

## Newsletter #51

### Clarification on Disability Waivers in GA (including the Katie Beckett/Deeming Waiver)

September 30, 2008

Dearest Advocates:

Things have been very busy the last few days and I have a lot more information to send out to you in the next few days but I wanted you to be aware of an important announcement from Dept. of Human Resources dated September 26, 2008. (See below)

Please note that this letter **ONLY** effects MRWP/IWCP disability waivers (that are going to be changed effective November 1, 2008 to NOW/COMP disability waivers and **NOT** Katie Beckett Deeming Waivers. Therefore, if you have the Katie Beckett/Deeming waiver this does **NOT** impact you. I hope this clarifies your concerns as I have received many emails in the last few days.

*United...We Will Make A Difference!*

Sincerely,

*Heidi*

**(Proud Mother to Jacob - 8 yrs old with Down syndrome and Jared - 7 yrs old)**

*"Help the Children Now, So They Can Help Themselves Later!"*

[www.heidijmoore.com](http://www.heidijmoore.com)



**B. J. Walker, Commissioner**  
**Gwendolyn B. Skinner, Division Director**

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Georgia Department of Human Resources • Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases  
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September 26, 2008

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Persons with Developmental Disabilities  
His or Her Family and Providers of Services

FROM: Stephen Hall, Ph.D., Director  
Office of Developmental Disabilities

RE: Exciting News! Our New Waivers Are Here November 1, 2008

**DHR Regional Offices: Please Immediately Distribute Widely to all Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Their Families and Providers of Services. If you receive this after November 27, 2008, please notify the Georgia Office of Developmental Disabilities.**

Well finally! After three years of trying, the Federal Medicaid Office (CMS) and the Georgia Department of Community Health and those of us working in the Office of Developmental Disabilities within MHDDAD have our new waivers and services ready to go live on November 1 and we have a CMS approved waiver implementation plan to transition everyone into the new services over twelve months beginning this November.

And yes, everybody will have an individual budget based on his or her needs. Providers want to know what their big budget will be for the coming year and here it is: providers can safely predict it will be almost identical to last year's budget. We have been spared cuts in services for persons in waiver services. Remember the big deal for Georgia's new Medicaid waivers is our shift from a provider-centered system to person-centered system where individual families get their son or daughter's budgets in the month that is two months before their son or daughter's birthday month. This will give persons with disabilities plenty of time to choose their providers over the next twelve months.

Of course some providers are worried about how much money there will be and whether the person and their family will still choose them. Not to worry – there has been a legislative approved increase in funds to serve persons with developmental disabilities again this year and information from the seventeen other states that now offer self-directed supports and individual budgets says that 95% of families will stay with their current provider the first year, and only 10% of families every year will choose a different provider. Good providers already understand that a system that gives the family –the customer the choice— will bring more and more families

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and the necessary funding their way. In fact, good providers can expect to grow two to three times larger from families choosing to have their allocated funds given to these good providers.

So information about each person's individual budget will flow first to the Support Coordinator who will inform the family so they can begin deciding what services will be provided in agreement with the needs identified in the person's individual service plan, and they, the family will decide how much of the money goes to which providers that they choose. This turns the Developmental Disability system into a much more free American system where families are in charge of service and funding rather than the money going from the government to a provider and then the family having to go there to find out how much they got. I know this

new way of doing business empowering families will make some providers nervous, but if you are a good provider you have nothing at all to worry about. They will still choose you.

Despite telling good providers that they can stop worrying about the money, worrying if families will choose them, some providers will still be worried. Again, good providers have nothing in the world to worry about. Mediocre providers probably do. Families will look out after their own son and daughter's best interests and they will make sure that the taxpayer's dollars they are using go to those providers that can do their son or daughter the most good.

We have conducted over 54 community forums and have spoken in person to more than 9000 families directly about these changes. And while an overwhelming number of persons with disabilities and their families love and will love these changes, as do most providers of services, there are some, some even good providers who are afraid they are going to lose funds to provide services. They must not be! In fact most providers will experience no change but receive the potential for increased funding, that is if the family chooses them to do all of their son or daughter's services.

This is an exciting time for Georgians receiving these new individually funded waivers based on each person's exact need, but not everybody wins.

Taxpayers win because their money is used to meet the exact needs of the individual person through individual allocation to meet that particular person's exact needs. Families win because so many things that were not possible for their loved ones to be supported in the community during the day, in the evenings, and weekends are now possible in the new waivers. Providers win because good providers know what they are and will use the new funding to serve even more people. The only losers when the customer is in charge are mediocre providers that had the false security of a government contract for the money. Now it will be the families' choice.

Safeguards are already in place to ensure that only DHR regional offices approved funds go to pre-authorized vendors of services. A lot of people have to say "yes" before the public funds are used but this time the first yes comes from the person and their family.

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We will be fighting rumors and deliver on our promises to families who have fought so hard for these changes in Georgia. If you have something good to say or have a success story to tell, please share it with everyone. Nobody knows everything and we will make some mistakes in this month by month transition. We will stay in touch through our new website and as always by direct communication in your local communities. November 2008 through October 2009, the new Developmental Disability waiver transition months are truly great days for Georgians with developmental disabilities.