

Paying Parents, Spouses, and Relatives for Direct Services

Issue

For many years, family members of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) could not be paid to provide support for their children, siblings, spouses, and other relatives. Over time, policies were changed to allow family members to be paid to provide these supports.

All people are interdependent, and rely on our friends and family members for support from time to time. Some people with disabilities – both children and adults – need more support with things like:

- Medical therapies and interventions
- Emotional supports
- Support at school
- Support to work

Some people with IDD prefer to have support from a parent, family member, or spouse, because they have a close and trusted relationship. That person knows them best.

Sometimes, support from a parent, family member, or spouse is best because of the way our service system is set up. The service system does not always meet people's individual needs, help them achieve their goals, or offer culturally respectful supports. Other common challenges are high staff turnover rates, higher-cost, isolation, and segregation.

Many of these factors make family supports the best option, but this can cause financial challenges. Some parents and family members have had to step away from their careers in order to provide the right supports. Some people have to work many jobs to make ends meet, while providing support for their family member.

This can cause serious emotional and financial difficulties for families who lose income. As a result, they may be forced into the formal service system.

For all of these reasons, policies that allow family members to be paid to provide direct support are important. However, at times, policy makers have tried to stop or limit these payments.

Position

The Arc Minnesota supports policies that allow family members of people with IDD to be paid for providing support. Family members should be defined broadly to include parents of minor children, adult children, spouses, or other relatives.

People who are part of the natural family support system of a person with IDD are familiar with the type of support they need and want. It should be the decision of the individual and their family if family members and relatives should provide that service.

Paying family or relatives can provide personal and financial stability. It can help reduce language or cultural barriers that exist in the formal service system.

Adults with disabilities who access support from their family members must be able to choose what is important to and for them. The individual must have informed choice and make decisions about how they spend their time, with whom, where and how they work, and other supports they access.

Paying Parents, Spouses, and Relatives for Direct Services

It is important to have high standards for all types of supports, including those provided by family members. This includes:

- A criminal background check
- Training as required by the State of Minnesota
- Training chosen by the individual who is accessing support
- Submitting needed paperwork for tracking time and services

When people are accessing supports from their family members, they should:

- Have the same budget that they would for more formal services
- Have the same hourly rate as they would for more formal services
- Be able to access benefits for their family members
- Have individual rights and protections
- Be free from abuse, neglect, and maltreatment

Reviewed and approved by The Arc Minnesota Public Policy Committee on 11.3.2020