



Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Consulta Life Coaching and Support Brokerage
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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Alarice Vidale the Palacios

- I am certified support broker
- I have 7 years' experience providing services to adults and their families in self direction
- I am the parent of a specially enabled individual, who is a participant in DDA's self-directed waiver.

My agency, Consulta has represented and advocated for over 100 families and their stakeholders in Self Direction. Consulta currently provides active brokerage service to 60 participants, their family members and their support providers. Consulta has active cases in all four (4) regions where DDA has offices.

Since our inception, our business niche has been to represent families whose origins were not of the United States. This is because, I being an Afro-Latina, of Caribbean descent by way of South America, understand the challenges faced when attempting to access forms of social services.

Here we are, years later and the result is; we are a solid organization that represent many individuals with multicultural backgrounds and varying degrees of financial status. Over the last three years we've have observed increasing variation in the self-directed service delivery model.

Specifically access of services by individuals and their families of cultural and racial groups. The lack of access we noted were simple barriers:

- 1) lack of information or inconsistencies in the information provided.
- 2) poor follow up to waiver questions, discouraging responses to families seeking hope
- 3) lack of qualified DDA agents (CCS), who failed to thoroughly understand the programs
- 4) straight deterrence in the form of steering families away from self-directed services
- 5) Language - the universal connector - although DDA has translation services many families still miss an opportunity to connect because the DDA agent (CCS) does not access the translation services in order to take a 15 minute conversation and share the services with the family.



The aforementioned, is mild compared to what we have been witnessing recently. Consulta has had several cases where the families have been approved for self-directed services and the funding package has taken months to be received by the fiscal management service. The most recent case of this involved a family from Pakistan whose package was approved in October 2021, however their funding package was not loaded until January 25, 2022.

Equality and the accessibility of services are further driven apart by the functionality of the DDA regional offices (WMRO, SMRO, ERO, CMRO), which all fail to have a minimum standard of cohesive operation. Simply put each regional office oscillates in a different direction resulting in prolonged access or even denial of services to qualified individuals.

My agency has done the work. We can provide the numbers and if you were to ask, we would be able to provide you with the names. In the state of Maryland families, government officials and communities on a whole, must continue to strive for families to be able to access information about all DDA waivers and services. We must continue to strive to be certain that all regional offices of DDA are aligned and are providing equal services. We must strive to create an eligibility and verification process that does not hinder or injects large amounts of time into a participant's plan and budget. Such uncoordinated practices result in high denial of services to the prospect who is in dire needs of these services.

DDA, as an organization needs to define a strategy which will allow for equal accessibility and diversity support for all families.

Respectfully,

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