

State Agency Promising Practice

TOPIC:
Funding and
Service Contracting

Pennsylvania: Using Funding to Improve Integrated Employment Services

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Project Background

The Impact of State Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Agency Employment Contracting Methods and Service Payment Rates on Employment for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston. The goal of this project is to explore how state IDD agencies' contracting and payment methods supported the use of innovative employment services, access to assistive technology, or improvements in the employment services workforce to ensure access to high-quality employment services. To explore this topic, we have selected eight states whose IDD agency and/or Medicaid Authority developed and implemented financing strategies that reflect the factors of interest.

Introduction

During the COVID-19 public health emergency Pennsylvania's intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) agency modified its approach toward providing services in the community and the mechanism for funding those services. Among myriad other changes, the state adopted the use of teleservices, remote supports, and assistive technology. This state profile analysis aims to offer an understanding of the changes to Pennsylvania's financing structures, payment models, and the integration of technology in facilitating remote employment services.

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State Initiatives and Strategic Implementation

Use of Supplemental Federal Dollars

Pennsylvania used Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support supplemental payments for community participation and employment services. Specifically, these funds were used to address recruitment, retention, and infection control improvements. Trends in service use data showed that Pennsylvania was able to stabilize the provision of employment and community participation services by introducing supplemental payments to support workforce recruitment and retention.

Modifications for Remote Services

Additionally, the state took advantage of flexibility offered through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Pennsylvania implemented Appendix K amendments to their Home and Community Based Waivers that included the use of remote or "teleservice" employment support services. By allowing services to be delivered remotely, the state ensured continuous support for people with IDD.

To ensure that the state was able to implement remote service delivery, Pennsylvania made modifications to payment methods and developed detailed guidelines for teleservices, covering aspects from employment support to case



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management. Additionally, Pennsylvania facilitated access to technology for people with IDD and their service providers. Funds that covered costs associated with remote services ensured they remained uninterrupted and accessible.

Long-Term Plans to Improve Financing and Contracting

Pennsylvania also continued to plan for future improvements to their financing and contracting systems during the public health emergency. For example, they developed the competitive integrated employment pay-for-performance with milestone one payments for reporting as a first step toward developing a value-based payment system for people with IDD receiving residential services. This shift signifies a move toward incentivizing service providers based on outcomes rather than the quantity of services provided to an individual.

Impact

The shift to teleservices and remote services and the use of technology brought several benefits, including increased independence for people with IDD and enhanced flexibility in service delivery for providers. Feedback from the community highlighted the value of this type of service delivery for maintaining service continuity during the public health emergency and in offering potential long-term benefits for more personalized and accessible support.

Recognizing the additional financial burden placed on service providers during the transition to remote services, Pennsylvania offered supplemental recovery payments. Pennsylvania's financial support for additional costs, such as assistive technology, has been paramount in enabling remote services. The comprehensive recovery and expansion payment information for community participation and employment service providers have ensured that essential services remain accessible. People with IDD and providers have experienced significant benefits from these initiatives, including increased access to services, enhanced flexibility, and the continuity of support during the pandemic.

Challenges, Opportunities, and Future Directions

Looking ahead, Pennsylvania strategic planning for the continuation of teleservices, remote services and technology supports post-pandemic demonstrates a long-term vision that includes building systems capacity. Pennsylvania is committed to sustaining and further developing remote services and supports and has made structure changes to waiver service definitions. The state's strategic planning includes continuous evaluation of remote service models, ensuring that they align with the evolving needs of people with IDD and the broader goals of the IDD service system.

Conclusion

Through strategic financial planning, innovative payment models, and the effective integration of technology, Pennsylvania has developed a responsive framework for using financing and contracting methods to improve employment outcomes for people with IDD. By adapting funding structures, and focusing on outcomes, Pennsylvania has not only navigated the challenges posed by COVID-19 but also laid the groundwork for a more flexible, effective, and inclusive service delivery model. As Pennsylvania continues to refine its approach, its experience offers valuable lessons for other states looking to enhance their support for people with IDD in the workforce.



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