

Bridge to Independence Recommendations

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Bridge to Independence Advisory Committee

- The Bridge to Independence (B2i) Advisory Committee identified areas for further recommendation in the 2017 Annual Report.
- Two Workgroups were tasked with making recommendations on these areas:
 - Finance and Policy Workgroup
 - Coordination and Eliminate Duplication of Services
 - Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities
 - Eligibility Determination and Service Coordination
 - Young Adults who are Pregnant or Parenting
 - Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup
 - Coordinate and Provide Feedback on the External Evaluation
 - Review and Guide Data that Exists from Outside Organizations

Finance and Policy Workgroup

Recommendations for the Consideration of the Nebraska Children's Commission

Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities

- Recommendation 1: Young Adults enrolled in the Bridge to Independence program and whose residence in a licensed center for the developmentally disabled paid for by Medicaid under a HCBS Waiver will not receive a Bridge to Independence stipend.
- *Persons residing in a licensed center for the developmentally disabled are only allowed to retain \$60 a month. The balance of their income offsets the cost of their care. Bridge to Independence payments are either General funds or a combination of General funds and IV-E. For former wards with developmental disabilities covered by Medicaid, the amount above \$60 would offset costs at approximately 47% General and 53% federal. If the Bridge payment is from General Funds only, 53% offsets the federal Medicaid payment. If the payment is from General and IV-E funds, there is a net zero impact, i.e. the fund source for the B2i payment is the same as the Medicaid. Additionally, the young adult should qualify for Social Security benefits which is also applied to offset Medicaid General and federal costs.*

Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities

- Recommendation 2: Young adults enrolled in the B2i Program who are receiving services paid for by Medicaid under a HCBS waiver will receive case management that is coordinated across the two programs. A structured process will be developed to ensure these young adults access the needed services. An assessment will be undertaken to understand the needs of the young adult. A plan will be created based on this assessment to ensure access to services and case management without any duplication.

Case Management Services Comparison

B2i Program

- Definition: Support provided by department to a young adult to complement his/her own efforts towards self sufficiency
- This may include assisting the youth to access resource to:
 - Obtain employment
 - Obtain identification
 - Access banking services
 - Access legal services related to juvenile court record sealing
 - Obtain secondary education, vocational or post secondary education
 - Apply for immigration relief
 - Create a health care power of attorney
 - Obtain health and education records
 - Apply for public benefits and assistance
 - Maintain relationships
 - Access information about relatives
 - Access young adult empowerment opportunities
 - Access pregnancy and parenting resources and services

HCBS Waiver

- Definition: activities conducted on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to help them access developmental disability services and other services not funded by the Department. Service coordination ensures that services are responsive to the preferences and needs of the individual and that services promote the independence, interdependence, productivity, and inclusion of individuals receiving services.
- This may include assistance with:
 - Developing a service plan based on wants and needs
 - Referrals for DD agency providers
 - Visits and transition plans
 - Help preferred DD independent provider to enroll
 - Help access services not funded by DD including Medicaid, SSI, and SNAP
 - Identifying and accessing community resources
 - Meet every six months, minimum
 - Working towards life goals
 - Monitoring the service plan to ensure implementation
 - Adequately addressing needs
 - Contact with participant to ensure needs are met
 - Contact with legal representative and as requested, family
 - Advocacy on behalf of participant with service provider(s), family, and community
 - Ensure services promote independence, productivity and inclusion

Mitigating the “Cliff Effect” and Eliminating Duplication in Public Benefits

- Recommendation 3: Young Adults receive assistance in navigating existing public benefits programs to meet their needs and prevent duplication of services, including information about the impact of B2i stipends on program eligibility and assistance opening savings accounts that protect the money they save from their Bridge to Independence stipend, including the possibility of opening an Individual Development Account (IDA).
- Recommendation 4: Incentivize savings and mitigate the cliff effect by connecting young adults to savings matching programs, protected savings accounts, and IDAs.
- Recommendation 5: The Workgroup requests that the Nebraska Children’s Commission tasks the Foster Care Reimbursement Rate Committee to develop a recommendation for the minimum adequate rate for a maintenance payment for young adults in the Bridge to Independence program who are parenting (a) minor child(ren) consistent with state and federal requirements.

Changes to Eligibility and Eligibility Categories

- **Young Adults who are Incapable of Participating in Either the Employment or Education Eligibility Programs**
 - Recommendation 6: The Workgroup will undertake a thorough analysis of the young adults who are served through the eligibility category of being “incapable of participating in either the employment or eligibility programs” and understand how they are incapable. The Finance and Policy Workgroup will create recommendations on this subject before the next meeting B2i Advisory Committee in 2018.
- **Young Adults who are Participating in a Program Activity Designed to Promote Employment or Remove Barriers to Employment**
 - Recommendation 7: The Finance and Policy Workgroup will collect feedback from young adults who have been served in the B2i Program while participating in a program or activity designed to promote employment or remove barriers to employment and the Independence Coordinators and stakeholders that serve and support these young adults, and examine data on this population. The Finance and Policy Workgroup will create recommendations on this eligibility category before the next meeting B2i Advisory Committee in 2018.
- **Young Adults Residing Outside of Nebraska**
 - Recommendation 8: The Finance and Policy Workgroup will collect feedback from young adults who have moved out of state on the Bridge to Independence Program and the Independence Coordinators and stakeholders that serve and support these young adults and examine data related to this population. The Finance and Policy Workgroup will create recommendations on this subject before the next meeting B2i Advisory Committee in 2018.

Evaluation and Data Collection Workgroup

Coordinating and Providing Feedback on the External Evaluation

- Recommendation 9: The Data and Evaluation Committee recommends that six questions (see page 5 of narrative) guide the Bridge to Independence Program Evaluation.
- Recommendation 10: The Workgroup strongly supports, *Outcome Analysis and Data Consultation*, as a necessary first step to defining outcomes and establishing a sustainable framework for data analysis of the B2i Program. An ideal external evaluation should focus on quantitative data first and then shift to qualitative data, undertaking the tasks in the order described on page six of narrative.

DHHS Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process

- Recommendation 11: The Workgroup will continue to review the CQI data information at each meeting to determine if additional data or trends are relevant to and should be forwarded onto the Advisory Committee. The following information is identified as key for the review of the Advisory Committee:
 - IV-E eligibility data;
 - Data related to the benefits and programs that young adults enrolled in the B2i program are accessing;
 - Number of entries; and
 - Total number of young adult served in each fiscal year for the fiscal years of 14, 15, 16, and 17.
- Recommendation 12: The Workgroup will continue to work closely with DHHS to examine data related to Title IV-E penetration, and support program and process changes necessary to increase the number of young adults who are eligible for and receiving Title IV-E funding.
- Recommendation 13: Data collected related to living arrangement should reflect young adults who are experiencing homelessness and unstable housing.
- Recommendation 14: The Workgroup will continue to provide comments and feedback on the FCRO Bridge to Independence case review process.