

DRAFT SURVEY/SIGN ON LETTER – PROVIDER CAPACITY BUILDING GRANTS

New federal funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for Wisconsin must be used to improve Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) for people with disabilities and older adults in Family Care, IRIS, PACE and Partnership. The Department of Health Services (DHS) has pledged a portion of these funds in grants to providers to improve programs that support people with intellectual, developmental, and other significant disabilities to find and retain work in competitive integrated employment.

Please read the below letter and indicate whether you will sign on in support. The letter with all signees listed will be sent to leadership at DHS.

To Department of Health Services Leadership:

In Wisconsin, Home and Community-Based Service (HCBS) providers have been struggling to recruit and retain quality direct care staff, but at the same time are interested in continued improvement of their service models. The providers signed onto this letter welcome the opportunity to work with the Department of Health Services on a grant program with federal ARPA funds that addresses our immediate staffing needs while improving employment outcomes for people with intellectual, developmental, and other significant disabilities by finding and retaining work in competitive integrated employment.

Direct care staff have indicated that enhanced training and support, in combination with increased wages and benefits, are reasons why they stay with a provider employer.

Grant funding that is significant enough to offer the flexibility to provider applicants to ensure staff retention and includes quality training components is needed.

We welcome a grant structure that includes the following:

- Funding available to provider organizations including, but not limited to, facility-based prevocational, community based prevocational, supported employment and day service providers who apply to initiate or increase and sustain their provision of competitive integrated employment services in the broader community.*
- Awards made to providers committed to increasing pathways to competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities along with community-based wrap around supports.*
- Grantee commitments to specific benchmarks and willingness to participate in a community of practice that includes coaching, mentoring, and technical assistance.*
- Specific set aside funding within grant awards to help grantees who demonstrate commitment toward benchmarks to reward and retain direct care staffing.*

- *Commitment by the state and funders (MCOs, ICAs, etc.) to establish a permanent rate structure or other ongoing funding mechanism that rewards high-performing providers that maintain progress after the grant period ends.*
- *Provider Grants of at least \$25,000 per recipient up to a maximum of \$150,000 per recipient. Providers may apply for grants that can be implemented over a 36-month period (January 1, 2022 - December 31, 2024).*

In addition, we support the following award criteria:

Grant funds will be awarded to providers with the clearest metrics-to:

- *Increase: a. competitive integrated employment and/or b. meaningful involvement, interaction, contribution in the broader community for people with disabilities as a pathway to employment.*
- ***Expand capacity*** *to meet specific competitive integrated employment or service outcomes in the broader community for individuals with disabilities.*
- *Support staff development and training that would lead to increased retention.*

We agree to the following expectations of Grant awardees:

- Develop a work plan and budget with target numbers of program participants impacted*
- Outline training plans to equip staff and increase capacity*
- Develop an employee retention plan*
- Create plans to educate staff, participants, and families on the project*
- Outline plans to support increased individualized person-centered community participation of program participants*
- Describe the organization's commitment to increasing service capacity*
- Describe strategies for business and other broader community engagement*
- Implement (sustainable) strategies to address transportation barriers*
- Participate in required technical assistance activities*
- Establish and report on quarterly benchmarks achieved over the grant period.*

We thank you for the recognition that providers are essential partners in improving Wisconsin's Home and Community-Based Services system, but that existing funding levels and structures do not allow providers to make significant, sustainable change.