



URGENT

NOTIFICATION FOR PROVIDERS

Important Information for Providers January 19, 2022

NCDHHS Releases 2022-23 Olmstead Plan for the State's System of Community-Based Services and Supports for People with Disabilities

RALEIGH – The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services published its Olmstead Plan, designed to assist people with disabilities who receive or are eligible for publicly-funded services to reside in and experience the full benefit of being part of day-to-day life in communities alongside those without disabilities. Developed with stakeholders from across the state, the plan's goal is to divert people from entering institutions and to support those wishing to leave.

The Olmstead Plan serves as a blueprint for how NCDHHS, the Office of the Governor and other governmental agencies and their partners, with support from the North Carolina General Assembly, make decisions about services to fund and support the health and well-being of North Carolinians with disabilities. The plan outlines an approach to the array of services and supports vital to community living. Access to housing, employment, home and community-based services and other supports are addressed in the plan.








"The Olmstead Plan captures our Department's total commitment to build towards the vision in which every North Carolinian can live, work, and thrive in their communities," said NCDHHS Secretary Kody H. Kinsley. "The plan supports building capacity in our community-based health care services and supports and furthering the infrastructure that enables health such as transportation, employment, and housing. I look forward to working with all of our stakeholders to implement this plan."

The plan incorporates years of work across NCDHHS and North Carolina to refine and re-define policies and programs so they more clearly align with the U.S. Supreme Court's imperative in the *Olmstead v. L.C.* ruling regarding community integration.

The plan builds on the foundation of NCDHHS' [Transition to Community Living](#) and [Money Follows the Person](#) programs. It also expands the work to address social determinants of health that are at the heart of [NCDHHS' Healthy Opportunities](#) initiative.

"The Olmstead Plan will become the filter through which DHHS will develop disability and aging policy," said NCDHHS Deputy Secretary for NC Medicaid Dave Richard. "We are grateful to the many community partners who helped develop this plan and will continue serving as trusted advisors as we implement it."

In its first phase, the plan is a strategic framework with measurable targets for 2022 and 2023, including:

-  Strengthen alternatives for community inclusion for individuals and families through increased access to home and community-based services and supports.
-  Implement strategies to recruit, train and retain the frontline staff who provide daily services that allow people to live, work and thrive in their communities.
-  Transition people to more independent living situations from institutional and segregated settings and provide needed supports in the community for individuals who are at risk of entering these settings.
-  Increase opportunities for supported education and pre-employment transition services for youth, as well as competitive integrated employment opportunities for adults with disabilities.
-  Address disparities in access to services.
-  Increase input to public policymaking from families and individuals with lived experience.
-  Use data for making quality improvements in the provision of services.

The Olmstead Plan will direct the development of diverse work plans, aligning the activities of NCDHHS and other state agencies with its goals.

The Olmstead Plan Stakeholder Advisory's (OPSA) 36 external stakeholders have met quarterly and in committee for 15 months, advising NCDHHS on all aspects of the plan. The NCDHHS Office of the Senior Advisor on the Americans with Disabilities Act and its contractor, the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC), [released an October 2021 draft](#) that incorporated the insights, expertise and lived experience of the OPSA. The now final version reflects a review of 91 public comments.

A new OPSA will be formed to monitor and assess the progress and outcomes of the plan. This will include evaluation reports, integration with departmental strategic plans and alignment with

other relevant entities. The Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations ([LME/MCOs](#)) Tailored Plans and Standard Plans play a key role in Plan implementation.

[Learn more about the landmark U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Olmstead v L.C.*](#)

SPECIAL BULLETIN COVID-19 #218:








Direct Care Worker Eligibility Portal

 [The Eligibility Portal is now available for registration and submission](#)

January 19, 2022

NC Medicaid established the [Direct Care Worker Eligibility Portal](#) for purposes of the direct care workers and support staff one-time bonus and the ICF-IID direct care worker wage increase announced in Special Bulletins COVID-19 [#212](#) and [#213](#). The Eligibility Portal is now available for registration and submission.

