



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Investing in Arizona's Future: Ensuring Support for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

PHOENIX - (November 29, 2022) The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and its state and federal partners have invested funds to support the provider community and bolster the services available for individuals with developmental disabilities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to today. Additionally, DDD and its partners have worked to ensure services for members through service improvements and flexibilities implemented throughout the federal Public Health Emergency (PHE).

Through funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the State General Fund, vendors who provide critical services and supports to individuals with developmental disabilities are able to retain and recruit Direct Support Professionals, improve and expand services, address rising costs and more.

"By investing in our service providers who work directly with DDD members and their families, we are investing in the health, safety and future of individuals with developmental disabilities," said DES Director Michael Wisheart. "We'd like to thank Governor Ducey and members of the Arizona Legislature for recognizing the importance of resources needed in order to support our provider community."

- The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) recently received federal approval to allocate one-time funding to recruit and retain a knowledgeable and well-trained workforce as part of its ARPA spending plan. To date, DDD has distributed two ARPA-Directed Payments to Qualifying Vendors totaling \$259.1 million.
- During the 2022 Arizona Legislative Session, Governor Doug Ducey and the Legislature took action to increase provider rates by 8-16% for Qualified Vendors serving members of DDD and the Arizona Early Intervention Program (AzeIP) through the State Fiscal Year 2023 budget. The rate increases went into effect October 1, 2022.
- During the 2021 Arizona Legislative Session, Governor Ducey and the Legislature also increased rates paid to Qualified Vendors for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), which serve DDD members in their own homes or communities, and not in a facility or isolated setting.
- Governor Ducey and the legislature also invested in services for AzeIP families, permanently increasing provider rates for AzeIP by 21%. This investment improves upon

the temporary rate increase DES was able to support through late FY 2022 and early FY 2023. The rate increase aims to improve services and outcomes for children by addressing the increasing service costs, provider turnover, and caseload size. The enhanced rates also address the gap between therapy rates paid by DDD and AzEIP.

DES and its state and federal partners will continue to seize every opportunity to support the network of service providers that care for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Improvements and Flexibilities in Services During the Public Health Emergency

DDD and its provider community have worked collaboratively to ensure access to services for members throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future. In partnership with AHCCCS and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), DDD was able to implement flexibilities for members, their families and service providers, including:

- Virtual planning meetings for all members
- Allowing for parents to be paid providers for their minor children
- Home delivered meals for eligible members
- Telehealth services for therapies, day programs and employment services
- Services to support remote learning

All flexibilities will continue through the federal Public Health Emergency (PHE). However, after the expiration of the PHE, parents of minor children will still be allowed to be paid providers in accordance with ARPA. Additionally, DDD will continue home-delivered meals, and as a result of recently enacted legislation, telehealth services will remain an option for DDD members.

“The DDD Team has worked diligently to ensure critical services are provided to our members and their families,” said DES Director Michael Wisehart. “We are grateful for the collaboration with AHCCCS, CMS and the provider community as we strive to deliver quality services while keeping the health and safety of members and staff at the forefront of our minds.”

In order to support providers during challenging times, DDD issued value-based payments that enabled them to purchase supplies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, as well as to incentivize direct support professionals to secure staffing levels to meet the needs of our members. Enhanced rates were available for group home providers supporting members who tested positive for COVID-19 in order to offset increased costs for staffing, cleaning/sanitizing, and additional mitigation strategies.

Through these partnerships and investments, DDD and the provider community can ensure that members are given opportunities to live self-directed, healthy and meaningful lives. For more information about DDD and its services, [visit our website](#).

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