



The path forward in 2022

We kicked off 2022 with a flurry of opportunities to advocate for support for CWI and our teams including, the NYS Budget, for American Rescue Plan Act funds, for sustained wage increases for our DSPs AND for the rest of our essential staff team. This newsletter will highlight some of those areas. We encourage everyone to add your voice to these topics, we need to sustain the momentum that we have now!



NY Alliance I/DD Policy Recommendations

February 2022

The New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation is at the forefront of public policy conversations in Albany. From housing supports and services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to regulatory and rate/finance reform, our association has delivered a comprehensive set of policy and programmatic recommendations to lawmakers and policymakers at the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities.

We are pleased to share the ten NY Alliance Policy Briefs with you which highlight background information on the specific topic area, key recommendations for implementation and links to helpful resources and supporting documentation such as government reports, reports from institutions of higher education and NY Alliance publications.

The Policy Briefs are as follows:

[Serving People with Complex Needs](#)

[Implementing a Direct Support Professional Credential](#)

[Person-Centered Thinking Evolution](#)

[Regulatory Reform](#)

[Commission on the Future of New York's System of Supports & Services for People With I/DD](#)

[Rate Reform](#)

[Diversity & Racial Equity](#)

[Better Access to Affordable and Independent Housing](#)

[Use of Assistive/Enabling Technology to Support People](#)

[Advocacy for Discrete Standard Occupational Classification for DSPs](#)

NY Alliance will continue to share these Policy Briefs with members of the State Legislature and key policymakers in New York State. Feel free to share these briefs in your meetings with members of the State Assembly, State Senate, key State Officials and others in your communities.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Advocacy Policy briefs.....	1
NYDA Legislative Priorities.....	2
COVID Update.....	2
Update on funding initiatives.....	3
Advocacy efforts	4
Our outstanding team.....	5
Communication	9
Photos.....	6-7
Grants, Donations, Fundraising.....	8
Program Updates.....	8
Recruitment Efforts.....	9

NEW YORK STATE DISABILITIES ADVOCATES (NYDA)

2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) – 5.4% FOR Fiscal Year 2023 Following a decade of provider agencies not receiving the statutorily required cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), the significant fiscal impacts of COVID-19 and the current level of inflation, agencies' costs have increased significantly necessitating that the full 5.4% COLA be included in the State's FY 2023 Budget....resulting in wage stagnation. NYDA BUDGET REQUEST: Accept HMH Part DD

WORKFORCE Continued and sustained investment in DSPs' salaries is essential to recruit and retain staff and for the future viability of the field. The Executive Budget includes a proposal to make up to \$3,000 bonus payments to frontline health care and mental hygiene workers. This is a welcome proposal that will provide additional resources to help address the current workforce crisis. NYDA BUDGET REQUEST Advance amendments to HMH Part DDespite recent significant one-time investments to the I/DD field over the past several months, statewide average wages for DSPs remain at or below the statewide Fast Food Minimum Wage. We must work collaboratively to address the workforce shortages that exist and to support future higher wages for our Direct Support Professionals.

ESTABLISHING A PERSONAL INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR DIRECT CARE STAFF To address the significant workforce challenges of the I/DD and mental hygiene service delivery systems and to recognize the vital work that DSPs do to support individuals with disabilities, a personal income tax credit should be established to provide recruitment and retention incentives to these vital employees. NYDA BUDGET REQUEST: Include S7643/A9200, which would establish a refundable personal income tax credit for direct care staff employed by provider agencies.
nydisabilityadvocates.org 2

Implementation of Statewide Recruitment Programs
Expansion of the current BOCES and Community College Programs statewide to create a pipeline for the DSP care field.

Implementation of Credential and Career Ladder Programs

- * Credential Program – Advance language in the SFY 2023 Budget to implement a statewide standardized DSP credential program.
- * • Career Ladder – Advance language in the SFY 2023 Budget to establish a career ladder program, which will provide a pathway to an associate's degree in the human services field for current DSPs.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CAPITAL FUNDING The Executive Budget proposes authorizing additional funds for the Statewide Health Care Transformation Program and new funding for the Nonprofit Infrastructure Capital Investment Program,Nonprofit Infrastructure Capital Investment Program (NICIP), and amend the Statewide Health Care Facilities Transformation Program (SHCFTP) to include community-based intellectual/developmental disabilities providers that are authorized, approved and/or funded by OPWDD as eligible applicants.

