

# Waiting List Update from the Office of Developmental Programs

By Patty McCool, ODP

We are pleased to tell you that the waiting list initiative for 2007-2008 served 96% of the 3007 people who were targeted to receive services by the end of June, 2008. These people were recent graduates and people on the emergency and critical PUNS list, who needed non-residential services. Since funds were allocated for the last six months of the year, the bulk of the work to accomplish this occurred within those six months. That timetable put pressure on families to make decisions, file paperwork and begin services quickly.

As you may have heard, we did not use all the budgeted money in the initiative last year. The time needed to get people enrolled in the waiver, to work with families on Individual Support Plans and to get commitments from providers for the appropriate services contributed to a slow start for many services. However, be assured that we have had our regional program managers checking to see that the annualized funds allocated for this year are encumbered and being spent.

In administering the waiting list initiative last year, we learned a lot about the ability of our various data systems to provide the information we needed to monitor progress. We learned, for example, that it was difficult to track progress via PUNS data, because the process for

removing someone from PUNS was not clear enough. We are now working on modifications to the PUNS process to address how it is to be used in the future.

During last year, we made great progress toward transitioning our payment system to direct payment of providers by the state. As we complete the transition this year, we know that we will be able to access data about payments for service. This data will allow us to track whether people are getting the services that are in their Individual Support Plans. Until this transition is complete, we can only assess this on an individual basis.

In addition to the people we tracked in the portion of the initiative that targeted graduates and non-residential services, we served additional people who needed group home placement and people aging out of residential services. This represents additional people served via last year's waiting list initiative.

The waiting list continued to add people, even as we moved people into services. The PUNS is very fluid. People come on and leave on a daily basis. But, in spite of additions and keeping in mind that people served by the initiative may not have left the PUNS, but moved from emergency to planning or may not have left the list because some service was late to start, the PUNS list has declined from its June 30, 2007 of 21,847 by 689 to its October 31, 2008 of 21,158.

At this time, the waiting list initiative for FY 2008-2009 has not been finalized due to the unfortunate economic situation across the country and PA in particular. We remain hopeful that the initiatives will be released soon. When that occurs, ODP will move quickly with the Administrative Entities to ensure that individuals are enrolled in the appropriate waiver and begin to receive services and supports as soon as possible

Thank you for all the hard work of the PAWL to support individuals in need in PA!

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