



Public Policy for the People

Brought to you by
the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities



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**** House votes to transfer the Division of Aging Services to the Georgia Adult and Aging Services Agency (HB 86); Senate vote is pending.**

****Employment First Advocacy Day a HUGE Success!!**

Insider Highlights

Over the course of the last week, the House really began to dig in to the "Big Budget" (FY2016). If you care about the Unlock budget ASKS, now is the time to speak up with your story (see **Advocacy Corner** section).

GCDD also held its Employment First Advocacy Day, Wednesday, February 11, and it was very well attended. The chapel at Central Presbyterian Church across from the Capitol was packed with advocates ready to speak up about why Georgia needs to adopt an Employment First policy. Then advocates went over to the Capitol and met with their legislators. Learn more about what an Employment First policy means and why it is needed here in Georgia; click on the following link: <http://www.ciclt.net/ul/gcdd/EFGflyerfinal.pdf>

The following photos, and related quote from two attendees who speak about their experience, highlight GCDD's Employment First advocacy efforts.



"What a great opportunity and fun time we had today ... It clearly was a day of positive energy from the advocates in the room to the beginning of Jenna finding her voice. Thanks for making the day so special for us!"

-Denise & Jenna Quigley

Advocacy of the Week

We need YOU to get involved TODAY. Here are some things that you can do this week:

1. **Are you or your loved one on the ICWP waiver? Are you or your loved one desperately waiting for a NOW/COMP waiver?** If you answered yes to either of these questions, then read the **Advocacy Corner** section of this newsletter. We need you to send us your story to unlockthewaitinglists@gmail.com by Monday evening, February 16.
2. Register for GCDD's **Youth Advocacy Day on Wednesday, February 19, and Disability Day at the Capitol, Thursday, March 5.** Remember, your voice counts! To register, click the following link:
http://www.ciclt.net/sn/events/e_signup.aspx?ClientCode=gcdd&E_ID=500061&RegType=ATT
3. Mark your calendar to join us for the weekly **GCDD Public Policy calls every Monday at 9:30 a.m.** during the session. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter 232357 at the prompt.

Advocacy Corner

ICWP Waiver Recipients/Families - Send Unlock Your Story!

The Problem: Personal support - assistance with activities of daily living such as toileting, dressing, and bathing - is the core of the ICWP, and that rate is extremely low. Currently, the state rate for ICWP personal support is between \$10.84 (level 1 care) and \$14.77 (hospital level of care). This means that in most cases if you use an agency to hire your personal care attendants, they may get \$8-9 per hour. Even if you self-direct, you might be able to pay only \$9-10 per hour. These amounts are far less than the \$20 rate paid for personal care support in the other Georgia Medicaid waivers or in private home healthcare. (See the graph on the one pager at the link below for ICWP Rate Increase). Therefore, it is difficult to impossible to find qualified caregivers at this impossibly low rate.

The Solution: We need to gradually raise the ICWP Personal Support rate to \$20 per hour so Georgians on ICWP and their families can find and keep adequate caregivers. We recommend phasing in this amount, starting with a three dollar per hour increase in fiscal year 2016, which would have a budget impact of \$7,975,490.

Here is the link to the [ICWP Rate Increase](#) one pager document with information about what to ask the Legislature for.

What can you do? Send your story to unlockthewaitinglists@gmail.com by Monday evening, February 16. Unlock will share your story with the House Health Appropriations subcommittee (the Honorable Chairman Parrish) at the upcoming hearing for public comments (for time, date, and location see the **Budget 101** section).

Template for the ICWP Letter:

Subject: Please support Unlock Request: Fund Personal Support Rate Increase for ICWP for FY 2016 to Begin to Address the Disparity

Dear Honorable Chairman Parrish:

<State your name, where you live, the name of the person on the ICWP waiver, your relationship to that person if it is your loved one. Tell how long you (or your loved one) have been on the ICWP waiver and the kinds of difficulties and challenges it causes your family to have such a low pay rate. Tell how raising the rate would help you and your family. Be sure to mention if it has impacted anyone's ability to go to work or if you have lost a job because of not being able to find/keep caregivers at the low rate.>

I respectfully request that you support the Unlock the Waiting List request to gradually raise the ICWP Personal Support rate to \$20/hour so Georgians can find and keep adequate caregivers. We recommend phasing in this amount, starting with a \$3 per hour increase in FY 2016 for an amount of \$7,975,490.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

<Give your full name, complete mailing address, phone number, and email address>

Desperately Waiting for NOW/COMP Waiver? - Send Unlock Your Story

The Problem: If you are a Georgian with a significant developmental disability, you have three choices. One is to spend your life in a facility, like a private intermediate care facility or nursing facility. Your second choice is to get a NOW or COMP waiver. Virtually everyone would choose a life with the waiver rather than be stuck in a facility. But there's a problem: just because you qualify for a waiver doesn't mean that you get one. And that's the third choice - to hang on as best you can, wait, hope, and pray for a waiver. In fact, over 7,500 Georgians and their families are desperately hanging on as they wait for a waiver. To see our one pager on the issue, click [here](#).

