

From: Tom McAlvanah

Sent: Wednesday, April 8, 2020

Subject: OPWDD COVID-19 Update

Good evening,

Let's begin today's update with the good news that OPWDD's Appendix K Waiver was approved. See below attachment.

As with most CMS formatted agreements, the language is technical. It is also broad with much detail to be interpreted, and needs to be read more than once, or twice.

As Kate Marlay explained, this Waiver allows for the ability to conduct Day Services in alternate sites (a residence, person's home, anywhere). The calculation of the retainer day 80% will be based on the 6 month period, 7/19 through 12/19. Respite services and Community Hab are part of this Waiver and can be conducted in other settings. Unfortunately, SEMP is not included. All were disappointed on the phone, so strategies for SEMP will need to be discussed by the providers and brought back. Kate did lament that they could not get a more expansive program for services like SEMP. Other parts of the Waiver language include waivers of some of the DSP training requirements.

We hope to get more guidance on tomorrow afternoon's Day Program Retainer Day Services Webinar at 2PM. Hope you are registered.

Prior to the Appendix K discussion, a couple of family members brought up the unresolved issue of the Visitation guidance for a companion during a Hospitalization stay for individuals who require intensive levels of advocacy and/or supervision. The resolution at this point is still on a case by case basis with a revised policy in the not too distant future. Not everyone was satisfied.

Another rather intense discussion between a family member and the Commissioner revolved around the topic of data. The Commissioner referred to the number of people who have confirmed cases of the virus, 1,100 out of the 140,000 people supported by OPWDD. The number of deaths is 105, less than 1% of the total population. The challenge to that data point is the number of deaths out of the number contracting the virus (considering the health complication for many people with disabilities) and the fact that the data can be skewed considering the amount of cases in the downstate area. When you then consider the amount of people who are symptomatic but remain untested, it suggests another level of suspicion about any release of data. No resolution followed.

Finally, as Kevin Valenichis once again stated that DOB was working on the increase to the supervised IRA rates, questions were raised about 2% cuts planned for July 1.

As Kevin spoke to OPW's spending plan, it left many unsatisfied.

At this point in the conversation, and I do not usually mention names, Margaret Puddington spoke up and referred to the efforts being made by agencies to enhance pay for staff to come to work during the health crisis and the expenses they are incurring for purchasing their own PPEs. She stated that their "good faith" efforts should require a policy and be considered a priority.

The response was "Understood."

Thanks again Margaret!