

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Designing a Peer Mentor Program For Clients in State-Operated Intermediate Care Facilities

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5092
Part II Community Services
Section 203 G Page 139 IV ii

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Developmental Disabilities Administration
Office of the Assistant Secretary
PO Box 45310
Olympia, WA 98504-5310
360.407.1500
www.dshs.wa.gov/dda

Transforming Lives

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2021-2023 Washington state biennial budget appropriates funds to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) to develop and implement a peer mentor program that will connect each state-operated intermediate care facility resident with a peer mentor to assist transition planning.

“Peer” means another person with an intellectual disability. “Transition” refers to the resident’s move from an intermediate care facility to a more appropriate residential setting, either in the community or in a smaller facility.

The peer mentors will use their experience to inform and support the resident’s transition. Program development is underway with a targeted service implementation date of July 1, 2022. Neither additional legislation nor additional appropriation are requested at this time.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, a stakeholder workgroup facilitated by the William D. Ruckelshaus Center produced a report to the Legislature entitled [Rethinking Intellectual and Developmental Disability Policy to Empower Clients, Develop Providers, and Improve Services](#). The report recognizes the success of the Family Mentor Program and suggests that it should be expanded to connect each client in a state-operated intermediate care facility with a mentor. In 2020, the Legislature passed ESSB 6419, which created a joint executive/legislative taskforce to implement the 2019 report’s recommendations.

Based on recommendations from developmental disability self-advocates, the joint taskforce endorsed adding a peer mentorship component to the Family Mentor Program. The Legislature later passed ESSB 5092, which appropriates \$46,000 of the general fund state appropriation in fiscal year 2022, \$46,000 of the general fund state appropriation in fiscal year 2023, and \$280,000 of the general fund to implement the program. This is in addition to the existing funding of \$137,000 general fund state per year.

The Family Mentor Program succeeds by supporting families and guardians during a family member’s transition from a Residential Habilitation Center to the community. Each family mentor is a relative of an individual with developmental disabilities. The family mentors are independent contractors, not state employees. In much the same way, the peer mentors would be contracted to support an intermediate care facility client through the decision-making process and the subsequent transition.

PROJECT STATUS

- 1) **Timing.** To ensure program success, DDA will implement the peer mentor program once the staffing crisis caused by COVID-19 has subsided and community residential service providers are in a better position to accept new clients.
- 2) **Contractor query.** DDA queried existing contractors to determine whether they would be interested in partnering with the administration to implement the peer mentor program. At the time of the inquiry, the three contractors who historically had helped implement the Family Mentor Program expressed no interest.
- 3) **Key performance indicators.** DDA is drawing on its knowledge of the factors that contribute to the success of the Family Mentor Program to establish key performance indicators that will be incorporated into the request for proposal/qualifications and the service contract. DDA is paying particular attention to the importance of meeting each client's needs through person-centered service delivery.
- 4) **Request for proposal/qualifications.** DDA is working with DSHS Central Contracts and Legal Services - Facilities, Finance, and Analytics Administration to complete the request for proposal/qualifications process to find a suitable contractor. DDA estimates it will take four to nine months to secure a contractor.
- 5) **Contract development.** DDA is working with DSHS Central Contracts and Legal Services - Facilities, Finance, and Analytics Administration to draft an appropriate service contract.
- 6) **Phased implementation.** To maximize program success, DDA will direct a phased implementation of the program. Starting with one state-operated intermediate care facility and then proceeding to other facilities will allow DDA and the contractor to learn from the initial introduction of the program and adapt accordingly.
- 7) **Funding.** DDA will continue to use available Roads to Community Living (sometimes called "money-follows-the-person") grant funds to augment the legislative appropriation.

CONCLUSION

DDA has made progress toward designing an effective and sustainable peer mentor program for state-operated intermediate care facility residents. A program implementation target of July 1, 2022 has been set. Establishing a peer mentor program is an important step toward implementing the 2019 [report](#) and the work of the joint executive/legislative taskforce under ESSB 6419.

But more importantly, this work reflects the voice of developmental disability self-advocates and will ensure their continued presence in the transition process. As the state transforms its system of residential services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities, the voice of these advocates will remain essential to fostering partnerships that empower people to live the lives they want.