

Open for Public Comment: Proposed Revision to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funded Initiative for Supporting Individuals and Families

ODP Announcement 23-030

AUDIENCE:

All interested stakeholders

PURPOSE:

To announce a 30-day public comment period on a proposal to expand funding made available to Administrative Entities (AEs)/Counties to support individuals and families on the waiting list to allow for pursuit of innovative strategies to provide alternatives to Community Participation Support (CPS) services.

DISCUSSION:

Staffing shortages and the lingering impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a decrease in the availability of CPS services for some individuals.

Spending for Respite and Family Support Services made available to individuals on the waiting list through the [Home and Community Based Services \(HCBS\) Spending Plan](#) approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is lower than projected in the majority of counties. The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) is requesting public comment on the following proposal that would allow AEs to repurpose

unspent ARPA respite dollars to develop and fund innovative alternatives to traditional CPS.

The ARPA respite initiative was approved for funding totaling \$12M from April 1, 2021, through March 31, 2025. To-date current spending is approximately \$700,000.

Under this proposal, AEs will be encouraged to participate in the development of alternative CPS services that do not supplant current waiver services to help bridge the gap for individuals and families who currently cannot find a CPS provider or are at risk of being placed on a provider waiting list for CPS services. This includes individuals on the waiting list and those who are enrolled in the waivers. ODP will encourage AEs to work collaboratively where there are regional needs and where regional partnership will best meet the needs of the population.

When:

This proposal requires CMS approval of the change to the HCBS Spending Plan. ODP anticipates that, if approved by CMS, expenditures using these funds will likely be available after September 30, 2023; but planning and organizing activities could begin sooner. ARPA funds will no longer be distributed after October 31, 2024. ARPA funds must be spent by March 31, 2025.

Principles for Development:

- AEs are expected to engage stakeholders to understand needs and aid in the brainstorming and development process.
- Alternative services cannot include activities and/or services currently covered through the Consolidated, Community Living, and P/FDS Waivers

for individuals enrolled in one of these waivers. ARPA funds cannot be used to supplant waiver services.

- Alternative services can include activities and/or services currently covered through the waivers for individuals who are on waiting list for enrollment in a waiver.
- Funding can be used for start-up needed to establish alternative services that meets the other criteria for development.
- AEs must be able to authorize or fund the service through waiver/base dollars once the pilot period/ARPA dollars are no longer available. ODP will consider potential modifications to service definitions for scalable alternatives to CPS.
- Alternative services must align and comply with applicable 55 Pa. Code Chapter 6100 regulations. AEs will be required to submit an innovative project proposal parallel to the requirements in § 6100.44 for larger projects. ODP will consider regulatory waivers if necessary to implement innovative models.
- Alternative services must support involvement in integrated community activities, exploring new experiences and interests, developing friendships and contribution to the community.

Suggested Options for AEs to Explore:

- Private industry partnerships

- Interest/industry specific arrangements such as: arts, theatre, fitness, community service, etc. that are inclusive for all community members
- Career or drop in centers
- Ways to develop employment opportunities or ways to build social capital
- Building peer networks
- Exploration of culture, civil rights, and self-advocacy
- Leveraging the Community of Practice for Supporting Families Regional Collaboratives

Public Comment:

ODP will review and consider all comments received by 11:59pm on **April 10, 2023**, in developing a final proposal for use of these ARPA funds. Public comment may be submitted through one of the following methods:

- Electronic submission through email to ra-odpcomment@pa.gov.
- Written submission through mail, addressed to:
Julie Mochon, Department of Human Services
Office of Developmental Programs
625 Forster Street, Room 510, Harrisburg, PA 17120

CONTACT:

Questions about this communication should be directed to ra-odpcomment@pa.gov