



Why Should I Care??

Funding and Services for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) are under constant Pressure for Change, at both the Federal and State levels. Some of these changes are good, but many are big threats to this community – taking away choices and appropriate services. It is vital to have **Involvement and Advocacy from Parents, Families, and Friends** to maintain a full array of disability service choices to improve the Quality of Life of our loved ones. Here are a few of the Critical Issues that we are focused on:

1. **EMPLOYMENT** – Minnesota Department of Human Services has adopted the Employment First Policy (E1MN). The vision for this is, *“All people with Disabilities, including people who have complex and significant disabilities want to work, can be competitively employed earning at least minimum wage and benefits, and should be fully integrated within the workplace.”* This vision is unrealistic and even dangerous for many people with significant levels of I/DD. In the 2021 Minnesota Legislative session, the HHS omnibus bill that was passed and signed by the governor created a Task Force with a specific assignment to plan the elimination of the use of Special Minimum Wages using the 14(c) clause of the Fair Labor and Standards Act. The task force membership is heavily weighted with organizations that support the elimination of the use of the 14(c) provisions in Minnesota. If this is successful, thousands of Minnesotans with I/DD will lose their employment and Center Based Employment programs will close. In the Spring of 2022, two bills were created to change the direction of this task force and to add membership of those who were excluded in the first task force. The 2022 Legislature adjourned without acting on these bills, leaving the task force in place with its many flaws.
2. **HOUSING** – Parents and families are finding it increasingly difficult to find housing for their loved ones with I/DD. The Legislature imposed a moratorium in 2009, halting any additional corporate adult foster care facilities (traditional group homes) from being established. That moratorium is still in effect. Some new forms of housing have emerged but many of these have not worked well, and the pandemic has made them even worse. Intermediate Care Facilities are under fire as they are expensive and disability rights organizations want them closed because they appear to look like small institutions. Parents and other care givers and people with I/DD need more sustainable housing options.
3. **Shortage of good quality Direct Service Professionals (DSPs)** – Before the Covid19 epidemic, DHS conducted a study of labor and found that there were 18,500 (19%) vacancies with the service providers in Minnesota. The turnover rate was found to be 48% per year. The reimbursement rate system (DWRS) has locked in wage factors that do not provide timely and

market rate compensation for DSPs, which is the root cause of these poor numbers. Parents and families are struggling with obtaining good quality services their loved ones are entitled to. At the time of this writing, many service providers (residential, day, and employment) are experiencing much higher vacancy rates and turnover than what the study revealed. Many providers have yet to call back all of their clients to Day programs due to staff shortages, even though programs were allowed to restart over a year ago!

4. **CASE MANAGEMENT** – Case management services have seen a significant decline in quality and availability over the last few years. Many county case managers have moved to become MNCHOICES assessors and the counties have backfilled with contracted case managers. At the same time, the complexity of the systems that provide services for people with I/DD has increased dramatically, and contract case managers are not well trained. Turnover of these contract case managers is very high.
5. **WAIVERS** – It has always been difficult for parents and families to understand and pursue getting MA Waivers for their loved ones, as they come through Transition. But now there is a new initiative called “Waiver Reimagine” that could increase this complexity and change the standards of services people with I/DD are entitled to. Service Banding and Individualized Budgeting are on their way and could make the process even more complex and restrict access to services.

These Critical Issues need parents and families and friends of people with I/DD to step up and get involved and advocate more than ever. A-Team Minnesota has been established to help people to unite in advocacy to reduce these most serious threats to allow our loved ones the best lives and Choices they are entitled to.

A-Team Minnesota – Dedicated to Supporting a full array of disability service options. Uniting families, self-advocates, and friends in creating awareness, advocacy and advisement.