

To Employment and Community First CHOICES Participant or Family Member,

You are receiving this letter because you or your loved one currently receives home and community-based services through the Employment and Community First CHOICES program. We want to make sure you know about an exciting change that will be coming next year! If you have heard about it, we understand there are a lot of questions and also some misinformation. So, we want you to hear directly from us.

You may have heard that the department is working with TennCare to transition day-to-day oversight of the Employment and Community First CHOICES program to DIDD. That's only part of the story. We are bringing **all** Medicaid programs and services for people with IDD together into a single aligned system under DIDD's leadership. This includes the DIDD waivers, Employment and Community First CHOICES, and ICFs/IID (Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities). We will use the managed care program to help us deliver these services (just like we do in Employment and Community First CHOICES). But DIDD will be in charge of all of the programs. We will work with your TennCare health plan to help you get the services you need to reach your goals in the community.

Why We Are Making These Changes

- DIDD will bring our expertise and commitment to serving people with IDD to all of these programs.
- We will provide new and exciting enabling technologies to help people do the things they want to do with as much independence as possible.
- We will make sure every person supported has the chance to work, become as independent as they can be, and be part of their community.
- We will align requirements for providers across the programs, reducing provider costs, and allowing them to focus on what matters most—supporting people with IDD.
- We will help to address workforce shortages by making sure DSPs are able to work where they are really needed, and while allowing people to have as much freedom and independence as is right for them.
- We will bring in additional Medicaid dollars that will help to prevent cuts in services or provider payments that might otherwise be necessary.

What This Means for You or Your Family Member:

Nothing about your services **is changing**. Even when we start the new system, the services and supports you currently receive will still be available. You will have the **same TennCare health**

plan. You can use the **same providers.**

Through this change, you or your family member will gain the expertise and oversight from the department that is solely dedicated to supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. DIDD is already working to help support the Employment and Community First CHOICES program in intake, critical incident management, and quality assurance. But this change will bring DIDD expertise in program operations, enabling technology, person-centered planning, self-advocacy, clinical and behavioral services specifically for people with IDD, communications, provider support and other important areas.

We will work with you to see if there are opportunities to use technology that can give you more freedom and independence, both at home and on the job. We also will work to establish an open line of communication with you, so you can hear directly from us about services and supports.

We Want to Hear from You!

An important part of any change is making sure people have an opportunity to let us know what they think. Right now, we have shared what's called a concept paper, so that people know our ideas. That way they can tell us what they like, where they have concerns, and other information that is important for us to know. As we make more decisions about how we think the new system will work best, we will share more information. Any changes we make to the 1915(c) waivers or the Employment and Community First CHOICES program will ensure that people are still able to receive the services and supports they need, be posted for public comment before we submit them to the federal government, and consider input from people, families, providers and other stakeholders.

We hope that this helps clear up any misinformation you might have. We know you might still have many questions, and we don't have all the answers yet. We want to hear from you. The people we support are always our first priority, and nothing about these plans will change that. Rather, we believe this will allow all of us, working together, to create a better system for all Tennesseans with IDD, helping them to live their best lives in their communities.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Brad Turner and the DIDD Team
