

Virginia's Individual and Family Support Program

**State Plan for Increasing Support for Virginians with Developmental
Disabilities**

FY 2022 Update

Background

In March 2013, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) launched the Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP) to assist those on the Commonwealth's HCBS DD Waiver Waiting List (the Waitlist). The IFSP's target population includes both individuals who have a developmental disability and their families. IFSP initially provided financial assistance to individuals and families. Nonetheless, the program has grown to provide varying types of supports to the over 14,000 individuals on Virginia's DD Waiver Waiting List.

Annual Updates

In 2017, the IFSP State and Regional Councils adopted a strategic plan establishing the Commonwealth's priorities for addressing the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities who are awaiting waiver services.

The Plan expresses the Commonwealth's large-scale goals and objectives for serving individuals and families on the Waitlist. It focuses on the IFSP-Funding Program, the creation of the IFSP State and Regional Councils, and establishment of other programmatic areas needed to establish a comprehensive and coordinated set of strategies for supporting the needs of families.

Per the DOJ Settlement Agreement and in partnership with the IFSP State Council, DBHDS has agreed to provide an annual update on the State Plan that includes the following:

- Annual Summary of IFSP-Funding Program activities, grantee satisfaction, and activities to establish priorities to the Funding Program
- Summaries of communication efforts, including:
 - o usage of the *My Life, My Community* website and
 - o efforts to inform individuals on Virginia's DD Waiver Wait List (WWL) of supports, including IFSP-Funding, case management, and family and peer mentoring.
- Summaries of IFSP Regional Council activities, and
- Summaries of activities supporting family and peer mentoring.

Additionally, each year, IFSP staff will review the existing State Plan and provide updates to the IFSP State Council.

Summary Overview

The following is a summary update on the program indicators and outcomes from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022. The updates reference outcome indicators that were adopted by the IFSP State Council in April 2019. In partnership with the State Council, IFSP will provide annual updates to the State Plan to reflect changing program priorities and needs. Changes will be included as addendums to the State Plan document, and when/if needed, IFSP will partner with the State Council to adopt formal revisions.

Annual summary of IFSP-Funding Program activities, grantee satisfaction, and activities to establish priorities of the IFSP-Funding Program (See Appendix A: Funding Program Summary)

Each fiscal year, IFSP develops a summary of funding activities detailing the amount of funds requested by applicants. *Appendix A: Funding Program Summary* provides detailed overview of the funds awarded for the FY 2021 and FY 2022 funding periods, including the results of the Survey of Need in lieu of a satisfaction survey.

The Portal was closed for extensive review and testing by DBHDS IS&T until launching for the beginning of the Fall 2021 “Save a Draft” period on September 14. At that time, draft applications could be saved until the portal closed on October 4, then reopening for final submission and approval on October 7. However, the Portal suffered another breach and was shut down within 6 minutes of opening.

DBHDS IT provided IFSP staff with a list of all Applicants with completed and saved drafts as of October 4, 2021. IFSP staff verified eligibility through the WaMS system and confirmed addresses through CSBs. IT also performed a forensic evaluation of the data in the Portal system in order to determine and identify those who were potentially exposed during the breach. 4,061 Applicants and their Responsible Parties were identified as being potentially exposed during the Breach, breaking down to a total of 2,597 adults and 1,464 minors under 18. Per federal HIPAA and privacy regulations, DBHDS notified these 4,061 individuals within the mandated 60-day notification period via postal mail, using DOC mail house services. DBHDS offered these individuals free credit monitoring services for up to two years. As of the last day of the enrollment period, 186 adults and 60 minors under 18 registered for these services.

From September 14th to October 4th, IFSP received over 4,036 requests for assistance during the “Save a Draft” period leading up to the opening of the Portal for applications. Given the large number of applications saved and IFSP’s desire to assist families as quickly as possible, DBHDS approved all IFSP application drafts that were saved as of October 4, 2021, utilizing funds from FY 2020 and FY 2021. \$4,036,000 was awarded to these families, with each Applicant being awarded \$1,000.

IFSP staff worked throughout the year to resolve issues to ensure all 4,036 individuals received and had access to their funding. Initial issues included returned funding cards, non-registered cards, wrong addresses, and failure to register the card. The follow-up work by the IFSP staff resulted in 99.9% of those issues being resolved.

In addition, because no funds were distributed in FY 2021, IFSP could not conduct the Annual Satisfaction Survey. Instead, a Survey of Needs was developed and distributed as part of the FY22 Annual Notification Message to People on the Waiver Wait List to the entire population of individuals on the WWL. However, only 147 respondents completed the survey, so IFSP does not find the results to be truly representative of people on the WWL. These survey questions were presented at the June 2021 State Council meeting, and Council members provided input as shown in the *State Council Minute Archives* in Appendix F.

