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LD 744

My name is Scott Miller and I am the Director and founder of Creative Trails, which is the Community Support program of Support Solutions. Creative Trails has been around for over 15 years and currently serves 150 participants throughout 5 locations and 2 counties and has national recognition for providing contemporary services. Prior to the pandemic we supported over 200 participants throughout 8 locations. Due to financial constraints of poor rates and low wages for staff we had significant program closures. We are lucky to still be providing contemporary services as many other Community Support Providers had to close. Waiver recipient waitlists are out of control with many individuals with intellectual disabilities not getting desired services. Our services are essential for individuals to live meaningful lives in their community. It gives them opportunities to explore their chosen community, volunteer options, develop skills and to explore careers. All of these components are crucial and the key focus of our program, which is driven by skilled staff. Without higher rates we can't afford to pay staff what the job entails. We can not find staff at \$16 an hour, which we can barely afford with the current rate. We need your help to avoid a full collapse of an important service. Please see the below bulleted points to ensure LD 744 Community-based rate study happens.

LD 744 An Act to Ensure Access to Services for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities by Requiring Rate Studies for Home and Community-based Services. Below are some examples of why and what needs to be examined in the Community-based Service rate studies:

a. CS service methodologies need to be reviewed so staff to participant ratios are accurate in today's programming realities. It is imperative that the waiver participants can have flexible services to meet the positive HCBS requirements. The service methodology has to be financially sound for providers to deliver a successful service.

b. Training staff: There have been several added HCBS state required trainings that staff are mandated to take, which we are important and exciting for the movement but is costly. There are also many OADS webinars that are important and take up management time to be current. Management then uses these updates in orientation trainings to meet the higher level of community connectivity and career exploration needs. This also is expensive as it costs providers at all staffing levels.

c. Documentation time: The new HCBS OADS recommended documentation template in Therap is very time consuming to meet OADS and Mainecare needs. Documentation time to complete a note takes 20-30 minutes on average. This needs to be taken into consideration in the current rate study as it is not reflected correctly in the previous one.

d. Program prep: To meet HCBS needs with making individualized connection in the community takes more prep time outside of billing hours. The last rate study is short in this line item.

e. Transportation: Fuel prices have sky rocketed since the last study and need to be updated in the rates so individuals can access the community when bus systems are not always an option. Following HCBS philosophy it is crucial we can afford to get the individuals out in the community to explore volunteer and career options. Providers want to steer away from larger vans/group outings which is also desired in the HCBS philosophy of community integration... so smaller vehicles are need. However, this means more vehicles, thus more fuel.

f. Utility costs: Prices for electricity have sky rocked and even with decreasing facility sizes and being out in the community for larger percentages of time there is still sophisticated skill development that takes place at the center, which is costly.

g. Programing absentee rates have been unpredictable and high due to illness, pandemic fall out, and NET transportation issues. This needs to be reexamined.

h. Provider administration costs need to be looked at. HCBS compliance needs take an enormous amount of administrative time. We are now required to track Competitive Integrated Employment on all individuals, use mapping tools, and many other aspects that are extremely time consuming...but recognized by the provider and state as important.

Sincerely,
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