

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Debrief: The Medicaid Waiver Program

Next month is Developmental Disabilities Awareness month, and I want to shed some light on important issues for those we serve and our community. Finding the right care for adults with developmental disabilities is a long and, at times, stressful journey for individuals and their families who want the best for themselves and their loved ones. Part of the search to find and secure supportive care is figuring out what type of funding your loved one qualifies for.

For the individuals Langley provides care and services for, most are funded by the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Service Board (CSB). We have also provided support and services for a few individuals under Medicaid, specifically the Medicaid Waivers as well as accepting private pay. We are beginning to see the pendulum swing, with a focus on the Medicaid Waiver funding, shifting away from the local funding through Fairfax-Falls Church CSB. The good news is that we are prepared for this transition.

In the last year, several of our individuals have transitioned from CSB funding to Medicaid Waiver. During this transition, we have noted some confusion surrounding this shift in funding. I want to briefly explain how this program works and why the Medicaid Waiver is an important tool for caring for those in our community. So, what is a Medicaid Waiver, and how does one qualify for it?

Medicaid Waiver is the largest funding source of long-term support for individuals with developmental disabilities provided by the federal and state governments (NACDD). The Medicaid Waiver program in Virginia covers two different types of waivers – the Developmental Disability (DD) Waiver Program and the Commonwealth Coordinated Care (CCC) Plus Waiver Program (Arc of Virginia). I will focus on the DD Waiver since a majority of the individuals we serve qualify for this program.

The DD Waiver provides support and service options for independent living, learning, physical and behavioral health, employment, recreation, and community inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities. In the DD Waiver program, three waiver types provide continued services to individuals enrolled with Langley (My Life, My Community):

- Building Independence (BI) – For individuals who can live independently and may not need support all the time.
- Family & Individual Support (FIS) – For individuals who live with their family, friends, or in their own homes and need support with some medical and/or behavioral needs.
- Community Living (CL) – For individuals who require support in their homes and may need to live in these homes with staff to receive support with complex medical and/or behavioral needs.

Individuals and families must contact their support coordinator at the Fairfax-Falls Church CSB to express their interest and be screened for DD Waiver eligibility. Support coordinators at the CSB will guide individuals and families through this process. Langley's role is to help support coordinators determine eligibility; we do not lead this process.

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Eligibility for the DD Waiver hinges on two criteria: the Virginia Individual Developmental Disabilities Eligibility Survey (VIDES) and financial eligibility. Once eligibility is determined, those who qualify for the DD Waiver are enrolled in the DD Waiver Waiting List. Individuals on the waiting list can still receive support services. This waiting list has three priority categories based on how much and quickly an individual needs support – Priority One, Two, and Three. When the County is awarded waiver slots, it looks at its priority list and begins reaching out to the individuals and their families. In the past 12 months, Langley has seen several of our individuals who were on the priority one waiting list switch to the DD Waiver program.

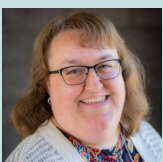
Once an individual is offered a DD Waiver, time is of the essence. Individuals and their families or caregivers have 30 days to accept funding through the DD Waiver program. Accepting this funding is important for individuals and their families because DD Waiver helps fund you or your loved one's services through Langley!

It is at this point that you must meet the financial requirements. There are tools out there to help meet the financial requirements of the program. Programs like an Able Account or a Special Needs Trust will help ensure that you or your loved one does not miss out on this lifelong program with many benefits. If you are unfamiliar with a Special Needs Trust or an Able Account, The ARC of Northern Virginia is a great resource to help you learn more. Don't wait to learn about the benefits of setting this up! Doing this now will reduce the stress, if the time comes, for you or your loved one to take advantage of a Medicaid Waiver.

If you are a loved one of someone who is on the DD Waiver waitlist or is interested in learning more, contact our office at (703) 893-0068 and ask to speak with a program manager about Medicaid Waiver. I know securing funding to keep services like Langley is important for you or your family members, and Langley will help guide you along the way.

For our community, the transition to Medicaid Waiver has been an exciting and, at times, stressful process for our individuals and families. One of the biggest sticking points with this transition is the time it takes to be offered a Medicaid Waiver while on the waitlist. Individuals on the waitlist receive a Medicaid Waiver when someone moves from Virginia, passes away, or moves into a nursing home or institution. Funding for Medicaid Waiver is managed at the state level, Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS), and the appropriation of additional funds to increase the number of slots is dependent upon General Assembly action. If you want to learn more about how you can advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities or more funding for Medicaid Waiver from the General Assembly, visit The Arc of Virginia and the Arc of Northern Virginia's websites for more information.

I hope this has helped shed some light on issues that are important to us at Langley.



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