



February 23, 2022

To: Renee Rader, Kenneth Bausell, and Deb Goda

The members of the Developmental Disability Consortium and other community advocates are writing to you to express our concerns about equity in service provision for persons with I/DD.

### **FAMILY NAVIGATION AND PEER SUPPORT: EQUITY FOR PEOPLE WITH I/DD**

Family Navigation and Peer Support Services should be accessible to individuals and families with an array of needs. This is a critical time to ensure these services for the I/DD community are part of Medicaid Transformation, the 1915(i) state plan amendment, and the implementation of the Olmstead Plan. Family Navigation and Peer Support services can help reduce barriers to care, connect people to appropriate resources and supports in a timely manner, and empower people to make informed decisions. Families and peers are an untapped resource that can address growing workforce shortages.

Family Navigation and Peer Support Services are needed to support children and adults with complex behavioral and medical needs and those on the Registry of Unmet Needs (RUN). In addition, children from birth to 3-years or older who do not yet have an IDD/ASD diagnosis but are presumptively eligible and therefore not on the RUN must be connected with the necessary services.

The benefits of Family Navigation and Peer Support are equally critical for individuals connected to a care management team and those who are not. These can include:

- Meaningful engagement and effective access to necessary community support systems including healthcare, education, employment, housing, and benefits
- Use of hospital and crisis services can be avoided or reduced in frequency and duration
- Out-of-home placement or higher-cost treatment services are avoided

While the Care Management Team Extender level of service will be adequate for some, it is not sufficient for all. Children and adults entering the system, children with complex medical needs, and those with significant barriers to accessing care require a higher level of attentiveness. These services should be available as stand-alone services as Peer Support is within the Behavioral Health system.

### **Essential Next Steps**

1. Tailored Plans should offer access to family navigation and peer support services beyond the extender role within the Care Management Team.
2. Family navigation and peer support services should be included in the 1915(i) state plan amendment
3. These services should be available for presumptively eligible children from birth to age 3 as well as during lifespan transitions including from school to adulthood and into retirement
4. There must be an adequate reimbursement rate for Family Navigation and Peer Support
5. Evaluate the outcomes of Family Navigation and Peer Support and how these services can be tied to value-based care and reimbursement

Respectfully, Alisha Tatum, Chair, NC Developmental Disabilities Consortium