



Day Habilitation - A New Medicaid Waiver Service for Individuals with Significant IDD

We are seeking legislation to establish a new Medicaid waiver service called “Day Habilitation” to address the unmet needs of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Day habilitation provides assistance to improve self-help, socialization and adaptive skills that enhance social development and foster greater independence in community living.

The Problem

Once young people with IDD become adults and age out of K-12 special education, they lose critical assistance to learn, improve and retain social and adaptive skills necessary for integrated living in the community. This abrupt loss of learning, activities and support is often described as falling off “the cliff”.

For many individuals this results in distress and isolation for themselves and their families who are often forced to exit the workforce to provide necessary support. This loss of support may precipitate a host of health and behavioral problems that strain individuals and their family caregivers, with whom 75% of adults with IDD live. This is often the antecedent to crisis and skyrocketing requests for expensive residential or institutional placements.

Washington State’s employment first approach offers meaningful benefits to those with IDD but even with robust programming many are not employed or work less than ten hours per week.* Those individuals with more significant disabilities have a low participation rate and their varied and complex needs make sustained employment difficult. Day Habilitation is intended to fill the hours individuals aren’t working in a more normative fashion.

DDA’s other service options have very low participation due to their inaccessibility, restrictive provisions, contracting hurdles and limited benefits.

The Solution

Day Habilitation services provide long-term support that people with IDD and their families need to achieve increased quality of life and more meaningful lives. This service is provided by many states, and is a well-defined Medicaid HCBS waiver service approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Provision of regularly scheduled activities in a non-residential setting, such as assistance with acquisition, retention, or improvement in self-help, socialization and adaptive skills that enhance social development and develop skills in performing activities of daily living and community living. Activities and environments are designed to foster the acquisition of skills, building positive social behavior and interpersonal competence, greater independence and personal choice. **

The services provide assistance with personal care, oversight, instruction and support in the areas of health, safety and integration into the physical and social life of the community. These programs typically provide transportation services and help coordinate the delivery of specialized services such as speech, physical and occupational therapies.

Proposed Legislation

DDA participants and their families and disability advocacy groups propose a bill that does the following:

1. Adds Day Habilitation as a service to existing Basic Plus and Core Medicaid waivers, not making it part of Aggregate Services;
2. Ensures participants receive a minimum of 20 hours per week of paid service;
3. Makes Day Habilitation services available in addition to, and concurrent with, supported employment services and respite;
4. Sets the minimum reimbursement rate for service providers at \$35.00 per participant for each hour of participation in a qualified program;
5. Requires DDA to directly contract with, pay and manage service providers;
6. Formally adopts the CMS definition of Day Habilitation services in statute and/or agency rules;
7. Ensures that eligible DDA participants and their primary caregivers and guardians are adequately advised of the service, its benefits, providers and given a choice to participate;
8. Sets quantified expectations for making the services available in a timely manner (e.g., how many participants received within a specific time frame).

Day Habilitation services provide constructive non-work activities that bring people with IDD out of isolation and allow them to continue to develop skills and opportunities to more fully participate in the community. It is this kind of Habilitation that the state has committed in statute (RCW 71A.12.020) to provide.

**DDA 2022 caseload and Cost Report*

***CMS Updates to the §1915 (c) Waiver Instructions and Technical Guide regarding employment and employment related services*