



### The Facts

#### **6264 individuals are on the Waiting List as of October, 2007**

- 48% on the waiting list are adults living at home who have no services at all.
- 48% are children whose families need some support when their child is not in school.
- 4% are in custody of Department of Children's Services, State funded, Regional Mental Health Centers or Nursing Homes
- Crisis List** – 1153 individuals as of November 2007

**In FY2006-2007 DMRS is enrolling 50 individuals each month.**

**Approximately 95 individuals are added to the Waiting List each month.**

### Action Needed Now

**The General Assembly should appropriate funds to provide services and supports for a minimum of 100 persons each month on the waiting list.**

### Impact of Waiting on families

- *Longevity of individuals with developmental disabilities*
  - People with disabilities are living longer as a result of better health care.
- *Aging of caregivers*
  - Traditionally, Tennessee families have "taken care of their own". Parents are aging and are in poor health and are less able to care for family members with disabilities
- *Loss of educational gains*
  - Students with disabilities leave school with many skills ready to work; however, no programs are available to help them transition to employment.
  - Employment and postsecondary education opportunities are needed.
- *Lack of accurate information for families about the waiting list and obtaining services*
  - Many do not have information about the service system in Tennessee, how to apply for service and how to get assistance.
  - People need accurate information on how to apply for services and to take advantage of local resources.

### What is needed

Funds must be available in Tennessee for needed services and supports. To ensure that people get the help they need, the following must occur:

- Public systems should actively reach out to individuals and to families to make them aware of the process to obtain services and supports.
- Determination of eligibility and plans to identify necessary services and supports should be completed promptly on request by qualified personnel who are independent from the service provider and the funding agency.

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- Cost effective options must be made available to families creating real choices
- The State needs to gather information about services that should be developed in the community.
- Individuals and families should be made aware of community service and support options that are readily available. Information should be gathered on services that need to be developed and implemented
- In emergency situations, people should receive services and supports within hours.

### **Conclusion**

Individuals with disabilities and their families have been waiting too long with no end in sight. Tennessee should no longer ignore the needs of these citizens. To address these critical needs:

- DMRS should be required to develop and implement a long-range plan that would reduce the Waiting List by 50 % in five (5) years
- DMRS's plan must involve strategies to provide more cost effective supports and services to people in all categories on the waiting list. Waiting for people to reach crisis is unacceptable.
- DMRS's plan must revolve around a strategy to take more people off the waiting list each month than the number of new people being enrolled on the waiting list each month waiting for services.
- DMRS should develop and implement a process to determine the specific needs of each person on the waiting list so that appropriate services and supports can be developed based on identified needs.
- All future Waivers in Tennessee must be cost effective, person centered, flexible, and must include self directed options.
- DMRS should amend the self determination waiver to raise the cap to a maximum of \$45,000. Families will be given the opportunity to create flexible self-determined supports which will include residential options, and not preclude other services available within the more comprehensive (expensive) HCBS waiver.
- DMRS should create another Waiver with a cap of \$15,000 per year to address the needs of the adults and children waiting for services and supports who may need only minimal supports.
- DMRS shall not allow anyone to remain on the waiting list in the Crisis category more than 30 days or on the Urgent list more than 120 days

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