NURSES ACROSS NEW YORK I/DD providers historically have had challenges in recruiting and retaining essential nursing staff. The proposed Nurses Across New York program will provide loan forgiveness for nurses working in underserved communities, which would support recruitment and retention. NYDA BUDGET REQUEST: Amend HMH Part A to specify I/DD and Behavioral Health agencies are included as eligible places of employment for loan forgiveness.

The following strategies have been identified as NYDA budget request priorities: State of New York Advocacy for New Federal Standard Occupational Classification for Direct Support Professionals Which would provide metrics for planning purpose. Regulatory Reform Proposals as Suggested by the Arc New York in the areas of: • Hiring, Training and Evaluation of Staff • Supportive Apartments • Medical/Nursing Documentation • Emergency Drill Streamlining

To read the full NYDA priorities, CWI personnel can go to the [Vdrive>Everyone>Advocacy Information>2022_NYDA_LegislativePriorities_Onesheet](#).

COVID Update

On January 14th, Local Health Departments announced that they were no longer the point of contact for COVID-19 reporting and contact tracing. Instead, each person with a positive test (PCR or Rapid-excluding home tests) or those who have been exposed to a positive person have been re-directed to NY State's websites for COVID-19; <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/new-york-state-contact-tracing>. This website details NYS approach to isolation and quarantine.

Update on Appendix K Workforce Stabilization Initiatives

Overview from the OPWDD website:

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are the backbone of the OPWDD service system, and targeted investments are needed to recruit, train, and retain the professionals needed to improve the experience and outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Especially during the pandemic, DSPs provided critical care that kept people healthy and safe. OPWDD is dedicating roughly 76 percent of its ARPA funds to the following initiatives, which are proposed to acknowledge the work of these DSPs, support retention and enhance workforce skills and capacity.

Workforce Incentives and Bonuses

Heroes Fund and COVID-19 Vaccination Bonus

The Heroes Fund will grant supplemental, one-time payments to DSPs and Family Care Providers who worked during the COVID-19 pandemic and are currently employed in the OPWDD service system. OPWDD will issue a payment of \$1,000 per full-time DSP or Family Care Provider who worked at least a 90-day period during the period of 3/17/2020 to 9/1/2021 and continues to be employed by the provider agency/employer. OPWDD will also issue an additional bonus of \$500 to each of these workers who are vaccinated against COVID-19.

Longevity and Retention Bonuses

Due to the workforce vacancy and turnover rates in the field of direct support, as well as the overall workforce shortages that many employers are experiencing, additional compensation is needed to retain workers and enhance direct service as a career choice. OPWDD will use enhanced FMAP funds to provide supplemental payments in the form of a Longevity and Retention Bonus; each bonus is equivalent to a 20 percent increase in reported DSP payroll costs.

OPWDD will issue supplemental, one-time payments to service providers based on cost data and the providers' attestation that all funds will be paid to qualified workers.

There will be two bonuses available:

Longevity Bonus – This bonus will be available to DSPs and Family Care Providers covering the period of time between 4/1/2020 and 3/31/2021.

Retention Bonus – This bonus will be prospective and available to DSPs and Family Care Providers covering the period of time between 4/1/2021 and 3/31/2022.

Agencies qualify for the supplemental payments if they delivered Home and Community-Based Waiver services between March 17, 2020 and September 1, 2021. Providers that submitted claims for retainer payments only during this time are not eligible for the bonus payments.

The Heroes Fund and the Longevity and Retention bonus payments will support DSPs and Family Care Providers who worked during the pandemic and remain employed in the OPWDD service system. The payments are available for workers employed by the service providers directly or who work for people with developmental disabilities through the Self-Direction program.

OPWDD held a webinar on 12/2/21 to share details about the Appendix K Waiver amendment approval related to the ARPA workforce bonuses and incentives. Visit <https://opwdd.ny.gov/supporting-and-strengthening-direct-support-workforce> for the recorded webinar and more information.

Updates as of 2/23/22: NYS's goal is to load rates into emedny in February and intend to disperse <3/31/22 so NYS can get 10% federal match. The Longevity and Retention funds have been submitted for approval. The others may be delayed due to challenges with questionnaire/surveys.

What does that mean for agencies? Clarification has been provided that agencies can recoup any funds spent between 7/8/21 and 3/25/22 for incentives such as the additional \$5/hour paid to staff a house when a resident had tested positive for COVID. CWI run those reports. This will help offset the enormous amount of incentives paid out in those 8 months.