Providers will submit attestations of their eligible workers by selecting “Register” at the top right of the page and using one of the following registration codes to establish themselves as the authorized user:

-  **Single Provider Service Location:** Authorized users submitting an attestation for a single provider service location will use a combination of NPI and location code; example: 123456789-001. If the authorized user does not know the location code, they should contact Medicaid.DCW.HelpDesk@dhhs.nc.gov.
-  **Single Provider with Multiple Provider Service Locations:** Authorized users submitting an attestation for a single provider with multiple provider service locations will use a combination of NPI and location code; example: 123456789-001.
-  **Multiple Providers:** Authorized users submitting attestations for multiple providers using multiple NPIs should use one provider NPI as the registration code. Upon registration, the user must email Medicaid.DCW.HelpDesk@dhhs.nc.gov with the following information to receive the ability to submit for multiple provider NPIs:
 -  Registration username
 -  Registration email
 -  All NPIs submitting for
 -  Corporate name

SPECIAL BULLETIN COVID-19 #214:

Direct Care Worker HCBS Wage Increase

 [Eligible direct care workers to receive wage increase from eligible HCBS providers](#)

January 14, 2022

The Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2021 (S.L. 2021-180) approved a Medicaid budget provision to implement the home- and community-based (HCBS) direct care workers wage increases. The details of provider and worker eligibility and timing are outlined below.

Overview:

To receive funds for direct care workers they employ, providers must be Medicaid- and/or NC Health Choice-enrolled and recognized by NC Medicaid as a HCBS provider. All funds for the direct care worker wage increase will be implemented through NC Medicaid Managed Care and NC Medicaid Direct rate increases to providers who furnish specific services defined by NC Medicaid.

All providers who are eligible to participate in the HCBS wage increase are responsible for identifying each of the direct care workers they employ who meet the following direct care worker definition and eligibility requirements:

- 🌱 **NC Medicaid defines a direct care worker as** “a non-licensed individual who by virtue of employment generally provides to individual Medicaid- and/or NC Health Choice-enrolled patients, clients or residents direct contact assistance with personal care or activities of daily living, exclusive of qualified professionals.”
- 🌱 To be eligible, the direct care worker must interact directly with patients or clients

All providers who are eligible to participate in the HCBS wage increase are responsible for distributing no less than 80% of funds received to increase wages of direct care workers identified using the criteria above within the next practicable pay period, not to exceed 45 days. This wage increase must be in addition to the rate of pay each employee was receiving as of Oct. 1, 2021 (excluding any temporary wage increases made in response to COVID-19).

All providers receiving a rate increase under this policy shall keep documentation of the use of that rate increase to report on wages of direct care workers that meet the criteria above. Provider records of wage increase are subject to audit.

Webinars:

NC Medicaid will hold webinars to provide an overview of the direct care worker HCBS wage increase Jan. 21, 2022 & Jan. 24, 2022. Providers may register for the applicable webinar using the links below:

- 🌱 [Behavioral Health Webinar Jan. 21, 2022, 1 p.m. ET](#)
- 🌱 [Behavioral Health Webinar Jan. 24, 2022, 1 p.m. ET](#)
- 🌱 [Physical Health Webinar Jan. 21, 2022, 2:30 p.m. ET](#)
- 🌱 [Physical Health Webinar Jan. 25, 2022, 2:30 p.m. ET](#)

SPECIAL BULLETIN COVID-19 #213:

Direct Care Worker ICF-IID Wage Increase

 [Eligible direct care workers to receive wage increase from eligible ICF-IID providers](#)

January 14, 2022

The Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2021 (S.L. 2021-180) approved a Medicaid budget provision to implement the Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF-IID) direct care worker wage increases. To meet the administrative and reporting requirements of that Act, NC Medicaid will require eligible Medicaid enrolled providers to submit some standard information. The details of provider and worker eligibility and the process for the required provider submissions are outlined below.

Eligibility and Requirements:

Providers must be Medicaid enrolled and recognized by NC Medicaid as privately owned intermediate care facility for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ICF-IIDs), including ICF-IID-level group homes. NC Medicaid will distribute the funding for direct care worker wage increases to eligible providers participating Medicaid Managed Care through capitation rate increases. Providers within NC Medicaid Direct will have funds distributed through NC Medicaid Direct rate increases.

