



January 18, 2018

To: Individuals, Families, Providers and Agencies

From: Carrie Beier, Superintendent

Welcome to 2018 and thank you for your ongoing support. I am wanting to share some information with you all, as we move through this New Year.

Over the past 4 years we have had many new exciting initiatives and mandates at the Federal and State level regarding community inclusion/integration, person centered planning, employment first and rules, etc. These initiatives and challenges are taking us and this industry down new paths and out of our comfort zones. We are aware and know the past few years have brought times of stress and challenges to those we serve, their families, providers and our hardworking staff. I hope the information below provides reassurance that while perhaps stressful and challenging, the changes we are experiencing are for the better.

As with any business, we are continually adjusting, growing, and striving to be efficient and effective in our jobs while always looking at the needs of those we serve as well as the big picture. We often face the challenge of having to make decisions that have both short and long-term effects for those we serve, our providers and our staff. Please know that we do not make decisions lightly or without great concern and consideration for everyone involved.

I am pleased to share the number of eligible individuals has nearly doubled over the past 12 years. In turn, our SSA Department has grown over the past 8 years from 9 SSA's in 2010, to 20 SSA's in 2018. Along with this growth and all the change, comes staff turnover for various reasons. We however, remain committed to recruiting and retaining the best candidates to ensure a qualified workforce for those we support.

Our most recent SSA department structure was set up to have specialized SSA's for Kids, Waivers, Individual Budgets and Transition Youth. Under this structure, families and individuals had to move from one SSA to the next based on their age. Also under this structure, adults had to move from SSA to SSA based on their funding source. While this structure may have worked effectively in the past, we believe a new structure will be more effective based on our growth, and possible continued growth.

We also heard concerns that some SSA's felt their caseloads were more complex and challenging than their co-workers. It was also shared that some SSA's felt they should be compensated differently based on the complexity, funding source requirements, and amount of work their specialized caseloads required.

As we move forward and to address these concerns, we have changed the SSA department structure to better meet the needs of individuals, families, providers, schools and agencies. We have redesigned the structure so that every SSA on our team will be cross trained and able to support and serve a family



regardless of the age of the individual or their funding source. We are confident the redesign of our structure will support positive outcomes for everyone.

As a result of these changes and the new structure:

- SSA's and families will be able to build longer lasting (possibly lifetime) relationships.
- Families who may have multiple individuals receiving county board supports will be able to have just one SSA to help coordinate their supports and services.
- When possible, Providers may have fewer SSA's to collaborate and communicate with particularly if all individuals are living in one residence.
- The SSA team will be cross trained and develop a wide base of knowledge and expertise.
- Families and Individuals will not change SSA's if they have a change in funding source.
- SSA's caseloads will be consistent and similar in size and complexity with the new structure, which addresses any feelings of inequality between SSA's and their workloads.
- The entire SSA team will be able to help and support each other and families should an SSA be out on sick leave, etc.
- Should a family have a specific need regarding support, there will be a greater opportunity to develop a match for a family with an SSA team member.

We in the social service industries experience socio-economic pressures regarding hiring, training, staff retention and other workforce challenges similar to other businesses in the private sector. As with all agencies, the Board of DD plans annual staff training and professional learning opportunities as needed throughout the year for staff and management employees to learn and grow professionally.

Please know that we all are working diligently towards quality services and positive outcomes for those we serve. As always, we will continue to assess and analyze our operations, processes, staffing and systems to enhance and further improve the supports and services we provide. Should you have questions please do not hesitate to contact me or any one listed below.

Warmest Regards and Best Wishes in the New Year,

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