



In this edition of the Informing Families Newsletter, we hear from Sandi Gruberg and Michelle Williams, Co-Communication Coordinators, Washington Statewide Parent Coalitions. They write to families on what to expect this legislative session, the concerns being brought, and ways you can become involved for your family to have the say in the decisions and issues that directly affect you.

Our 2024 Legislative Session begins this January. This year's session is a short session, meaning that legislators will be looking mainly at policy changes instead of requests that will have a high impact on state budgeting or spending. A low-cost policy ask might be changing the training requirements for family care providers. A high-budget ask might be increasing respite hours on DDA waivers, creating additional accessible housing, or developing a new DDA waiver service.

Through communication with families like yours across the state this last year, Statewide Parent and Family Coalitions have identified several care and access issues that affect the developmental disability community. We've been working hard to bring these issues to the attention of legislators. Here are a few our community's concerns that we have already presented to decision makers:

- Shortage of care providers. Families cannot access trained providers to care for their loved ones or take them into the community.
- Lack of paid safety support. Many of our loved ones are unable to be left alone at home or in the community, yet Medicaid Personal Care/Community First Choice will only pay for direct personal care tasks and not the time a provider or parent spends supporting individuals for safety reasons. Parents and family caregivers often have to leave the paid workforce to provide this unpaid support.
- Lack of regular, meaningful community activities and day programs. Once our loved ones leave school, they are often stuck at home without anything to do. Adult individuals with IDD and their families need dependable day programming that will provide socialization, recreation, learning, and skill-building.
- Unpaid parent caregivers of minors. Under current DDA guidelines, parents can only be paid for providing personal care only after their loved ones turn 18 years old. Parents of Medicaid-eligible minor children with developmental disabilities often have to leave the workforce to provide unpaid personal care. (Continued on page 2)

(Cont.) These are just a handful of issues that parents and family members care about this legislative session. We know there are other needs that haven't been heard or presented. Below are some opportunities for you to get involved and make sure your loved one's voice reaches the elected officials who are making decisions that affect your family.

Register for the Arc of WA's Advocacy Days <https://arcwa.org/advocacy/2024-advocacy-days/>

Advocacy Days are held virtually (via Zoom) during each legislative session to involve individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD), their families, and their service providers in the legislative process.



Advocacy Days January 2023

Legislative Notebook <https://arcwa.org/advocacy/2024-legislative-session-notebook/>

Each year before legislative session, The Arc of Washington State, the Developmental Disability Council, and the Community Advocacy Coalition collect information from disability advocates, providers, families, and community members, and compile it into a Legislative Notebook for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). The Notebook is available on the Arc of Wa website and includes

- One-page information sheets on the issues of importance
- Data charts on DDA services and supports and how they are used
- Budget charts
- Budget requests from Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)
- List of all Legislators and their contact info
- Priorities Lists from various Community Organizations (including Parent and Family Coalitions!)

Action Alerts <https://arcwa.org/action-center/>

Sign up with the Arc of WA to receive Action Alert emails or text messages when legislators need to hear your voice on specific budget or policy issues. Make a difference!

Washington State Legislature www.leg.wa.gov

Find your legislators, contact them via email, connect with them during session, find information on bills that have been filed, and sign up to testify or note your position on a bill.

Statewide Parent Coalitions

Contact Michelle Williams kittitascountyparent2parent@gmail.com or Sandi Gruberg sandi@pc2online.org to learn about statewide advocacy and connect with your local Parent and Family Coalition.

DDA GovDelivery

Visit <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dda/dda-messages> and sign up to receive timely messages and updates from DSHS and the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

Remember, you and your loved one do have a say in the decisions and issues that affect your lives. As we've learned from disability advocates before us, change is made by those who show up!

DDA No-Paid Services Caseload Update

Thank You for Taking the DDA's Outreach Survey!

The Developmental Disabilities Administration recently submitted the third annual No-Paid Services Caseload Report to the Legislature.

Your responses to the No-Paid Services outreach survey served as the backbone of the report and your voices will now help guide legislator's decisions, informing what types of services you are interested in receiving and when. Thank you for your responses, your time, and for telling your stories. Your input assists to further DDA's mission to provide you with the supports you want to live your lives.

Want to learn more? Check out this link to the legislative report: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/DDA/dda/documents/23-0885%20DDA%20Leg%20NPS%20Report%202023.pdf>.

Case Manager Updates

In January 2024, DDA will mark a significant milestone to provide case management services once again to everyone on the No-

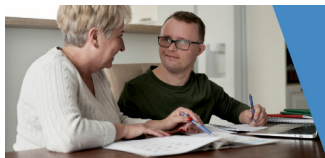
Paid Services caseload. Case managers were assigned in parts of the state beginning in August 2023 and nearly every individual enrolled with DDA should have an assigned case manager by January 2024. Each region has worked very hard and built great teams. Soon, if you have not already, you will receive a letter with your case manager's name and contact information. In addition, case managers will be reaching out to every individual on their caseload at least once per year; the contact has already begun in some parts of the state.

Each case manager for the No-Paid Services caseload is being assigned to work with 300 individuals, and DDA looks forward to connecting with each of you. DDA is excited to offer case managers once again for individuals without services to inform, refer, and connect you to the resources you want.

If you do not know who your case manager is, or want to request something now, please visit <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dda/service-and-information-request> or use <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/office-locations> to find your local DDA office.

Is your adult loved one living in your family home? Are you a self-advocate ready to transition into a more independent life? Partners4Housing is offering a free benefits and housing review.

Thanks to the Developmental Disabilities Council's Dan Thompson Memorial Fund, Partners4Housing is reaching out to as many families as possible in Washington.



What can you expect from the benefits and housing review?

When you or your loved one access the review, it will include: online questionnaire, review of benefits, one hour consultation to discuss housing options, access to their roommate matching pool, and more. This is available for individuals with an Intellectual and/or developmental disability who are 17 and older and live in Washington state.

To learn more visit <https://informingfamilies.org/partners4housing/>

To access your free benefits and housing review visit <https://signup.partners4housing.com/promo/> **3**

State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Developmental Disabilities Administration
P.O. Box 45310
Olympia, WA 98504-5310

Winter Resources for Families

Preparing for Winter Weather

Informing Families Page

Winter storms are here and it is important to be prepared. Check out the Informing Families webpage on winter safety tips and resources from different agencies. (<https://informingfamilies.org/preparing-for-winter-weather/>)

Free At-Home COVID-19 Tests

Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order 4 free-at home tests. If you did not order tests this fall, you may place two orders for a total of 8 tests. These are mailed to you for free. Visit <https://www.covid.gov/tools-and-resources/resources/tests> to order your tests today.

Low Income Energy Assistance Program

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program can help families with heating and electricity costs this winter by program assistance with utilities bills. To learn more about eligibility visit <http://energyhelp.us/>



Get instant updates from the Developmental Disabilities Administration:

- News and Announcements
- Provider Information
- Resources
- Training and Events!

How to Sign Up:

- Text "DDA" to 468311
- Visit <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dda> and then scroll down the home page and click on the GovDelivery envelope and sign up link for news and information.