For staff in those 200 series? Agencies have up to 90 days to complete the calculations for each category of bonus for each time period covered. We will need to calculate all eligible employees for Longevity for 2020 period and then again for 2021 period up through the 3/25/22 pay period (so those calculations can't be properly done until that pay period is closed) and do the same for the Retention bonuses. Each employee's hours and qualification for the funds will need to be calculated separately. This will take time. CWI's goal is to get it done correctly and done within the 90 days we have to work within. Our failure to properly comply could cause NYS to take back the funds.

ADVOCACY EFFORTS

The week of 2/14-18/22 was designated as NYS Legislative Advocacy Week. The NY Alliance in partnership with NYSARC held virtual sessions to inform providers and legislators alike of the key points in the NYS budget as it applies to our field of service. Across the state, agencies were encouraged to set up meetings with the respective legislators to help drive home the important points.

CWI organized a panel of stakeholders to meet with staff from Assemblyman Matt Simpson, Senator Dan Stec and Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner's offices. They passionately shared their stories and provided impactful examples of the need to support the proposed budget as well as the need to have sustainable changes made in how services are funded and staff are supported to choose this work as a career.

Thank you to: Pat Imbimbo, Phillip Lape, Brooke Avon, Bonni Salley, Kerry Brush, Michelle Treffi, Ashley Davis, Sally Hawley, April Boucher, Brooklyn Generous, Terri Perry, Dan Juidiciani and Michelle Swinton for joining Deb Rowell in one or more of these meetings.

We closed out the week participating in the ARCC's Lunch with the Legislators event.



Our Community Partner

February 10, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: **Support Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for programs and services licensed, funded and certified by the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) and the State Office for the Aging (SOFA)**

Dear Governor Hochul,

Thank you for putting in your initial budget money and support for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for programs and services licensed, funded and certified by the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH), Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) and the State Office for the Aging (SOFA). The role and impact that these programs and services provide to our business community and community as a whole are invaluable.

Although the State of New York has a mandatory statute to give these programs yearly COLAs, they have not received a COLA increase in the past eleven years. Each of these programs and services have been exacerbated and stretched thin by almost two years of COVID-19. Employees at these non-profit programs and services receive on average 70% of the compensation of government counterparts.

We hope you will ensure that these COLA monies and funding will stay in the upcoming New York State budget to be adopted April 1, 2022.

Blessings,

Michael Bittel
President/CEO
Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce

For doing your job with excellence and persistence, we thank you.

Communication...Connecting

We have had some helpful suggestions to improve upon our communication with our stakeholders and are committed to finding ways to better connect with our stakeholders. We use many means to share information during these pandemic times when in person meetings are limited. These include: email, this newsletter, facebook posts, memos, video chats and in the Shares Drive (V) >Everyone file folder, we have been practicing filing these things so that staff can access current information when convenient for them.

We are addressing general topics re: the status of the organization as well as specific noteworthy initiatives. To follow-up topics on the recent video chat and email announcement, we have been working to review the Business Plan for our Just a Buck retail store. This innovative extension of our services has been well received by our community as well as by the people we've been able to train and employ. It is near and dear to our hearts. However, we were not achieving the necessary milestones in the business plan for the retail store to be viable. Lengthy review with the Board of Directors, the Franchise headquarters and internal finances brought us to the determination to sell the store. A local businessman who greatly values the mission and the staff has worked with the franchise to purchase the store with the intention of maintaining the current team of employees. We were able to share this news once the purchase agreement had been made official/closing had been scheduled. The store changed over to the new owner on 2/28/22. We hope that you continue to support this business and the people they will now be employing. CWI will miss the direct relationship but we are proud of our role in getting this launched.

We are supporting our team members to not only look for ways to cut expenses but to add income. Sally Hawley and the ADK Fulfillment team have developed a relationship with a current vendor who is now leasing space at our Everts Ave. site and they have added a new vendor and commodity to their work (Sick Kits). Chrissy Lewis is negotiating with potential renters for the open office areas at Pearl. Dan Juidiciani and his team continue to work on long term stability for 6 residents with a move from Flat Rock Road, Lake George to Bradley Ave., Fort Edward. With the census reduced, Dianna Potter and her team are working to reduce third party rental obligations by leaving a Glen St. property and consolidating Generations into other sites with space. These are just a few examples of the work our leadership team is involved in for the long term stability of the agency.