After the 20th Study, DBHDS determined that the previously submitted Prioritization model was not feasible. DBDHS was directed by the 2022 General Assembly within Item 313.NN. of the 2022

Appropriation Act (Chapter 2, 2022 Special Session 1 Acts of Assembly) to utilize emergency authority to promulgate regulations that change the current distribution of annual Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP) funds from a ‘first-come-first-served’ basis to one based on program categories and set criteria. If the emergency action is approved, it will go through Executive Branch Review and will become effective when signed by the Governor. Because the application process is based on those pending amendments, DBHDS cannot initiate the funding cycle until the emergency regulation is effective. Preparations are in place to launch the funding cycle as soon as the regulation is effective.

The newly proposed model will prioritize funding for individuals with a Priority 1 DD Waiver Waitlist Status based on their Critical Needs Score. This will ensure those with the highest needs receive funding. As there are also individuals with Priority 2 and 3 statuses with critical needs developing, the newly proposed model would provide some funding to those individuals, as well.

Communication efforts, including activities of the *My Life, My Community* website and efforts to inform individuals on Virginia’s DD Waiver Waiting List of availability of critical supports, such as IFSP-Funding, case management, and family and peer mentoring

IFSP continued its efforts towards providing more comprehensive information to families during FY 2022. The *My Life, My Community* website (MLMC) officially launched in August 2019. IFSP continues to improve its information and referral supports by addressing its navigability. As stated in the 18th and 20th Study reports, IFSP expanded its contract with SeniorNavigator to include a redesign of the MLMC website. IFSP also continued to align MLMC with its work in the Community of Practice to curate page content that will feature information based on the life stage of the site visitor. The MLMC website redesign and content updates, including the proposed State Council portal, were completed in May 2021. IFSP’s June 2021 State Council Meeting included a live demonstration of the new features by SeniorNavigator.

In 2019, IFSP implemented an annual process to inform people on the Waiver Waiting List about eligible supports, including case management, the *My Life, My Community* website, family and peer mentoring, and the IFSP-Funding Program. IFSP continues to follow this process. In August 2021, IFSP notified all individuals on the Waiver Waiting List with a valid email address, and information was sent via email to 7,727 individuals out of the 14,056 individuals on the Waiver Waiting List represented in WaMS as of August 2021. Those without an email address received hard copies of the same promotional materials via postal mail to 6,329 people represented by 5,064 physical addresses in August 2021. Appendix B’s *Annual Notification for Individuals on WWL FY22 Update and Quantity Details 2.14.21* provide more details about the promotional materials included.

In June 2021, the IFSP Communications Coordinator convened a group of internal and external stakeholder partners with expertise to serve as an advisory workgroup for key IFSP-related communications products directed towards self-advocates and family members of people with DD throughout the Commonwealth. This group was formed to provide feedback that would help improve IFSP’s information and outreach materials on a regular frequency. Appendix B’s *IFSP Communications Advisory Group Proposal*, June 2021 notes, and December 2021 notes contain details about the group’s composition and the materials discussed. No meetings were held after December 2021 or the rest of FY 2022 due to staffing constraints.

In FY 2021, IFSP published the “IFSP: First Steps” document and distributed it to physicians who were likely to have contact with children and families on the Waiver Waiting List. IFSP continued this outreach effort in FY 2022. A total of 1,160 “First Steps” documents and cover letters were mailed to 58 medical professionals by postal mail. Appendix B’s *Methodology for “IFSP: First Steps” Document: Annual Update* contains details about the document’s content and distribution updates.

Summaries of activities supporting family and peer mentoring

IFSP continues to partner with the Partnership for People with Disabilities (The Partnership) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to provide peer family supports to individuals on the DD Waiver Waiting List. The Partnership’s Center for Family Involvement (CFI) is home to the Family-to-Family Network of Virginia, or F2F Network, that provides direct support to families of children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities through a network of over 20 staff and roughly 80 active volunteer Family Navigators. Six CFI staff serve as Regional Network Coordinators on IFSP’s five Regional Councils. The Partnership provides support to the IFSP program by providing emotional, informational, and systems navigation support to families.

