



DATE: February 16, 2021 **COMMITTEE:** Senate Finance
BILL NO: Senate Bill 441
BILL TITLE: Developmental Disabilities Administration - Self-Directed Services (Self-Direction Act)
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 441 - Developmental Disabilities Administration - Self-Directed Services (Self-Direction Act)

Bill Summary: Senate Bill 441 forms an Advisory Council for Self-Directed Services. The council would provide recommendations to the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration. Senate Bill 441 also increases funding for the Self-Directed service program and preserves self-directed services components that are important to many people.

Background: Over the last three years, Kennedy Krieger Institute has expanded our service delivery to include adults with disabilities through the Developmental Disabilities Administration and Department of Rehabilitation services by becoming a licensed adult service provider. We currently serve 31 adults with disabilities through our Meaningful Community Services programs:

Meaningful Community Services at Kennedy Krieger Institute helps individuals with disabilities obtain and maintain meaningful employment and community engagement through a person-centered approach. Meaningful Community Services include, Project SEARCH, CORE Foundations, and CORE Foundations Community Programming. CORE Foundations services adults with disabilities through self-directed services.

Project SEARCH at Kennedy Krieger Institute is a 10-month, transition to work program for individuals 18 through 24 years of age that provides hands-on job training through integrated worksite rotations, career exploration, innovative adaptations and mentoring from experienced staff. Upon program completion, the ultimate goal for interns to utilize their internships skills to gain competitive employment. Project SEARCH at Kennedy Krieger Institute trains 8-12 interns in each cohort, and currently 21 Kennedy Krieger Institute departments participate in Project SEARCH by hosting interns.

CORE Foundations provides individuals of all abilities with the opportunity and education to continue developing core skills that are the foundation for a successful adult life. We develop a customized program in partnership with each individual to support their independence. The person-centered approach requires an individualized plan, daily schedule, and goals for each individual. CORE Foundations is a certified and licensed Developmental Disabilities Administration adult provider for the state of Maryland and a community-based program serving 7 Maryland counties. CORE Foundations provides employment services through the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

Meaningful Community Services pivoted to **Virtual Support Services** to continue to provide innovative, person-centered, and engaging services to individuals with disabilities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rationale:

Self-Directed Services are offered through the Community Pathways Waiver at the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). “This is service delivery for individuals with developmental disabilities and/or designated representatives who wish to exercise more choice, control, and authority over their supports. Self-direction gives waiver participants and families greater control over the services they receive, how they receive them, and who provides them. At the same time, people who self-direct must be willing to take on the responsibility of managing their services.”

The DDA has been undergoing changes in service delivery and fee models for several years and continues to make changes. The number of individuals receiving Self-Directed Services has increased over the last several years, however there is an inconsistency of knowledge of self-directed services and the processes in which the Person-Centered Planning team should follow. An Advisory Council would provide the opportunity to discuss aligning the processes, policies, and expectations of self-directed services to better serve those who are eligible for the program.

Kennedy Krieger Institute is in favor of an advisory council that would make recommendations to support consistency in service delivery, and equity among individuals who have selected self-directed services. Prior submission of this bill requested that self-directed services be removed from the Community Pathways Waiver, and return to a waiver of its own. Self-directed services were a standalone waiver program and only had 41 participants; when self-directed services waiver was combined with the Community Pathways waiver in 2013 it has grown to 1500 participants. We are not in support of this, as it could have implications on eligibility for individuals, and access to self-directed services.

Currently the Person-Centered Planning team consists of the individual receiving services, family member, community of coordinator of service, support broker, vendor provider (if applies), staff, and any other person the individual requests to be at these meetings. The knowledge and experience of each member is inconsistent across Person-Centered Planning teams, which leads to inequalities of the services an individual receives and understands they can access. We have experienced this with individuals who we support receiving services through self-direction. Increased knowledge and consistency would benefit those receiving self-directed services, and the advisory council could evaluate these practices to support progress.

Kennedy Krieger Institute requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 441.