



News Updates:

OPWDD Solicits Letters of Intent to Become a DISCO

OPWDD is initiating a process to establish the first specialized managed care organizations to provide supports and services to individuals with developmental disabilities. These entities, known as **Developmental Disabilities Individual Support and Care Coordination Organizations (DISCOs)**, will begin operations in early 2014. DISCO operations will be governed by Article 44 of the New York State (NYS) Public Health Law, and will be responsible for providing individualized care coordination and long-term supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities who voluntarily enroll.

To begin the process, OPWDD invites eligible organizations to indicate their intention to apply to become DISCOs, or to provide specialized developmental disabilities services through an existing managed care organization, by submitting a [letter of intent](#). Letters of intent should inform OPWDD of:

- The board membership of the responding organization;
- Whether the potential applicant will be a DISCO, a managed long-term care plan or a mainstream managed care plan; and
- The counties in New York State in which the entity intends to operate.

OPWDD will provide detailed information on Medicaid services for individuals with developmental disabilities to organizations that submit letters of intent. Letters of intent should be submitted by the close of business on May 3, 2013 to People.First@opwdd.ny.gov or by mail to:

Commissioner Courtney Burke
NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, NY 12229

Later this spring, OPWDD will formally solicit DISCO applications through a request for applications (RFA). Additional information about the anticipated DISCO application process can be found in the [draft RFA](#) on OPWDD's [People First Waiver resources page](#). OPWDD will finalize and post the final RFA in the weeks ahead.

Medicaid Service Data is now Available

OPWDD has made Medicaid service data on services provided to individuals with developmental disabilities available on the [People First Waiver webpage](#). This information has been provided for informational purposes only, to assist nonprofit service providers in preparing for the transition of the service system to a managed care infrastructure. **In May, OPWDD will hold a statewide videoconference to explain how to use the data and describe the additional data that will be provided to those organizations considering submitting an application to operate a DISCO.**

New Video Explains the Coordinated Assessment System

OPWDD has created a new video that will help individuals, families, and providers understand the new **Coordinated Assessment System (CAS)**, highlighting how it will improve supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities. The seven-minute video provides information on important features of the new assessment method and features a trained assessment specialist demonstrating an assessment in an individual's home. To view the video, please visit www.opwdd.ny.gov/node/2529.



OPWDD's Transformation Agreement

OPWDD and the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have identified a series of shared goals that will improve opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities in the areas of employment, integrated living, and self-direction of services. These goals are captured in a [transformation agreement](#) which OPWDD released in early April. In it, OPWDD has committed to:

- Transitioning at least 30% of the individuals moving out of institutional settings into private homes or residences of fewer than four unrelated individuals;
- Establishing a strategy for increasing supportive housing options, and a timeline for the transitioning of residents of intermediate care facilities to community settings;
- Increasing the number of individuals in competitive employment by 700 within one year; and
- Educating stakeholders to increase the number of individuals who self-direct some or all of their supports and services to 5,000 by the end of 2015.

To support the transformation agreement, OPWDD will receive additional funding and technical assistance through CMS's **Balancing Incentives Program**. This program provides funding to states that make structural reforms to increase access to non-institutional long-term supports and services. OPWDD will also participate in New York's **Money Follows the Person** demonstration, which provides federal funds to transition people who wish to leave institutional settings into community settings. OPWDD will make regular reports to CMS and its stakeholders on its progress toward achieving the **transformation agreement** goals and milestones.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is the People First Waiver still on track to establish DISCOs in 2013?

A: OPWDD and NYS Department of Health submitted the People First waiver applications to federal CMS on April 1, 2013. OPWDD expects to establish contracts with pilot DISCOs in late 2013. Voluntary enrollment of individuals in the pilot DISCOs may occur in early 2014.

Q: Will DISCOs actually be able to achieve a robust network of providers in rural areas?

A: OPWDD will require DISCOs to demonstrate the adequacy of their networks to meet the anticipated needs of enrolled members. Specifically, a DISCO must meet the standards required by 42 CFR 438.206 for availability of services; 42 CFR 438.207 for assurances of adequate capacity; and applicable sections of Mental Hygiene Law, Public Health Law and regulations. Each DISCO must have a minimum of two providers that are accepting new enrollees in each county in its service area for each type of service, unless the county has an insufficient number of providers available. When service providers are not available, DISCOs will be subject to regulations that prescribe procedures and circumstances for providing "out of network" services. In addition, service providers must be geographically accessible for the enrolled population. Acceptable travel times will be described in the DISCO contract. Exceptions will be allowed in cases where the needs of the person require service delivery from a provider with specialized skills and that provider is not located in the service area.

Join the People First Waiver Mailing List

Receive notice of new developments related to the People First Waiver! Join the People First Waiver Mailing List at www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_services_supports/people_first_waiver/home.

People First Waiver Information:

Webpage: www.opwdd.ny.gov/opwdd_services_supports/people_first_waiver/home

Email: People.First@opwdd.ny.gov

Comment Line: 1-866-946-9733 or TTY: 1-866-933-4889