

## REQUESTING A LIFEBOAT TO PROTECT ACCESS TO SLS SERVICES

Community service providers offer intensive and critical supports for Coloradans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). These services are essential for people with IDD to live meaningful lives in homes and communities of their choice. Colorado's IDD system has reached a tipping point and indicators of shrinking provider capacity are evident and growing. We believe that, in as few as five years, Colorado's provider shortages will be so severe that the results for people with IDD and their families could be devastating. The General Assembly has the power within the funds it has currently budgeted for IDD services to prevent further losses in provider capacity and help protect access to these critical services for Coloradans with IDD.

***To protect services, the General Assembly should use at least \$5 million of IDD reversion funds from the current fiscal year (FY 2016-17) plus federal matching funds to implement a 15% increase to the allocation for HCBS-Supported Living Services. SLS services are some of the most under-funded IDD services in Colorado. These funds should be applied to increase the individual spending/cost limitations, Service Plan Authorization Limits, and the rates associated with each HCBS-SLS service unit.***



As described in Alliance's issue brief, "A Perfect Storm for IDD Service Providers," the following trends indicate that Colorado's IDD service system, as currently funded, is unsustainable:

- An increasing number of providers are declining to offer SLS services because the rates do not cover the cost of delivering the services. It costs providers an average of \$20.20 per hour to employ a Direct Support Professional (DSP), yet the rates for some SLS services are as low as \$14.92 or \$19.80 per hour.
- Current rates don't support wages needed to recruit and retain a qualified direct support workforce. Average turnover among DSPs in Colorado is 38%, with some agencies experiencing upwards of 81% DSP turnover. Turnover costs providers millions each year and creates disruption in services for those who rely on them.
- Many people are having difficulty finding providers. A significant number of service requests (20%) sent out in May and June 2016 received no response from providers four or more months later, and an even larger number of requests (49%) failed to result in a provider placement within that timeframe.
- Those who do find placements wait an average of 47 days from a request for service to starting a service with their chosen providers. With service plans typically lasting 12 months, this means that, on average, individuals go without needed services for 13% or more of the plan year, if they find a placement at all.
- Difficulty in finding providers contributes to unspent dollars that are lost to the service system through reversions. In the past three fiscal years, \$48 million in IDD services dollars have been reverted, despite unmet community needs. In FY 2017-18, the Governor's office projects that another \$18.6 million will be reverted.

***The bottom line: Colorado's IDD system has reached a tipping point. If system funding issues are not addressed, providers will continue to face difficult decisions with compounding negative impacts. Providers will be forced to scale back on services, employee wages, or both, leading to disastrous consequences for the individuals they support. While we recognize that this investment will not solve all of Colorado's IDD sustainability problems, we believe that it will serve as a lifeboat to mitigate provider shortages and barriers to access for critical SLS services.***

Alliance is a statewide association of Community Centered Boards (CCBs) and Program Approved Service Agencies (PASAs) that provide services and supports to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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