



Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

Department of Human Services FY 2026 Budget Listening Session

November 19, 2024

Good day, Commissioner Adelman, and members of the Department of Human Services. On behalf of ABCD, thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts as you begin deliberations on the proposed FY '26 Budget. It means a lot to us to be a part of your process.

HCBS offers us a compass, but not a map. That left us to build what is imperative-to provide individuals with IDD the safety and security they require and the dignity and independence they rightly demand. How well our agencies fare in this new system is an open question.

Since the ability of day hab providers to transport individuals to and from the program mainly impacts people with few transportation options due to their ambulatory status, cognitive skills, unavailable public or family transport, it is imperative that we ensure transportation for those who would not otherwise have access to their chosen pursuit, day habilitation.

But if you are a day hab transporting individuals to and from the program on average, 24% of your revenue will be spent on transportation which is more than that of companies whose primary function is transport and delivery.¹ Over 30% if most of your riders are wheelchair bound, and over 50% if they also live in densely populated areas. Furthermore, day hubs which legitimately do not provide transportation report that if they were required to do so their programs would be unsustainable. I say, "legitimate" because the current service definition under the waiver states, "transportation to or from day habilitation is not included in the services." Meanwhile, many providers who do transport are keeping a close watch on their wheelchair numbers and where potential enrollees live to prevent costs from becoming untenable. These percentages and reactions highlight an insufficient policy of the prior administration and needed reform from this one.

We request your consideration of the trade association's proposal to rectify this problem.

¹ The day habilitation transportation papers can be found at ABCD's website advocacy page, <https://www.abcdnj.org/advocacy/>

We all know the value of habilitative therapies (physical, occupational, and speech) for our population. Regrettably, most day programs can't offer them because the Medicaid rates are a whopping 50% lower than the market rate, making it impossible to hire licensed professionals.² Unlike eligible individuals ageing in place under MLTSS with its extensive provider networks, eligibility under SP and CCP Waivers does not ensure service, inadvertently perpetuating IDD's marginalization.

We request efforts to begin to resolve this discrepancy by increasing the current rates for Speech Language Therapy.

DDD has received additional funds for recent trends which in FY25 were for the expanded number of individuals receiving community services and for the shifts in consumer spending patterns to more expensive goods and services. But when DHS doesn't meet inflation with an investment of equal value our fixed rates deteriorate. The state has a fiduciary responsibility to all IDD not just to those with more expensive taste in services. Maintaining the health and viability of your main partners, the licensed and certified sector of the system must also be considered in DDD trend calculations.

We request an annualized COLA increase across the board for all DDD Community Providers.

Inflation is a fact of life. Stasis is not a solution

² The day program habilitative/clinical therapy papers can be found at ABCD's website advocacy page, <https://www.abcdnj.org/advocacy/>