The Solution: It's time to throw Georgia families a lifeline. We need to fund more NOW/COMP waivers to reduce the waiting list. The Unlock the Waiting List FY 2016 ASK is to fund 1,000 more DD waivers for Georgians most in need with a budget impact of \$16,493,000.

What can you do? Send your story to unlockthewaitinglists@gmail.com by Monday evening, February 16. Unlock will share your story with the House Human Resources Appropriations subcommittee (the Honorable Chairwoman Dempsey) at the upcoming hearing for public comments (for time, date, and location see **Budget 101** section).

Template for NOW/COMP Letter:

Subject: Please support the Unlock Request: Fund 1000 new NOW/COMP waivers

Dear Honorable Chairwoman Dempsey:

<State your name, where you live, the name of the person with a DD who needs a waiver, your relationship to that person. Tell how long you (or your loved one) have been waiting for services and the kinds of difficulties and challenges it causes your family not to have access to the needed care and services. Tell what a waiver would do to help your family. Be sure to mention if it has impacted anyone's ability to go to work or if you have lost a job because you have not had the waiver for your loved one.>

I respectfully request that you support the Unlock the Waiting List request to fund 1000 more NOW/COMP waivers for Georgians most in need for \$16,493,000.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

<Give your full name, complete mailing address, phone number, and email address>

*****Advocacy Question of the Week*****

Q: The thought of talking to my legislator intimidates me. I really care about issues facing the disability community. Can you offer me any resources so that I can learn how to talk to my legislator in person and maybe even testify at a hearing to give public testimony down at the Capitol?

A: First, you can go to the **Resources/Quick Links** section of this newsletter and click on the "For Tips on How to Talk to Legislator" link. Second, you can watch this webinar (See link below - time is approx. 45 minutes in length) in which GCDD's very own Dawn Alford was a guest speaker and discusses how to talk to your state legislator and how to prepare to give testimony at a public hearing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YOBhc0eRbKM&feature=youtu.be>

Budget 101

This section of the newsletter highlights the activities and information regarding the Amended FY2015 (July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015) and FY2016 (July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016) budgets.

HB 75 (the appropriation bill for the FY2015 Amended Budget) was passed by the House on 1/29/15 and the Senate on 2/11/15. Now it goes to Conference Committee to resolve any differences. To see a list of these differences that must be resolved, click on the link below.

[HB 75 FY2015 House and Senate Differences Tracking Document](#)

Budget hearings were held the week of February 9th on the FY2016 budget for the Department of Community Health and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. There will be additional budget hearings the following week in which public testimony will be taken on FY 2016 budget asks. If you are interested in attending, please see the information below.

The House Appropriations Health Subcommittee (the Honorable Chairman Butch Parrish's subcommittee)

Date: **Tuesday, February 17, 2015**

Time: **2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. - Public Comment on FY16 budget**

Location: **Room 341 Capitol**

This committee has jurisdiction over the Department of Community Health budget. Note: *Unlock the Waiting Lists!* will be giving testimony regarding the ask to **raise the rate on the ICWP waiver** (see **Advocacy Corner** section of this newsletter).

The House Appropriations Human Resources Subcommittee (the Honorable Chairwoman Katie Dempsey's subcommittee)

Date: **February 17, 2015**

Time: **2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Public Comment on FY16 budget**

Location: **Room 415 CLOB**

This committee has jurisdiction over the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities budget. Note: *Unlock the Waiting Lists!* will be giving testimony regarding the ask to **fund 1000 additional NOW/COMP waivers** (see **Advocacy Corner** section of this newsletter).

The FY 2016 House budget tracking document presents the base budget, agency recommendations, and Governor's recommendation.

The key sections of the budget most relevant for people with disabilities are:
Section 15: Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
Section 17: Department of Community Health
Section 27: Department of Human Services

To see the FY 2016 House budget tracking document, click the link below:

[HB 76 FY2016 House Budget Tracking Document](#)

The Governor's FY2015 Amended Budget and FY2016 Recommendations:

[Governor's FY2015 Amended Budget](#)

[Amended FY2015 Budget Highlights](#)

[Governor's FY2016 Budget](#)

Check out the *Unlock the Waiting Lists!* website for the most current information.
<http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com>

Bills

2015 Georgia Legislative Bills

This section will present a list of bills that GCDD is tracking by clicking on the link to the GCDD Legislative Report below. Please note the information within this section is current as of Wednesday, February 11, 2015 (cutoff for publishing).

[GCDD Legislative Report](#)

Note that the in the legislative report (see link above), both the House and Senate bills will be listed by Bill Number, Sponsor, Title Summary, and the most current activity followed by Comments and Summary of the Bill. **Please note that the second line of each bill will reflect the date of the most recent action and what action was taken.** You can also click on the bill number within the report to link to the actual bill language itself and get even more detailed information.