Going Above & Beyond—Our Fabulous Staff

Our Operations team is getting things done---they have added projects to their daily responsibilities associated with the strategic moves mentioned above. They are doing much more work lately as the availability and affordability of outside vendors is a real challenge. We thank you all!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

For all the times you have not received a thank you, we thank you.

The Retiree Club has again expanded *Deb Havens*, Transit Coordinator stepped down after over 33 years!



Sr. leadership welcomes---
Dianna Potter, promoted to Division Director for Day Services. Dianna has been with CWI for 15 years and *Sherry Gonyea McElroy* joins us as Division Director for Clinical Services.



Did you know...we had 55 of our CWI team members qualify for the Sick Leave Incentive bonus this year! This is an incredible feat in a year of rampant COVID-19 cases! We sincerely appreciate this level of dedication. The people we serve as well as your co-workers benefit from your wellness efforts. WAY TO GO!

For being the rock to us all, we thank you.





FUNDRAISING, GRANTS, & DONATIONS

Fundraising

Fund Development Committee is working on a number of "events" including:

- >Dancing With the Adirondack Stars-March 26, 2022
- >South Glens Falls Marathon Dance—targeted for May 2022
- >Brooks BBQ, May 13, 2022
- >Kiwanis Golf Tournament, August 19,2022



Grants/Donations

CWI continues to apply for all American Rescue Plan Act grants as the opportunities arise. We have completed the preliminary step with Warren County for consideration of funding to offset the loss of revenue and the incentive pay provided to our essential workers during this pandemic. In addition, we have completed the initial application for such funds from Saratoga County.

For spending time supporting the dreams, visions, goals and ambitions of others, we thank you.



Targeted Donation For over 50 years, CWI has been enriching lives and empowering people to discover their potential. We have been able to significantly impact lives through innovative supports and services. Contributions have become a more important source of revenue for human services organizations as we have endured significant reductions in government funding. With your help, we can continue with our mission of empowering people and enriching lives throughout our community. We gladly accept: Venmo, Cash, Check, or Money Order Donations. Go to www.cwinc.org and click Donate.

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support CWI each time you shop, at no cost to you! When you shop at Smile.Amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to CWI. Amazon donates .5% of your purchases to the charity of your choice. It's free to use and makes a donation for purchases you were going to make anyway.

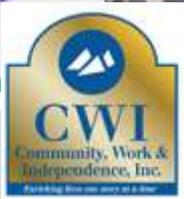
Log into your Amazon account and enter Smile.Amazon into the search bar, click on "Change your Charity," and enter CWI into the search box, we are the fourth one down.

STAFFING INCENTIVES

We remain optimistic that there will be sign on bonus funding in this new NYS budget (no details have been made available as yet) as well as additional funding to add to staff base rates. We have many positions vacant across the agency. Have someone in mind? Encourage them to apply. YOU are our best source of recruitment. **CWI Employees continue to be eligible for the Referral Bonus. Upon hire of qualifying referrals, the referring CWI Employees will receive a \$250 taxable bonuses per each qualifying referral. When in doubt, reach out to our HR department with any further questions.**

Update on our current incentives to entice and reward our team for working the hardest to fill shifts in our IRAs—weekends. We are providing stipends to work these hours. We continue to provide this incentive at almost total cost to CWI because we continue to experience alarming shortages of staff. We are using a variety of approaches to ensure the safety of our residents:

- ◆ In the fall, we had set the expectation for Sr. Team to work weekly to help cover open shifts.
- ◆ We found a path to pay exempt staff that pick up residential shifts outside their regular work schedule.
- ◆ (For the last 3 pay periods of 2021, 1450 hours of non-residential staff covered hours at the houses. It was still not enough. The omicron variant contributed to more absenteeism and the vaccine mandate topics caused staff to reconsider whether they wanted to stay employed.)
- ◆ Starting 1/3/22, we had requested exempt staff with some service based knowledge, to start picking up shifts in residential. We are trying to avoid shut down of IRAs like the 57 that other providers have already shut down across NYS.
- ◆ We have communicated with families and advocates of our IRA residents to coordinate when they can take their family member out of the IRA to relieve us for periods of time. This coordination had been going on in pockets on a more informal basis.
- ◆ We constantly encourage all staff to voluntarily pitch in where they can.
- ◆ \$3.15 increase in weekend hourly rates remains in place.



Community, Work & Independence,
Inc.
PO Box 303
16 Pearl Street
Glens Falls, NY 12801

Phone: 518-793-4700
Fax: 518-743-1061
E-mail: dgrace@cwinc.org

