



agency for persons with disabilities
State of Florida

Overview of “iBudget Florida” Plan

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) faces several challenges:

- Funding of services is difficult to manage within a complex system, leading to budget deficits.
- Cost controls to address deficits have limited consumer choice and made the system more complex.
- Because of deficits, funds have not been available to serve the wait list.

The Legislature required APD to submit a plan by Feb. 1, 2010, for implementing individual budgets. The goals for individual budgets, or “iBudgets”, are to:

- Simplify the system and
- Enhance self-direction, equity, and sustainability.

Several other states use individual budgeting approaches, and the federal government is encouraging other states to do so. APD conducted significant research and public outreach efforts to develop the plan. APD also co-hosted a stakeholders’ group with the Family Care Council Florida to get stakeholder input.

Elements of the iBudget Florida system are:

- Use of a formula, or algorithm, to set consumers’ budget amounts. Similar consumers would get similar amounts, while those with greater needs would get greater amounts.
 - Developed by a Ph.D.-level statistician, it models funding patterns from the years before the tier waiver system (FY06-07 and FY07-08) was implemented with an R^2 of .67.
 - The proposed algorithm considers a consumer’s age, living setting, and some results from a needs assessment instrument, the Questionnaire for Situational Information (QSI).
 - Alternate methods would determine funding for those with extraordinary needs who won’t fit the model and for those with changed or one-time needs using funds reserved for those purposes. Actuaries would advise APD on the amounts to reserve. Requests for additional funding would have to meet stringent criteria and require thorough review.
 - The total amount of iBudgets and reserved funds would be calculated to fit the agency’s appropriation for waiver services.
- Increased consumer choice among services. All services would be available to all consumers, rather than some consumers accessing only a limited array.
- Eliminating the current prior service authorization process and replacing it with a streamlined service review process. Consumers would have more flexibility to respond to changing needs faster and with less bureaucracy.
- Refocusing the waiver support coordinator’s role on supporting self-direction and obtaining additional community supports to augment waiver paid supports.
- Enhancing the agency’s quality assurance and improvement process.

Federal government approval would be required before APD could proceed. APD would then begin an initial phase-in in Fall 2010 involving a small number of consumers in a limited geographic area. After collecting data to evaluate the implementation and outcomes and refining the program, APD would begin statewide expansion in Fall 2011.

Considerations include:

- Every waiver-enrolled consumer would have his or her budget determined through the iBudget system and thus each consumer would have an individual limit on the amount expended for services. Those in the Consumer-Directed Care Plus (CDC+) program would spend their iBudget according to CDC+ policies, while everyone else would spend according to iBudget policies.
- Compared to their current cost plans, some consumers' budgets would increase, some would decrease, and some would stay about the same. APD proposes a gradual phase-in of budget amounts over time.
- Consumers may need to prioritize which needs are paid for under the waiver and find community resources to help address others. With less paperwork, waiver support coordinators will be better able to help consumers do so.
- Individual budgets will not precisely tailor funding to a consumer's needs. No algorithm can, given the many factors that affect individuals' needs and the challenge of measuring them and including them as variables in a formula. However, the new system would allow consumers to more precisely tailor services to their needs.

Benefits to consumers and their families include:

- Greater ability to choose services that matter to them.
- Greater flexibility for consumers to respond to changing needs.
- Reduced bureaucracy and "red tape."
- Support coordinators freed to focus on providing help that makes a real difference.
- Confidence that their funding is fair compared to other consumers who are similarly situated.
- Reduced likelihood of policy changes that cause significant disruption due to budget deficits.
- Security of a financially stable system that will be there to serve them down the road.
- Greater opportunity for the Agency to use new funds to serve the wait list and fairly meet consumers' changed needs rather than resolve deficits.

The State of Florida will benefit from:

- Predictable APD spending that is within the Agency's budget.
- A system which requires less Legislative intervention.
- Having greater information about the needs of APD consumers who are waiting for waiver services and the funding required to serve them.
- Consumers and families who are more satisfied with the system of care.