The Partnership is also home to the Leadership for Empowerment and Abuse Prevention (LEAP). In FY 2022, IFSP modified the contract with The Partnership to include funding for LEAP. LEAP provides training on healthy relationships and information about preventing abuse to adults with disabilities; each closed training is led by an adult with a disability. The September 2021 State Council meeting featured a short presentation about LEAP trainings. As of June 2022, LEAP procured new grant funding to adapt these trainings specifically for adults with autism and teens with intellectual and developmental disabilities during 2022 and 2023.

In May of 2020, IFSP signed a contract with The Arc of Virginia to develop and implement a peer support model for self-advocates. As in FY 2021, through IFSP support, The Arc of Virginia was able to use its expertise in supporting its existing self-advocacy alliance to provide training for self-advocates who were interested in providing peer mentoring support through a waiver service provider. IFSP plans to continue providing The Arc with ongoing financial support to increase its capacity to serve people on the WWL, so that individuals with DD have access to both the self-advocacy alliance and 1:1 subsidized peer supports. The Arc also holds quarterly professional development trainings for peer mentors that are developed based on peer mentors’ schedules and topics of interest. As of July 2022, The Arc has trained 12 peer mentors and matched 5 mentors with mentees. As of January 2022, two of The Arc’s peer mentors was appointed to the IFSP State Council.

All data on family and peer supports may be found in Appendix C: Family and Peer Supports.

Utilization of the *My Life, My Community* website and call center

IFSP continues to partner with SeniorNavigator to maintain the *My Life, My Community* (MLMC) website, which was launched in 2019. As stated in the *Communication Efforts* section of this overview, IFSP expanded its contract with SeniorNavigator to include a redesign of the MLMC website to increase and enhance navigability to site visitors looking for information about supports, as well as adding information based on the life stage of the site visitor. In FY 22, SeniorNavigator reported that the site received 39,427 visits from 27,243 users with an average of 77.5% new visitors and 22.5% returning

visitors per month.

In addition, this partnership allows for the continuation of high-quality customer support via the MLMC call center. Operators fielded over 4,000 calls from families and providers in FY 2022. The call topics and frequencies are listed in Appendix E: SeniorNavigator Quarterly Data. Due to IFSP staffing vacancies, DBHDS modified SeniorNavigator's contract in February 2022 so that My Life, My Community call center operators could begin contacting over 300 individuals and families with unregistered Way2Go debit cards that contain IFSP funds.

Summaries of the IFSP State and Regional Council Activities

At the beginning of calendar year 2021, IFSP hired two regionally-based peer support specialists in the Northern and Western regions. Both positions were part-time contract positions. To help demonstrate IFSP's commitment to supporting the voices and needs of families, both contractors were also family members of individuals with developmental disabilities. They had knowledge of waivers, regional resources, and insight into the challenges of outreach and capacity-building within specific communities in their respective regions (Spanish-speaking and rural communities, respectively). In addition to assisting with Regional Council outreach efforts, developing community resource maps, and providing DBHDS with administrative support in their regions, IFSP had also planned to utilize these contractors to help implement the proposed Funding Prioritization Model's Emergency Assistance category by assisting with intake and assessment of families that presented a crisis. The hope was that these peer support specialists could provide guidance for families in their respective Regional Councils who were seeking financial and social-emotional support.

As detailed in the 18th and 20th Study reports, IFSP's Community Coordinator oversaw the development and implementation of the Coordinated Council meeting format to plan, market, and conduct Regional Council events. This format allowed for IFSP to conduct an informational statewide main presentation, followed by regional breakouts where each Council could learn more about a related resource or program in their communities. This model was developed using feedback from IFSP Councilmembers and VCU CFI's Regional Network Coordinators (RNCs), as were the topics explored at each Coordinated Council meeting: mental health and crisis planning, transition and employment, and advocacy.

The April 2022 State Council meeting focused on the proposed changes to the IFSP Funding Program. Council members received information about the proposal and offered feedback and ideas. In the new fiscal year, the IFSP team will convene with the State Council to discuss and devise a plan to reconstitute the Regional Councils. Details of the IFSP staff activities to support the State and Regional Councils are included in the attachment titled Appendix F: Council Narrative.

Following the unexpected staff departures of peer support specialists, the Community Coordinator, and the Program Manager, IFSP's Regional Council activities were put on hold as of October 2021. A new IFSP Program Manager was hired in February 2022 but left the agency in July 2022. A Community Coordination Supervisor was hired at the end of June 2022. Due to the departure of the manager, the Community Coordination Supervisor filled the interim manager role beginning on July 25, 2022 and will continue in that role until a new manager is hired.

Future Updates

In addition to these changes, IFSP will collaborate with the IFSP State Council to conduct a more

extensive review of the IFSP State Plan in January 2023.