

Self-Empowered Life Funding (SELF) Waiver

Articles on the subject, published in *Pipeline** 2010-2012

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[Excerpted from September 29, 2010 issue – The waiver is named](#)

1. Ohio Self Determination Assn. 'Celebrates the Fire Within'

The enthusiasm generated by “Celebrating the Fire Within,” the theme of the Ohio Self Determination Association (OSDA) annual conference September 20-21 at the Doubletree Hotel in Worthington, definitely fired-up the nearly 300 participants in attendance during the two-day event, and may have prompted those with September’s heightened sense of preparedness (it’s National Preparedness Month – www.ready.gov) to make sure there were fire extinguishers ready to be deployed if need be... because this group was super-charged!

Not only was the conference a venue for several spirited and positive motivational speakers – but it was the forum for a history-making process of naming the new DODD Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver submitted last week for consideration by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

First, a Little Background

The Medicaid HCBS waiver is authorized in §1915(c) of the Social Security Act. The regulations permit a state to offer an array of home and community-based services that assist Medicaid beneficiaries to live in the community and avoid institutionalization. The state has broad discretion to design its waiver program to address the needs of the waiver’s target population. Waiver services complement and/or supplement the services that are available to participants through the Medicaid state plan and other federal, state, and local programs, as well as the supports that families and communities provide.

The design and operational features of a waiver will vary depending on the specific needs of the target population, the resources available to the state, service delivery system structure, state goals and objectives, and other factors.

The state has the latitude to design a waiver that is cost-effective and employs a variety of service delivery approaches, including participant direction of services.

How Do You Name a Waiver?

Given this background, DODD Director John Martin invited OSDA to lead the effort to involve all 2010 OSDA conference participants in brainstorming, discussing, refining, and then voting on a name that would accurately and appropriately identify the waiver -- and be meaningful to those for whom it has been developed. That is precisely what was accomplished.

Understanding the language in the proposed waiver description is important, and was part of the conference’s participant education efforts. With that foundation, it was equally important to empower people and energize statewide advocacy efforts through the waiver-naming process.

Out of the 164 name ideas initially brainstormed, the list was narrowed to nine. Then, following a 'sales pitch' by self-advocates and other supporters of each of the nine ideas, a final vote was taken, yielding the selected name:

Self Empowered Life Funding (SELF)

As noted in the official waiver submission description, *"The waiver will offer participant-direction of services and supports, and will embrace an individualized planning and budgeting approach."* The name selected could not have been more appropriate or descriptive.

Observing hundreds of individuals, family members, and professionals involved in the naming process was a strong testament to the democratic system. The process was detailed and organized, yet provided ample opportunity for individuals to express themselves, have fun, air questions and concerns, show enthusiasm for what the waiver might do for them personally, and be a part of something that had never been done before in Ohio's developmental disabilities community ... Take some of the bureaucracy out of waiver development, and empower the individuals ultimately to be served!

"The Ohio Self Determination Association does not just represent self advocates. OSDA represents them, yes – and all of the people affected by developmental disabilities services in Ohio ... families, County Board staff and other service providers, and friends. It's about all of us, working together, having a voice together."

- Dana Charlton, Director OSDA

Acknowledging the staff at OSDA and partnering agencies in the waiver-naming process, DODD Deputy Director Patrick Lanahan noted, "A special thank you to the board and members of OSDA, to staff and members of People First of Ohio, to staff of County Boards and other provider organizations – and especially to all of you self advocates! We are close to making this dream a reality, and we thank you for helping to make this happen." He added,

" This is definitely the first Home and Community-Based Services waiver that doesn't sound like it was named by a bureaucrat. And that's because it wasn't! "

OSDA President Lee Wedemeyer, Past President Annette Davis-Kramp, and Vice President Jeanne Stuntz, as well as OSDA Director Dana Charlton, assured that the waiver-naming activity was involving and meaningful for all. "We know you are excited about the options that will be made available to you with the way this proposed waiver is structured," said Stuntz, as she rallied the collective energy of self advocates and others before the final vote. She continued, "Are you ready to make history?!"



Lining up to continue the democratic process.

