

OPWDD Statewide Respite Focus Group

Region 1 Respite Improvement Work Plan

Region 1 stakeholders and regional office staff have continued efforts to make improvements to and expand capacity of respite service delivery. Over the last three years, stakeholders have been actively involved in reporting on the barriers they face in providing adequate, efficient and appropriate services to individuals and families. Surveys have been conducted and tracking methods implemented to gather data to better understand the unmet need/capacity of the region. Initiatives have been developed to specifically target recruitment, onboarding and training of staff, and to address unmet need by pooling staff resources/merging agency waitlists.

Staff Training

A pilot project has been underway to implement a customized staff training curriculum. It is recognized that the agency training process can often be extensive, and require training on content that is not applicable to the work of respite. Decreasing training time would allow an opportunity to open the doors to critical target audiences; those looking for part time work to supplement a full-time job, those attending college, or others who may have limited time to dedicate to an agency's full training and orientation process.

A specialized training curriculum has been developed, that covers all necessary training topics to allow for a respite staff to begin work. This curriculum would serve as the respite "core" training. The intent is for this "core" training to be universally accepted among all provider agencies, to allow the staff to work at multiple agencies. Once the "core" training is completed, the staff would follow up with the hiring agency to be trained on agency or individual specific material that may apply.

A google docs platform has been identified to host this online training. Careful consideration has been made to ensure that this online format will be as effective as an in-person training. The use of the same curriculum by each agency will ensure fidelity to the model. Test questions have been developed following each module to verify understanding and retention of the content. A training certificate will be generated upon completion, and the results will be maintained on a master spreadsheet for use by training administrators.

This training curriculum has been reviewed by OPWDD DQI. Recommendation was made by DQI for the curriculum to also be reviewed by OPWDD Counsel's Office. Once Counsel's Office reviews and approves of the curriculum, Region 1 respite provider agencies can begin utilizing the new "core" training. It is imperative that this step be completed, in order to address the barriers with staff training.

[Click here to view the Respite Focus Group's Training website.](#)

In the Driver's Seat Support Staff Registry

A Support Staff Registry, the first of its kind in Region One, has been developed utilizing the *In the Driver's Seat* website. This registry acts as a web based platform to connect individuals, families and support staff. It allows for families/individuals to become linked with staff that can support their specific needs, and creates an opportunity for staff looking for part time work as a respite provider to post their availability to provide the service. This two-way registry is intended to enhance networking capabilities, and increase access to resources. New users have been signing up for the registry every week. Currently,

Attachment 1

there are 117 people signed up; 31 staff looking for work, and 96 families looking for respite. A survey is currently being conducted to gather data regarding how many successful matches have been made. Improvements are being made to the registry to enhance searching abilities.

In the Driver's Seat was recently awarded \$100,000 from Senator Ort's Office to customize and expand their website. This grant will allow for the opportunity to develop additional tools and resources to support individuals and families in Region 1 and across NYS in becoming effectively linked with services. Within the last month, the number of website views has increased by 117%, with most views being directly to the Support Staff Registry.

Onboarding Staff

A significant part of the respite staff hiring process includes completion of background checks. The various background checks are necessary and imperative for staff to provide services to individuals with developmental disabilities, yet time intensive. Currently, if staff choose to work at more than one agency, they must go through the same background checks through each agency, which is duplicative. In efforts to increase staff viability, and create opportunity for staff to work at multiple agencies, streamlining the background check process would be beneficial.

A small grant has been secured from the Tower Foundation for the services of an attorney specializing in not-for-profit law who will work with local agencies, their legal reps and counsel from the Justice Center to consider options to comply with the federal "search and retain" requirement that can also relieve some or all of the administrative burden of delay involved in duplicated background checks.

Staff Pooling/Merged Waitlists

A pilot project is being implemented to examine waitlists for respite and to pool staff across agencies to see if resources can be shared to meet the needs of families. Staff that provide respite are often affiliated with an agency and have identified days/times they can pick up respite hours or are unable to work over 40 hours for those needing respite at their agency. However, we anticipate that staff may be open to picking up additional hours through another agency or there may be individuals on another agencies waitlist that may align with the staff's available time or preferred location.

