


# STATE INNOVATIONS



## DC COLLABORATION STREAMLINES MEDICAID WAIVER PROCESS

### Implementation

The District of Columbia's Office on Aging (DCOA) began collaborating with the Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF) to improve the Elderly and Persons with Physical Disabilities (EPD) Waiver Program in June of 2014. The EPD Waiver is a Medicaid waiver program that allows individuals with disabilities and older adults to receive services in a home and community-based setting if they are able to safely do so. Available services include case management, homemaker, respite, chore, personal care aide, personal emergency response, assisted living, and environmental accessibility adaptation.

The two agencies worked together for 12 months through the planning and implementation of procedural updates to the waiver program. DCOA and DHCF decided to transition the responsibility of completing pre-enrollment screens from the care management agencies to DCOA after evaluating the process. DCOA hired a team to manage the enrollment activities that consisted of a Medicaid lead, enrollment specialists, and a clinical social worker supervisor. The newly established team began conducting in-person pre-enrollment visits with clients in their homes and collecting data from the interviews.

The system was launched with a set of new internal processes in combination with staff training on the procedures and materials. DCOA and DHCF also piloted the procedures with several real-time EPD

Waiver referrals. Weekly and monthly meetings were held between DCOA, DHCF, and providers involved in the EPD Waiver with meeting participants ranging from frontline staff to directors and management teams. These recurring meetings were used as an opportunity to communicate systemic barriers and suggested solutions to the two collaborating agencies. A weekly data review was also conducted to hold all participants accountable. The team was dedicated to listening to feedback and updating materials as needed.

Beyond the internal implementation steps, DCOA and DHCF developed educational materials in plain language for dissemination to clients, caregivers, and community partners. They also hosted monthly training sessions for this audience to answer questions and hear feedback on the process from their perspective.

### Results

Overall, the EPD Waiver process was examined and improved at every step after the restructuring team completed their efforts. As a result, DHCF and DCOA eliminated the enrollment backlog in May of 2016; prior to their work, the backlog was over 600 applications. In addition, customer service provided to DC area residents improved along with community outreach and stakeholder engagement. The agencies have observed an increased understanding of the EPD Waiver eligibility criteria and enrollment process among residents in the

community. Finally, the restructuring resulted in increased accountability and transparency of the District's agencies and providers involved in the process.

An important additional achievement is the improved relationship between DCOA and DHCF. The partnership is mutually beneficial, and the work has fostered a new culture of collaboration at all levels from Executive to front line staff. In order to facilitate the open communication that was instrumental in the success of the EPD Waiver transformation, DCOA and DHCF continue hosting weekly management team meetings where further process refinements are discussed based on client feedback.

DCOA and DHCF continue to build upon the work they have already completed. The two agencies are currently preparing to expand their memorandum of understanding which will enable them to receive more Medicaid funding for application assistance and enrollment services. Additionally, DHCF received approval for over \$2.2 million from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to fund a multi-agency case management system that will service DHCF, DCOA, and the District of Columbia's Department on Disability Services (DDS). DCHF and DCOA look forward to continuing to build on their partnership for successful development of future projects with a focus on positive impact for DC residents.