Self Advocates and support staff prepare to tell their stories as to why the waiver they name they like best should be chosen as 'the one!' 'Self Empowered Life Funding' was the final choice.

[Excerpted from October 27, 2010 issue - Waiver submitted to CMS](#)

1. Self Empowered Life Funding (SELF) Waiver Submitted to CMS Today

As described in the September 29, 2010 issue of Pipeline ([Pipeline Volume 4 Issue 20](#)) the Self Empowered Life Funding (SELF) waiver, which was named by self advocates at last month's Ohio Self Determination Association (OSDA) conference, today was submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

CMS is the federal agency that administers Medicare and Medicaid, and regulates the certification of agencies and care facilities for people with developmental disabilities. The review of the proposed new waiver via the application process to CMS is the next step in the waiver approval process.

According to DODD Director John Martin,

"This waiver originated with the 2008 Futures Committee recommendations, and was propelled by strong advocacy and self-advocacy, including many autism advocates, statewide. The development of this unique waiver is a testament to our stakeholders' positive relationships in working together, and demonstrating a willingness to use more contemporary approaches to waiver services in order to further empower Ohioans with developmental disabilities."

Director Martin noted that the work of a core stakeholder 'waiver sustainability group' was instrumental in spearheading the efforts leading to successful completion of the waiver application. This waiver is an extension of the new flexible waiver, proposed in the previous biennium, for 100 children with intensive behavioral needs. It now will serve adults and children, with current predictions estimating at least 500 individuals would be using the waiver the first year it is in effect, and 2000 individuals using the waiver by the third year it is in effect.

The DODD's commitment to serving 100 children with intensive behavioral needs will continue to be state-funded. The new flexible waiver will be self-directed by the people served, which offers individuals freedom to select the package of services that best suits

their needs, within a capped budget. The Department hopes to have this waiver in effect during FY 2012.

[Excerpted from May 25, 2011 issue – SELF Waiver Questions & Clarifications, CMS](#)

1. OACB Spring Conference Spotlights Progress and Transformational Change

The Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB) *Spring Conference*, May 19-20, at the Hilton Columbus/Polaris, presented a wealth of useful information for attendees. Setting the stage for the two-day agenda, the opening session included news and views from Office of Health Transformation (OHT) Director Greg Moody, DODD Director John Martin, and OACB Executive Director Dan Ohler.

Speaking to conference attendees on the subject of Medicaid reform and the impact of the proposed budget on Ohio's developmental disabilities system, Moody noted, "The overall vision is for better care coordination, and a person-centered care management approach - not a provider, program, or payee approach." He added,

"Ohio's developmental disabilities system has already worked through major transformational change, and that turmoil changed the system. It is now constructively focused, and the challenges now are to see what partnerships are possible that have not been formed yet, and how home and community-based services can continue to evolve and improve quality of life."

Moody's presentation also highlighted the importance of OHT's priorities to replace system fragmentation with coordination, and to focus on quality care, rewarding person-centered results by providing quality incentives and performance measures within Ohio's Medicaid system.

DODD Director John Martin's remarks included updates on the budget process, as it evolves within the framework of OHT partners' discussions. He stated, "One of the advantages I have seen already to the OHT partnership among Ohio's human services agencies is that I am learning from my colleagues by following other agencies' initiatives, and watching how they can and will affect the work that we do."

In addition, Director Martin announced that June will be a month of information-gathering and soliciting stakeholder feedback in the form of six Family Forums now scheduled around the state, focusing on service utilization. He noted,

"It was especially interesting to me that as CMS* has been reviewing our waiver proposals, including the SELF Waiver, they have asked us several questions that helped us to identify and effectively address service utilization opportunities.**

It became more apparent to me that decreasing utilization was actually, more accurately, increasing independence."

*Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

**Self Empowered Life Funding

[Excerpted from July 6, 2011 issue – SELF specifically funded in budget](#)

1. Ohio's 2012-13 Biennial Budget Now A Reality

On June 29, the Ohio House of Representatives sent the Conference Committee report on HB153, the proposed FY2012-13 budget, to Governor John Kasich following a vote of 59-40. Governor Kasich signed it into law on June 30, and HB153 became effective July 1. The new \$55.8 billion budget contains language effecting considerable change for local governments, schools, Medicaid, and the state's prison system, among other far-reaching reforms.