This pilot was designed to include three agencies: People Inc., The Summit Center and The Arc Erie County. These agencies will be pooling their waitlists, examining their staffing availability, and assessing if their staff can meet the needs of individuals waiting for service in other agencies. The target sample for this pilot is a minimum of 50 individuals on respite waitlists across the three agencies. A consent form as been developed, which will be completed by families if they choose to participate in the pilot. If a staff is identified for a family, the family will either be approved for service via the DDRO with the new agency or the staff will be hired through the new agency to provide the service. Agencies participating understand that they may be giving another agency a billable individual, however everyone involved is in agreement that service delivery for the family outweighs the potential billing for the agency. The hope is that more families will receive service and that with positive results more agencies across the region will express an interest in pooling resources.

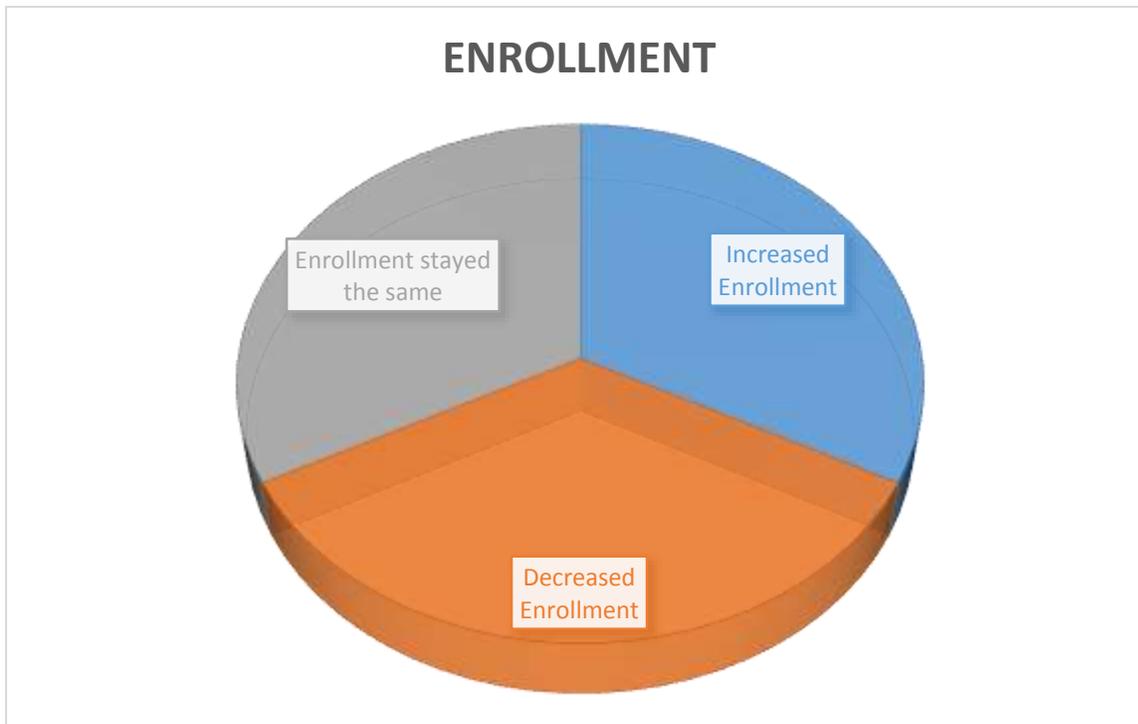
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To date, People Inc. has added 11 individuals to the combined waitlist. The Arc Erie County reported that they're on hold because of unanswered questions on whether training completed at one agency will satisfy that training requirement for a second agency and whether a common curriculum for respite training will be approved for all three. They indicated that they believe that their self-directed respite is working better precisely since the connection is faster and more focused in the hands of the individual seeking care. Summit is not moving forward because their new DSP's are being assigned to other program areas and they've had no new in-house staff applications in quite some time. Agencies were encouraged to continue to add individuals to the waitlist, with the intent that other agencies may have staff to fulfill the need. Aspire is considering participating in the pilot. Regional Office staff plan to reach out to other agencies with the hope of expanding the number of agencies involved, to improve outcomes.

Assessing the Impact of the 7/1/17 Revised Waiver Respite Rates

Since the rate changes from 7/1/17 34 out of 50 agencies were able to increase their billing. Billing increased from 4,569,081.90 to 5,480,034.41.

16 of the 50 agencies were able to increase enrollment since the rate changes.



It should also be noted that the time to receiving service decreased since the 7/1/17 rate changes. The average wait time went from 146 days to 51 days.

In regards to the Intensive Respite rate roll out it should be noted that at total of 188 individuals who were underserved or not able to be served are now able to be served in Respite.