



AADD ALASKA

MAY 2021

From you AADD President, Amanda Faulkner

AADD leadership continues to recognize the workforce that kept people safe through the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, we understand the urgency to stabilize the DSP workforce. Nationally and across Alaska businesses are desperately seeking employees and are offering huge hiring incentives. In the best of times, IDD Providers struggle to incentivize DSPs to enter the field. The current crisis compounds the fatigue and anxiety to deliver necessary services to individuals with specialized needs, AFTER a 15-month pandemic! AADD is hopeful that the State of Alaska decision to stop the enhanced unemployment benefits on June 12th and that increased Federal FMAP will be prioritized to stabilize our essential workforce.

As a result of national advocacy, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) included provisions to help address unmet needs resulting from the pandemic. One of them is a temporary, but significant, increase in federal funding for home and community-based services (HCBS). Specifically, states can receive a 10 percentage-point increase to the federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) they receive for certain Medicaid expenditures for HCBS. This "FMAP bump" is available for one year, from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

AADD is advocating on your behalf that a large portion of the FMAP go directly to HCBS Providers for workforce retention and recruitment efforts. AADD leadership provided SDS recommendations for FMAP use on May 20 and May 21, advocating that half of the funding go directly to stabilize the workforce crisis. The remaining portion was recommended to increase support to those currently on an ISW waiver, to reimburse IDD providers for unbillable costs related to transitioning an individual back to a community setting from and institution and to pilot companion services.

AADD will continue to keep you informed on the outcome for these advocacy efforts. We are tenacious, determined and working on behalf of you and the Shared Vision.

SDS UPDATE

10% FMAP Increase—CMS released Guidance on how the funds can be spent May 13th. States have 30 days to submit a plan to CMS: June 13, 2021. SDS hosted listening sessions for Aging on May 20 and IDD on May 21 that allowed AADD to provide their feedback.

Family Habilitation—SDS appreciated all of the input given in the 3 webinars on the Potential Changes to Residential Habilitation to differentiate between Group Homes and Family Habilitation Homes. Steve Lutsky is compiling the input. SDS is committed to another round of feedback before moving forward with a plan. AADD submitted a letter with multiple recommendations:

- ⇒ Grandfather approval for Group Home providers that own the home
- ⇒ Allow providers to become the Organized Health Care oversight Entity for Family Habilitation Homes
- ⇒ Increase the Family Habilitation Home rate
- ⇒ Define "live-in" staff and ensure different staffing models are available for group homes

Companion Services—SDS supports the concept of Companion Services. Multiple stakeholder groups supported a pilot project of Companion Services utilizing the 10% FMAP increase.

May 25 Lawmakers approved the nomination of Chiquita Brooks-LaSure as administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Brooks-LaSure, served at CMS during the Obama administration and is the first Black woman and the third consecutive female to lead the agency.

Face2Face Feedback

This is the input on AADD's Strategic Priorities from the membership :

Group #1: System Alignment

- *Plan a Summit with SDS*
- *Conversation with regional CMS staff about possible flexibilities, examples from other states*
- *Encourage providers to embed Vision in daily practice – in job descriptions, in training, etc.*

Group #2: Outreach & Education

- *Support operational funds for self-advocacy groups*
- *Include Vision in new employee orientation and at staff meetings*
- *Create mini-workshops for target audiences*

Group #3: DSP Workforce

- *Build on previous work around certification and tiers*
- *SOC code – figure out what's the next step*
- *Advocate for living wage*

Group #4: Institution to Community

- *Collect success stories*
- *Develop a handbook for parents & guardians*
- *Create a workgroup (police, doctors, CBC, SDS, care coordinators, API) to work together toward a solution*

FCC Launches Emergency Program

On May 12, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) launched the Emergency Broadband Benefit program. This program provides low-income families with discounts on broadband of \$50 per month or \$75 per month on tribal lands. Additionally, it provides a discount of up to \$100 per month for a computer or tablet.

Eligible individuals may enroll at <https://getemergencybroadband.org/>.

CALENDAR

June 1, 2021 Care Coordination— 10:30 to 11:30
June 8, 2021 DD Collaborative meeting - 1 to 4:00
June 10, 2021 Monthly AADD meeting—11—12
June 17, 2021 Compliance Group—8:30—9:30
June 17, 2021 CFO Group—10 to 100
June 24, 2021 Hot Topics—To be determined

Spotlight:

Building a DSP Marketplace

Providers are in the midst of a direct support workforce crisis – how do we turn it around?

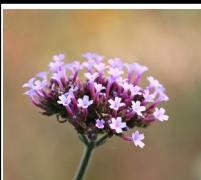
One of the tools in our toolbox is DSP Hire. DSP Hire (dsphere.com) is a web-based marketplace focused on streamlining recruitment and hiring of direct support professionals for Alaskans with disabilities. Employers can list DSP job openings for free. DSP Hire is actively marketing DSP positions statewide.

DSP Hire is not an “off-the-shelf” packaged deal. It is an evolving opportunity for Alaska-based DSP employers to design a recruitment tool that can positively impact current workforce trends.

We cannot maximize the opportunities provided by DSP Hire without the partnership of employers. Thursday May 27 AADD is hosting a Hot Topics focused on DSP Hire. Learn about several new features, current marketing and outreach efforts and future ideas.

DSP HIRE NEEDS TO HEAR FROM YOU – share your experiences, good and bad, with app developer Jake Carpenter. He has both a personal and professional commitment to positively impacting the DSP workforce market. Participate in the Hot Topics or reach out to Jake at jake@appcare.ai.

dsphere



When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.

Alexander Den Heijer

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