DODD budget reforms include a continuation of transformations already underway, and initiatives to better manage resources for long-term fiscal sustainability. The budget maintains funding levels for waivers, transfers the ICF/DD program and Transitions waiver from ODJFS to DODD, adds new choices to the Individual Options (IO) waiver, and provides funding for the new SELF waiver.

Major changes the Conference Committee report made to the House-passed version of HB153 included increasing funding for the PASSPORT* program; increasing funding for mental health programs; and increasing funding for programs affecting the more than 80,000 Ohioans who have developmental disabilities and their families. Outside of Medicaid-funded programs, most other areas of the budget saw funding decreases.

Director of the Office of Health Transformation (OHT) Greg Moody, has noted that the budget increases total Medicaid spending on long-term care by about \$166 million over the next two years, but that most of the additional dollars are targeted for home and community-based services. He explained,

"This should help to rebalance the long-term-care budget – our Number One budget directive."

It has been proven nationally that states which devote more dollars to home- and community-based care (and less to institutional care) spend less per person. In Ohio, according to current Administration projections, 58% of Medicaid long-term-care spending will be devoted to institutional care by the end of 2013, down from 64 % this year.

On the subject of reforming Medicaid to improve care and value, the [Final Budget Overview](#) notes two key areas of interest to Ohio's developmental disabilities community:

- *Caring for Vulnerable Ohioans in a Comprehensive Way:* The budget lays the groundwork for a new Integrated Care Delivery System (ICDS) to provide comprehensive, person-centered care that meets the physical health, behavioral health, long-term care and social needs of seniors and people with disabilities. Ohio will submit a waiver proposal to the federal government by September 2012 to implement the ICDS for people who are eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare ('dual eligibles') and people with severe and persistent mental illness.
- *Empowering Seniors and People with Disabilities to Live With Dignity Where They Choose:* An additional 12,890 Ohioans will receive Medicaid home- and

community-based services rather than having to choose an institution. The budget makes a significant investment in home- and community-based services for seniors and people with physical disabilities (PASSPORT/Choices, Assisted Living, Home Care and Aging Transitions waivers) and people with a developmental disability (Level One, Individual Options, DD Transitions, and the new SELF waivers). The budget provides \$532 million more for waivers for home- and community-based services over the biennium (above SFY 2011 levels), including \$55.6 million more for PASSPORT.

**PASSPORT: Pre-Admission Screening System Providing Options and Resources Today -- A waiver available to people over the age of 60 who meet certain requirements.*

[Excerpted from October 26, 2011 issue – SELF Waiver Information, as updated](#)

3. Update: Self Empowered Life Funding Waiver (SELF)

Earlier this year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) sent a Formal Request for Additional Information to DODD, asking for clarification as well as some revisions to the Self-Empowered Life Funding (SELF) Waiver Application. Following that, DODD has been working closely over the past several months with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and our stakeholders, to respond to CMS' questions and to modify the SELF waiver application accordingly.

The culmination of this work was sent to CMS on September 14, 2011, when the SELF Waiver application was then re-submitted to CMS, thereby re-starting the 90-day clock that CMS has to approve or deny a Federal waiver application.

The most significant changes made to the SELF Waiver application (based on recommendations made by stakeholders) in the resubmission of the Federal Waiver application are:

- Removal of the *Informal Respite* service under the SELF waiver. The decision was that this service could be covered equally under *Community Inclusion - Personal Assistance*.
- Removal of the *General* sub-category under Community Inclusion. The rationale being that this could be covered under *Participant-Directed Goods and Services*.

Regarding other work on the SELF Waiver that is currently underway, DODD is in discussions with ODJFS about the proposed rates for the new services under the SELF Waiver. In addition, we have been working with ODJFS in devising the contract language for the purpose of having the current statewide Financial Management Services (FMS) entity be the FMS vendor for the SELF waiver. Within the next few months, DODD also plans to post a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select a national vendor to provide Support Broker training in Ohio.

