

Meeting summary for ID/DD Member Call (01/31/2024)

Quick recap

Debbie Jenkins discussed the HCDS ARBA workforce grants, outlining seven categories of projects being considered for funding. She mentioned that a recording of a recent webinar on the grant application process may be added to their website. Debbie Jenkins also touched on the ARPA funds, emphasizing that these funds cannot be used for DSP wages, increases, or retention bonuses.

Summary

HCDS ARBA Workforce Grants Webinar Discussion

Debbie Jenkins discussed the HCDS ARBA workforce grants, sharing details about a recent webinar on the grant application process. She highlighted seven different categories of projects that the department is considering for funding, including DSP personal and professional support networks, director of operations and frontline supervisor mentoring programs, DSP-focused organizational culture, awareness campaigns, and maximizing positive relationships. Debbie also mentioned that the department may add a recording of the webinar to their website and that she had requested the slides from the webinar.

Seventh Bucket Project Funding Available

Debbie Jenkins discussed the seventh bucket, Re, which is for projects submitted by people with different ideas. She shared that the Request for Applications (RFA) is available on the department's website, detailing the project period from February 1st to December 30th of 2024. The funds must be spent by March 31st, 2021. Applications will be kept open until either all funds are exhausted or June 30th of this year. Applicants can expect to hear back within 10 business days, and projects will be reviewed on a first-come-first-serve basis. Debbie Jenkins emphasized that these funds cannot be used for DSP wages, increases, or retention bonuses, and any activities that can be funded through other sources cannot be included in the applications.

ARPA Funds and Direct Support Professional Compensation

Debbie Jenkins discussed the ARPA funds, which are not considered Federal funds and therefore will not be included in any Federal grants. This means that these funds will not trigger a single audit. She also highlighted the need to ensure that the project benefits both the entire workforce and home and community-based services, as per the ARPA fund requirements. Debbie also shared the 2022 Direct Support Professional Compensation Survey Summary, explaining its significance for providers of home and community-based services.

Provider Compliance and Employee Retention Concerns

Debbie Jenkins expressed concerns about provider compliance with reporting requirements, as 440 out of 1,483 providers failed to respond to a survey. She emphasized the importance of retaining employees beyond the first three months to reduce turnover, as 71% of those leaving the DSP job were there for less than a year. Debbie Jenkins also discussed a report on agency benefits, funding, vacancy rates, and turnover percentages. She noted that larger agencies offered more benefits, wages and total compensation had grown from 2020 to 2022, and providers were paying staff more than what reimbursement was providing. Debbie Jenkins highlighted a correlation between wage and turnover rates and mentioned a decrease in the number of people being served by 44% of agencies.

DSP Percentages and Medicaid Access Rule Discussed

Debbie Jenkins presented a report on Dsp percentages, noting that 55% of responding agencies had either the same or more Dsp compared to the previous year, while 45% had seen a decrease. She also mentioned that CMS had sent the Medicaid Access Final Rule to OMB for review, suggesting that changes might be coming soon. Debbie expressed concern over the proposed Medicaid access rule from CMS, which suggests that 80% of Medicaid reimbursement should be used for direct care worker wages. She highlighted the lack of clarity in the definition of "direct care" and the potential impact on the current rate model. Other topics discussed included an upcoming free webinar on the Department of Labor's independent contractor rule and updates on Anchor's national awards.

Third Award Category and Recertification

Debbie Jenkins discussed the third award category, which recognizes an organization or business that supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She mentioned that nominations for this award are open and encouraged interested parties to contact her for more details. Later in the meeting, Melissa raised a concern about recertification and its impact on ISP authorizations. Gina Kerman shared her own experience of certification being held up, suggesting this might be the issue Melissa was facing. The team agreed to investigate further.

Next steps

- Debbie will follow up on the ARPA workforce grants and share the link to the RFA in the news bytes on Friday.
- Debbie will reach out to the department to find out why counties are not authorizing ISPs beyond March.

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