new rate proposals made public on August 2nd by DMAS and DBHDS. The rate increases are for DD Waiver Services, Personal Assistance, Respite and Service Facilitation. The proposed rates are “based on a provider survey administered earlier this summer and research and analysis of other benchmark data, proposed rate models have been developed.”

DMAS and DBHDS invited providers and other interested stakeholders to review and comment on these proposals. The proposed rate models and webinar that walks-through the proposals can be accessed [here](#). Comments should be submitted by [email to HMA-Burns](#) by August 20th. After studying the proposed rates, CRAAG intends to comment.

At a minimum, in the upcoming Special Session of the Virginia General Assembly, CRAAG endorses The Arc of Virginia's recommendations:

- ✓ Accelerate DD Waiver provider recovery with infrastructure and capacity restoration payments - \$42.25M (4.25% of FY19 DD waiver billing, lump sum payments)
- ✓ Increase DD Waiver Rates to preserve the Community-Based System - 30% increase (effective 09/2021-06/2022)
- ✓ Grant access to vital technology for adults with developmental disabilities – Create a fund providing up to \$1,000 per person (for adults receiving DD Waiver Services)

## **Virtual Statewide Candidates Forum During The Arc Annual Convention**

2021 is an election year for Virginia Governor, Lt. Governor and Attorney General. The Candidates Forum features all the candidates running for the three top offices and is sponsored by a group of advocacy organizations,

including The Arc, Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, Training Alumni Association, Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN), and Autism Society of America. **Thursday, August 12th from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.** [Click to Register.](#)

## **The Underutilization of Supported Living Waiver Services**

The **Virginia Board for People with Disabilities** is required to submit annual assessments to the Governor on issues affecting Virginia's disabled population. One such 2020 assessment, [Residential Services and Day and Employment Services in the DD Waivers](#), is available on [VBPD's website](#). The Board's recommendations on the **underutilization of Supported Living Waiver Services** echo CRAAG's view:

- **Recommendation 1:** The General Assembly should support the goals of the Settlement Agreement and waiver redesign to incentivize integrated and independent living options by *establishing rates for the provision of supported living services that are comparable to the rates for the provision of group home residential services.*
- **Recommendation 2:** The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) should *“resolve inconsistent practices among licensing specialists when licensing Supported Living to ensure it is the provider that requires licensure, rather than the apartment/home being a DBHDS licensed setting.”*
- **Recommendation 3:** The Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) should clarify and resolve conflicting information in the waiver regulations located at 12VAC30-122-540, which states that the Supported Living *“provider shall be licensed”* but also describes Supported Living services being provided in *“DBHDS licensed settings.”*
- **Recommendation 4:** DBHDS and Community Services Boards should *ensure “that support coordinators have a comprehensive understanding of supported living services, including the differences between supported living and in-home supports. Support coordinators must be knowledgeable and accurate when explaining to individuals and families the various service options and opportunities available in the DD waivers, including supported living services.”*