



King County

Board for Developmental Disabilities

Build Capacity and Provide Equitable Access to Community-Based Supports – Supported Living

Updated November 16, 2018

Action Request

Adequately fund Supported Living in order to serve new clients waiting for services, stabilize providers, stop the trend of decreasing capacity and address an ongoing crisis in community residential services.

Supporting People to Live Independently

Supported Living helps people with developmental disabilities live as independently as possible by providing the right level of care in their own home. Direct-support professionals teach and assist clients with medical and mental health care, finances, transportation, household, and personal needs. The level of care available is the same as that provided in the state's institutions, Residential Habilitation Centers, with the added benefit that individuals are in the community, near friends and family, living the lives they want.

Supported Living is by far the most-used residential option for people at risk of institutional placement and who require up to 24 hours of care. Nearly 4,000 people statewide are served by Supported Living.¹ Many people served in Supported Living have previously lived in state institutions. Individuals served may have intensive medical needs, challenging behavior, or specialized communication needs. When living with family caregivers isn't an option, and when individuals need more than personal care, then Supported Living may be their **only** option.

A System in Crisis

Supported Living is a system in crisis, with direct support professionals paid considerably below a living wage. The hourly increase funded in the last biennium is greatly appreciated, but it is not enough to stem turnover that has averaged about 50 percent for the last three years. Wages have failed to keep pace with those of comparable service providers who work at state-run facilities, or even with low skilled employment opportunities. The churn is harmful to clients who require consistency and continuity of care and disrupts the

relationship building that is essential to serving people with complex behavior support needs. Open positions put individuals at risk if staffing levels cannot meet their needs, and unstable staffing prevents providers from taking on new clients. Because of this, Supported Living is serving 158 fewer people than the state's 2014 service target, and individuals with significant support needs continue to sit on wait lists. These situations are especially serious when a parent caregiver is elderly and unable to provide even basic care.

A Way to Stabilize

Additional investment by the state legislature will stem the turnover and increase capacity for people needing up to 24-hour care. In order to serve new clients waiting for services and discontinue the trend of decreasing capacity, funding must be allocated to bring staff wages to a livable wage and address the ongoing crisis in the community residential system.

An increase in provider rates will ensure that providers can comply with the state minimum wage, and offer a competitive wage. We must pay direct care staff a living wage, and give them resources to do their jobs.

Fund the maintenance and policy level decision packages from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services for Community Residential programs.

¹ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Developmental Disabilities Administration CARE System on 7/1/2018.