Below is a brief highlight of a few of the bills that passed through one chamber in the past two weeks. They must now go to the other chamber. To learn more about how a bill becomes law in Georgia, click the following link: [Tracking a Bill through the General Assembly](#)

Bills that Passed the House (must now go to the Senate)

HB62 Special needs students; waive certain qualifications for students whose parent is an active duty military service member stationed in Georgia within the previous year; provide A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 20-2-2114 of the official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to qualifications for the scholarship program for special needs students, so as to waive certain qualifications for students whose parent is an active duty military service member stationed in Georgia within the previous year; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

HB75 Supplemental appropriations; State Fiscal Year July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

A BILL to be entitled an Act to be entitled an Act to amend an Act making and providing appropriations for the State Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2014, and ending June 30, 2015, known as the "General Appropriations Act," Act No. 632, approved April 28, 2014 (Ga L. 2014, Volume One, Appendix, commencing at page 1 of 139), so as to make, provide, and change certain appropriations for the operation of the state government and its departments, boards, bureaus, commissions, institutions, and other agencies, for the university system, common schools, counties, municipalities, and political subdivisions, for all other governmental activities, projects, and undertakings authorized by law, and for all leases, contracts, agreements, and grants authorized by law; to provide for the control and administration of funds; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

HB86 Social services; provide for transfer of the Division of Aging Services to the Georgia Adult and Aging Services Agency; provisions

A BILL to be entitled to Act to amend Chapter 6 of Title 49 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to services for the aging, so as to provide for the transfer of the Division of Aging Services to the Georgia Adult and Aging Services Agency; to provide for definitions; to provide for the Georgia Adult and Aging Services Board; to provide for membership, powers, and duties; to provide for an executive director; to provide for transfer of rights, duties, and obligations; to amend various provisions of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated so as to make conforming changes; to provide for legislative findings; to provide for

related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

HB91 Education; eliminate Georgia High School Graduation Test; provisions

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the elementary and secondary education, so as to eliminate the Georgia High School Graduation Test as a requirement for purposes of graduation; to provide procedures for former students who did not pass one or more portions of the Georgia High School Graduation Test to petition to obtain a high school diploma; to provide for notice of such petition option; to provide for changes for purposes of conformity; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Bills that Passed the Senate (must now go to the House)

HB75 Supplemental appropriations; State Fiscal Year July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

A BILL to be entitled an Act to be entitled an Act to amend an Act making and providing appropriations for the State Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2014, and ending June 30, 2015, known as the "General Appropriations Act," Act No. 632, approved April 28, 2014 (Ga L. 2014, Volume One, Appendix, commencing at page 1 of 139), so as to make, provide, and change certain appropriations for the operation of the state government and its departments, boards, bureaus, commissions, institutions, and other agencies, for the university system, common schools, counties, municipalities, and political subdivisions, for all other governmental activities, projects, and undertakings authorized by law, and for all leases, contracts, agreements, and grants authorized by law; to provide for the control and administration of funds; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

SB1 Insurance; provide for certain insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 33-24-59.10 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to insurance coverage for autism, so as to provide for certain insurance coverage of autism spectrum disorders; to provide for definitions; to provide for limitations; to provide for premium cap and other conditions; to provide for applicability; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

SB3 'Supporting and Strengthening Families Act'; power of attorney from parent to another person; care of minor child; provide for

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 9 of Title 19 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to child custody proceedings, so as to provide for the creation, authorization, procedure, revocation, and termination of a power of attorney from a parent to another person for the temporary delegation of certain power and authority for the care of a minor child; to provide a short title; to provide for definitions; to provide for legislative findings; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Dates to Remember

The latest adjournment resolution set the legislative schedule for the rest of this session. To see it, click [here](#).

GCDD Youth Day at the Capitol: Thursday, February 19, 9-12 noon

GCDD Disability Day at the Capitol: Thursday, March 5

To register for either Youth Advocacy Day and/or Disability Day, click the link below:

http://www.ciclt.net/sn/events/e_signup.aspx?ClientCode=gcdd&E_ID=500061&RegType=ATT

Weekly GCDD Legislative call: Every Monday at 9:30 a.m. Dial 1-888-355-1249 and enter passcode 232357 at the prompt.

Also:

The entire month of February is Self-Advocates Month at the Capitol.

The **Georgia Division of Developmental Disabilities** is planning a series of public forums to collect comments and suggestions for the upcoming NOW/COMP waiver rewrite. See the list of remaining scheduled forums below. Visit the link below to get more information on how to register, to view the presentation slides that are being shown at the events, or to submit comments via an online form: <http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/nowcomp-community-forums>

Savannah: February 17

Tifton: February 24

Athens: February 2

Resources/Quick Links

[Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities 2015 Legislative Agenda](#)

For more One Pagers for Advocates, click below:

<http://www.unlockthewaitinglists.com/actionsalerts.html>

[For Tips on How to Talk to Your Legislator](#)

[Accessibility on Capitol Hill](#)

[House committee meeting calendar](#)

[Senate committee meeting calendar](#)

[Watch the Session Live!](#)

[Find Your Senator and Representative](#)

Thank you from the GCDD Public Policy Team!

Dawn Alford: Acting Public Policy Director

D'Arcy Robb: Public Policy Contractor - Employment First

Dave Zilles: Public Policy Contractor - Unlock the Waiting Lists - Parent Advocate

[Join our Advocacy Network Today!](#)