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By Email to: pwodp_outreach@pa.gov
Subject: Selective Contracting Concept Paper Comments

Dear Ms. Mochon,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Selective Contracting Concept Paper issued through ODP Announcement 23-042 on May 24, 2023. We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations to the general information that has been provided thus far. We further appreciate the stakeholder representation and multiple opportunities that Strategic Thinking Workgroup members will be afforded to deliberate and critically examine the concept and processes to intended to be developed through this initiative.

General Comments and Recommendations

Investment in DSP Workforce

We recognize and fully support the inclusion of *Implement Strategies to Support Workforce* as a primary goal of Selective Contracting. It is essential that regardless of performance levels or preferred tiers that the base level fee schedule rates equitably fund Direct Support Professional (DSP) wages at a competitive level for all service providers.

To this end, we recommend that the concept paper be amended to specifically include investment in the DSP workforce through a commitment to update market-based data upon which rates are to be developed in accordance with prevailing ODP regulations. This would enable Selective Contracting to be implemented from a more secure foundation and enable the ID/A system to reset fees with a greater understanding of the lasting impact of the pandemic and its influence on the broader service economy. This would also better support and facilitate the other stated primary goal: *Sustainability and Improving Service Quality*.

Clarity of System Design

An organizational chart illustrating the system design that ODP has described in its Concept Paper would be helpful in conveying the overall structure and relationships that ODP intends to utilize, such as the External Administrative Vendor relationship to Administrative Entities, existing ODP information systems, and any direct contact with or access to data by providers. Similarly, process maps to define and illustrate the functions to be performed in the new Selective Contracting service model would be useful to understand the concept and inform modifications going forward.

Existing ODP Policies & Regulations

It is recommended that a future revision of the Concept Paper include a summary or analysis of the expected impact and implications of Selective Contracting on existing ODP policies and prevailing regulations. While it may be too early to determine a significant portion in advance of the model's full development, policy areas such as the Supports Intensity Scale, Needs Group Assignments, Health Risk Screening Tool, Needs Exception Allowances and other practices and policies that currently align the level of care with payment would likely affect existing policies and/or regulations. Identifying these areas in advance may present opportunities to streamline certain processes to improve efficiency or enable simplification.

Workgroup Composition

We recommend continued evaluation and review of the workgroup composition to ensure that it remains diverse and balanced in its representation of the provider community. We further request that representatives from Mercer Consulting, NASDDDS, resources accessed from other states, and other subject matter experts working with ODP be available to and included in discussions with workgroup members so that they may benefit from their knowledge and expertise as options are being explored and considered in the development of the Selective Contracting model.

Specific Recommendations to the Concept Paper

Pay for Performance

It is understood that four tiers are under consideration for Residential providers and that the top two tiers would qualify for enhanced payment rates. As the performance standards and metrics are further developed it is requested that periodic reporting be communicated or posted to the ODP website so that the broader community can review updates and changes as they are being approved or considered for adoption.

Specific details on tiers and the reasoning and support behind the defined differentials should be shared widely, as well as considerations for specific contract language for preferred tier providers and the time frame for which enhanced payment rates would be available to providers in the event of tier changes or other factors that may affect preferred status. Once again, we emphasize that references to the existing Fee For Service rates for the lower tiers must still be sufficient to fund DSP wages at a competitive level.

Separate from enhanced payment rates, the Concept Paper more specifically identifies Potential Pay for Performance Standards, and which performance areas are currently under consideration for Pay for Performance. We are pleased that Technology is included for consideration for those providers using

Remote Supports. We further recommend the inclusion of Assistive Technology as a potential Pay for Performance area to promote its broader use and adoption.

Data Management

Opportunities to streamline data management and adopt common applications for physical health, mental & behavioral health, and medical record management are recommended. Integrated care solutions for the ID/A community are likely to require systems and resources that service providers may be unlikely to access on their own. We recommend as part of the Selective Contracting review and implementation process that all opportunities to leverage existing technologies that are already serving the ID/A community be evaluated for expansion and integration as part of a broader integrated care solution.

Timeline

We recommend that prerequisite activities be included on the timeline and that these include fee schedule rate adjustment activities to ensure that the newly adopted system is properly resourced and the budget to support it is fully approved in advance of its implementation. We further request that the provider community receive proper notice of any changes or expected delays well in advance of changes to the greatest extent possible.

Future Work

For each of the identified areas in this section of the Concept Paper we request that ODP publish, post, and distribute information for stakeholder review. To the extent that documents are produced for implementation and use by providers, or consultant reports and actuarial studies are prepared we likewise request that this information be made readily available so that we may remain informed as new development emerge and progress toward implementation proceeds.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments and recommendations. We greatly appreciate the ability to participate in this process and represent the ID/A service community toward improvements and enhancements to benefit service providers, families, and the people they serve.