



*Serving individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities in
Clay, Geary, Pottawatomie, and Riley counties in Kansas.*

TO: Senator Beverly Gossage, Chair and Committee Members
2023 Special Committee on Intellectual and Developmental Disability Waiver
Kansas Legislature
300 SW10th Street
Topeka, Ks. 66612

FROM: Lori B. Feldkamp, President & CEO

DATE: July 26, 2023

RE: Funding Needs for IDD Service Providers

Big Lakes provides services and supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Riley, Geary, Pottawatomie and Clay Counties in Kansas. Our mission is to deliver quality services that promote choice, independence and inclusion for persons with IDD. In 2023, we are celebrating 50 years of service to our communities.

Before outlining our current situation, I must thank you. Thank you for the 25% increase in IDD Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) funding in 2022. With these funds, we were able to increase our starting pay for new Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) from \$12.50 to \$16.00 per hour and the pay of our experienced DSPs \$3.50 more per hour. This increase was truly needed in order for IDD providers to begin to address the severe workforce shortage in this field. Without your support, this would not have happened, so THANK YOU!

Increasing our rate of reimbursement services in 2022 was a BIG first step in stabilizing the financial health and workforce resources of the IDD service system. However, funding adequacy has not yet been achieved to ensure a strong service system with provider choice for individuals with IDD in the future. Due to the urgency of the workforce crisis, all the funds we received in 2022 went towards wage increases while other operational expenses such as employee benefits, client transportation, facility maintenance, etc. continue to be neglected.

While significant progress has been made on recruitment and retention, additional resources are still needed to keep up with the workforce market and inflation. In the first quarter of 2022, we had 47 direct support openings. As of today, we have 30 direct support openings. While this is an improvement, we are still needing to cover over 1,000 of open hours on the schedule each week through overtime and other creative solutions to ensure the health and safety of those we serve. Eighteen of our DSP staff are averaging over 50 hours a week; 9 of the 18 have averaged 60+ hours per week since January. This model cannot be sustained as employees get burned out causing increased turnover of experienced DSPs.

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Regular increases to IDD HCBS reimbursement rates must be planned and implemented based on the costs to provide quality services and inflationary factors that drive those costs. Failure to do so will place IDD providers' right back where we were when we went nearly a decade without any increases at all. The IDD service system will not survive without periodic rate increases to ensure a stable system of supports for people with IDD. A stable service system is absolutely necessary if there is any hope of eliminating the waiting list which now numbers over 5,000 people in Kansas.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns regarding services and supports. I am willing to help in any manner I can to help develop a reasonable and predictable funding model we can all depend on to ensure quality services for people with IDD.