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Self Determination Gains Momentum

SACRAMENTO CA- The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has officially submitted California's "Self-Determination Program" Medicaid waiver proposal to the federal Centers on Medicare and Medicaid Services. The move was hailed by disability rights advocates as a significant leap forward for Self-Determination in the Golden State.

SB 468 by then Senator Bill Emmerson established a statewide Self-Determination Program. This 2013 bill essentially created individual budgets for regional center consumers, enabling them to purchase the services and supports of their choosing. The 21 regional centers scattered throughout the state serve approximately 290,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

Though some states already have 100% Self-Determination, California started with a small pilot project that will eventually grow to 2,500 people over a three-year rollout.

"This is an important step in giving individuals with I/DD the right to make their own decisions," said Dr. April Lopez, Chair of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. "I applaud Governor Brown for his leadership in this area. With the anticipated federal matching funds, the program can move forward, and eligible Californians will have options not available to them in the past."

According to DDS, "All individuals, regardless of ability, have the right to access the basic elements that make-up a good life, beginning with: family, independence, personal responsibility, and freedom of choice. The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act builds upon these basic fundamentals so that all individuals have the right to live their lives as they choose."

"Personal freedom is a cornerstone of American life," added Dr. Lopez. "This voluntary program makes it possible for disabled individuals to have more control over their own services and supports. Though participation is limited for now, our goal is that in the future, everyone who wants Self-Determination will be able to have it".

The State Council on developmental disabilities (SCDD) is established by state and federal law as an independent state agency to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports they need.

Contact: Nelly Nieblas
916-708-5544
Nelly.Nieblas@scdd.ca.gov