

Georgia's Two MR/DD Waivers

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In Georgia, there are two (2) waivers that serve persons with mental retardation/developmental disabilities. The first waiver is called the Mental Retardation Waiver Program (MRWP) and the second is the Community Habilitation and Support Services Waiver (CHSS). Although both serve the same-targeted populations, there are some similarities and differences. The Federal government through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approves both waivers. The waivers represent a source of funds for services for people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities that combines state and federal (Medicaid) dollars. The State Legislature appropriates waiver funds.

The waivers are designed to pay for community-based services to people who require the same level of care as those persons who are served in Intermediate Care Facilities for people with Mental Retardation (ICF/MR). The eligibility diagnoses for services include people with mental retardation or other closely related developmental disability which results in impairments of general intellectual functioning or adaptive behavior requiring treatment and services similar to those services needed by persons with mental retardation. The financial eligibility for funding requires that the individuals be a Medicaid recipient or Medicaid eligible through medical assistance only (MAO) determination.

The Intake and Evaluation Teams (formerly known as the Clinical Evaluation Teams) are responsible for determining if the individuals meet the criteria for services and for recommending the most appropriate services. The regional office designee is responsible for authorizing the services that the individual waiver participant receives.

The Department Community Health (DCH) is the State agency, which administers all Medicaid funds in Georgia. DHR manages the waivers funds according to DCH's restrictions and under the policies and procedures stipulated by CMS and DCH. The waivers are not entitlement programs; that is, people who meet the criteria may or may not receive services through this fund source. The limits on available dollars and service slots necessarily restrict the opportunity to always use the waivers as a fund source.

Daily operational management of the waiver funds is one of the functions of the DHR, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD) Office of DD and Regional Offices. DHR has the authority to fund services for people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities, contract with appropriate providers for these services, and monitor the quality of services provided. Each MHDDAD region has a specific allocation of dollars and slots to provide services for people with mental retardation/developmental disabilities. The Regional Office designated staff approve the services, which will be funded with waiver funds.

In both waivers, Medicaid reimbursement may be supplemented with state dollars. These state dollars may be used to assist with room and board costs that are not covered by Medicaid or supplement other non-reimbursed costs incurred by the provider to support the consumer. Also, the services and dollars follow the individual from one approved provider to another throughout the state as the individual and their family request. However, if the individual no longer needs the waiver services or passes away, the region can serve another person with these Medicaid dollars. The two waivers are summarized below.