DODD is targeting an April 2012 effective date for the SELF Waiver.

More about the SELF Waiver at <http://dodd.ohio.gov/SELFwaiver.htm>

[Excerpted from December 7, 2011 issue – Formal approval expected](#)

1. SELF Waiver Update – Formal Approval Expected this Month

DODD is in the final stages of the Self Empowered Life Funding (SELF) waiver policy and program approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service* (CMS). With final program approval expected by mid-December, Ohioans with developmental disabilities soon will have access to a waiver that empowers individuals with authority to direct *how* and *from whom* they receive supports and services.

“We’ve been communicating with CMS pretty regularly, and are on track to receive formal written approval this month,” said Patrick Stephan, DODD Deputy Director for the Division of Medicaid Administration. He adds,

“This is exciting news, and we’re grateful to all the organizations and individuals who have dedicated so much time and effort toward making the self-directed waiver concept a reality for Ohioans.”

With approval finalized this month, DODD will complete administrative work and training preparation to start the new SELF waiver, which was named by self advocates at the 2010 Ohio Self Determination Association (OSDA) conference. The waiver, which offers a budget of up to \$25,000 for children and \$40,000 for adults, will begin enrollment in July 2012.

Look for more information on the features of the SELF waiver in *Pipeline* over the next few months, as well as on the DODD website at www.dodd.ohio.gov. Look for the drop-down menu under the word ‘*Medicaid*’ in the horizontal menu bar at the top of the home page.

**CMS is the federal agency that administers Medicare and Medicaid, and regulates the certification of agencies and care facilities for people with developmental disabilities. The review of a proposed new waiver via the application process to CMS is one of the steps in the waiver approval process.*

[Excerpted from December 21, 2011 issue – formal approval received](#)

1. SELF Waiver Approved – Offers Independence, Choices

On December 13, DODD announced that Ohioans with developmental disabilities soon will have a new option that allows them freedom to control how they receive support services. Under the recently federally-approved Self Empowered Life Funding (SELF) waiver, individuals direct how their approved support dollars are allocated, and how they receive waiver services such as remote monitoring, and health equipment or supplies. They also can utilize new designated services such as Community Inclusion and Integrated Employment to help live more inclusive lives within their communities.

DODD Director John Martin stated, “Waivers were developed more than twenty years ago to give individuals with developmental disabilities options beyond institutionalization, providing them funding support to receive care and support where they choose to live — in home and community-based settings.” He added,

“The new SELF waiver is the next evolution in understanding how to support individuals to direct how they live, not just where they live.”

The state anticipates enrolling up to 2000 individuals in the SELF waiver over the next three years. Within those numbers, up to 100 children with intensive behavioral needs

will receive a state-funded waiver—which offers flexible service options for families of children with autism and other behavioral support needs.

Waivers are approved under federal guidelines by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), and then operated by DODD. Ohio’s 88 County Boards of Developmental Disabilities administer waiver services, and work directly with individuals to enroll in and comply with waiver requirements.

Enrollment for the new SELF waiver will begin in July 2012, following program development and County Board administrative training.

Individuals must meet eligibility requirements for the waiver, including meeting required ‘level of care’ needs, and be willing and able to perform responsibilities associated with self-directing their care. The SELF waiver has an overall annual cost cap of \$25,000 for children and \$40,000 for adults. The cap offers predictability for counties and the state in projecting funding needs for the community, while the structure of the waiver offers participants the flexibility to tailor services for their particular needs.

DODD Deputy Director for Medicaid Administration Patrick Stephan noted, “This is a much-awaited service waiver for many in the developmental disabilities community because it recognizes individuals’ capabilities and desires to live more independently, and to take responsibility for directing their own lives.” He continued,

“It goes to the heart of our state’s vision of creating a healthcare environment that is person-centered and driven by quality of care.”

For more information: [http://dodd.ohio.gov/newsroom/Pages/Self-Empowered-Life-Funding-\(SELF\)-waiver.aspx](http://dodd.ohio.gov/newsroom/Pages/Self-Empowered-Life-Funding-(SELF)-waiver.aspx).