

DDD Meets Day Program Service Needs

“People with developmental disabilities can have opportunities to grow.”

2008 grads and everyone on waiting list will be served

The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) expects that everyone eligible for day program services in New Jersey will be receiving them by the end of the year. To achieve this goal, DDD will fill existing vacancies in day program. At the same time, DDD also will offer the option of self-direction, using an individual budget, to 2008 graduates and individuals on the division's waiting list for day services. The 2008 grads in need of day services, along with everyone on waiting list, will be served.

DDD will offer the option of self-direction to some people already in day programs that are at capacity. Individuals who elect this option will leave the day program, thus creating a vacancy that can be filled by someone who is waiting for services. Close to 400 people will be affected.

The division estimates that it will cost approximately \$1.5 million to fund new services during FY 2009. This will come from unspent funding in other programs, a method DDD also used to help provide 2005, 2006 and 2007 graduates with day services.

“It's very exciting,” said Assistant Commissioner Kenneth Ritchey. “When we are done, there will no longer be a waiting list for day services. And, the fact that some people who are now in day programs may be able to leave the program and self-direct their own services is important. It shows that people with developmental disabilities can have opportunities to grow.”

Ritchey said the division has no plans to start a new waiting list for day services, and he hopes a way can be found

through the budget process to make sure day service funding is available on an ongoing basis, for future graduates and others seeking day services.

Each year, it is estimated that approximately 700 young people with a developmental disability will graduate from their educational entitlement. Until FY2004, however, the division did not have a formal process for assessing these graduates or offering them placements in a day program. That year, for the first and only time, money was included in the division's budget to fund day service placements for current graduates.

DDD also began working at that time with students and their families who were expected to graduate in two years to help them prepare for their transition to adulthood. As a result, DDD now knows each year which graduates would like to be placed in a day program.

The division also undertook a statewide review, in the spring, of people on the waiting list for residential placements who might also need day services. One hundred and thirty-five people were identified. Ritchey and the division then made a commitment provide day services to this group as well.

“Our funding is limited,” said Ritchey. “So we are thinking carefully about how to use it and also how we serve individuals. Self-direction is a good option for people who are comfortable managing their own services. The most important thing, even so, is to make sure everyone who wants day program services is able to have them.”

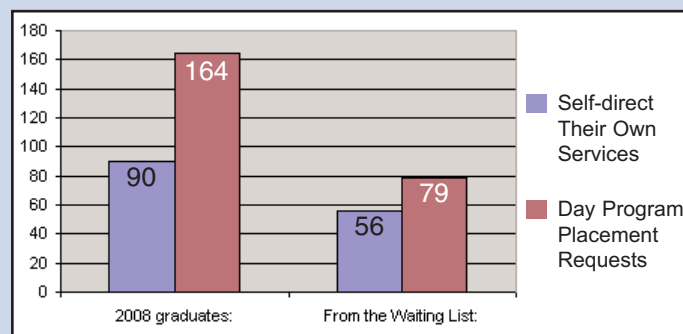
DDD funds Different types of day program services

DDD is committed to providing day services for people who need them. This does not, however, mean that all those individuals will move into traditional day programs. Some individuals, after working with DDD, will be allowed to self-direct their own services using an individual budget based on their assessed needs.

The division is offering the option to self-direct to eligible 2008 graduates, individuals on the waiting list and some people who already attend existing day programs that are at capacity. People who leave the program to self-direct will create vacancies that can be filled either by graduates or individuals from the waiting list.

“A lot has to come together to make this happen,” said Assistant Commissioner Kenneth Ritchey. “But I'm confident we'll have everyone served by the end of the year.”

Below, you can find a break-down of day services that will be provided to 2008 graduates and those individuals on the waiting list. It is not yet known how many people from selected day programs will opt for self-direction.



Helping Graduates find Employment – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and DDD

It is sometimes difficult for families to learn that there is no entitlement for services for people after they reach their 22nd birthday. A wide range of services are available through the state for people who meet certain eligibility requirements, but only to the extent that funding is available.

DDD especially wants young people to know that their best option for finding employment after graduation is to seek assistance from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), which is federally mandated to assist people with disabilities in finding employment. One of their priorities is helping people with the most significant disabilities. DVRS is a part of the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Individuals who do not want employment can turn to DDD for assistance in finding day services. There have been an average of about 200 graduates in each of the past four years. DDD was able to help these graduates find day services through traditional or self-directed means.

DVRS is not always able to help individuals find a full six-hour day of employment. In these cases, DDD is able to augment DVRS funding, with the goal of providing an individual with a combined total of up to 35 hours of employment and day service activity each week.

Adults with Autism Task Force at Work Recommendations due June 2009

The Adults with Autism Task Force has begun work to prepare a series of recommendations due June 2009 to Governor Corzine. Approximately 1,800 adults with an autism spectrum disorder are currently receiving DDD-funded services in the community.

The task force, created by legislation last year, is housed at the Department of Human Services with a mandate to review, assess and make recommendations about ways that adults with autism can be better served. The first meeting was held this past June at DHS Trenton office, and this month's meeting was held at DDD's Hamilton Township Office.

"As more people are understanding autism, the number of children receiving the diagnosis continues to grow," said DHS Commissioner Jennifer Velez. "A



critical time occurs when these young people leave school and transition to adulthood. It is important for us to be sure that we are doing everything we can to meet their needs, just as we are striving to meet the needs of people with other developmental disabilities. This task force will look at what currently exist in New Jersey for adults with autism, and make recommendations about what it believes should exist in the future."

The 13-member task force includes family members, an adult with autism and representatives of various autism advocacy groups, and the state departments of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, Health and Senior Services and Human Services.

DHS Commissioner Velez named Deborah Cohen as the chairperson. Cohen is the Director of the Department of Human Services' Office for Prevention of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Ari Ne'eman (Founding President of the Autism Self Advocacy Network) was elected vice-chairperson.

"I'm delighted that the Department of Human Services is involved with this task force," said Commissioner Velez. "I hope it will provide a safe place for the type of dialogue that is needed to produce ambitious but realistic recommendations. The experience of other task forces has been that the recommendations ultimately receiving funding and legislative support are those that reflect realistic and achievable goals."