Per legislation, eligible providers must distribute no less than 80% of funds received through the rate increases to increase the rate of pay paid to its direct care worker employees. This wage increase must be in addition to the rate of pay each employee was receiving as of Oct. 1, 2021 (excluding any temporary wage increases made in response to COVID-19), and providers must implement the wage increase within the next practicable pay period after the provider rate increase is effective, not to exceed 45 days.

To facilitate documenting that the incremental funding from the rate increase is used consistent with legislative requirements, all eligible providers must identify each of the direct care workers employed by their facility who meet the following direct care worker definition:

NC Medicaid defines a direct care worker as “a non-licensed individual who by virtue of employment generally provides to individual Medicaid enrolled patients, clients or residents direct contact assistance with personal care or activities of daily living.”

Consistent with legislation, eligible providers must provide NC Medicaid with data documenting baseline direct care worker pay levels and also attest formally (through the

submission process described below) that they will meet the standards outlined above for direct care worker wage increases. Providers receiving a rate increase through this funding must also keep documentation of the use of that rate increase to be able to report on wages of direct care workers, as defined above, upon request. Provider records of wage increase are subject to audit and are required to be made available upon request by NC Medicaid or by the relevant LME/MCO or PHP paying the increased provider rates. NC Medicaid reserves the right to request accounting/payroll information, such as payroll journals, for auditing purposes.

Timeline:

To meet the legislative requirements outlined above, eligible providers must submit the required employee data and attestation information to NC Medicaid no later than 5 p.m. EST on Jan. 31, 2022.

Submission Process:

NC Medicaid has established a Direct Care Worker Eligibility Portal to intake the data requirements for the ICF-IID Wage Increase. The portal will be made available for registration and submissions on Jan. 18 2022; a link will be distributed through a Special Bulletin.

All providers should identify one executive or authorized employee as the point of contact (POC) to register for access to the eligibility portal. The designated POC will request access through the Direct Care Worker Eligibility Registration page establishing themselves as the authorized submitter. These individuals will request access through the Direct Care Worker Eligibility Portal by submitting one of the following registration codes.

- 🌱 **Single Provider Service Location:** Authorized users submitting an attestation for a single provider service location will use a combination of NPI and location code; example: 123456789-001. If the authorized user does not know the location code, they should contact the Medicaid.DCW.HelpDesk@dhhs.nc.gov.
- 🌱 **Single Provider with Multiple Provider Service Locations:** Authorized users submitting an attestation for a single provider with multiple provider service locations will use a combination of NPI and location code; example: 123456789-001.
- 🌱 **Multiple Providers:** Authorized users submitting attestations for multiple providers using multiple NPIs should use one provider NPI as the registration code. Upon registration, the user must email Medicaid.DCW.HelpDesk@dhhs.nc.gov with the following information to receive the ability to submit for multiple provider NPIs:
 - Registration username
 - Registration email
 - All NPIs submitting for
 - Corporate name

Upon registration, the authorized submitter will receive access to the portal and the Direct Care Worker ICF-IID Eligibility Form. The authorized submitter must download, sign, and attach a PDF copy of the Direct Care Worker ICF-IID Wage Increase Attestation to each submission. Providers are also required to download, complete, and attach the ICF-IID Wage Baseline Template to each submission. Both the attestation and baseline template will be located in the knowledge base on the home page of the Portal. Please note that all entry fields on the eligibility form must be completed prior to submission.



Webinars:

NC Medicaid will hold webinars to provide an overview of the direct care worker ICF-IID wage increase submission requirements on Jan. 19, 2022 and Jan. 20, 2022. Registration is now available for the webinars below:

 [ICF/IID Jan. 19, 2022, 2:30 p.m. ET](#)

 [ICF/IID Jan. 20, 2022, 2:30 p.m. ET](#)

For more information:

-  Providers may contact Medicaid.DCW.HelpDesk@dhhs.nc.gov with any inquiries.
-  Direct care workers should talk with their employer to resolve all inquiries on eligibility and payout.

SPECIAL BULLETIN COVID-19 #212:

Direct Care Worker and Support Staff One-Time Bonus

 [Eligible direct care workers to receive one-time bonus from eligible providers](#)

January 14, 2022

The Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2021 approved a Medicaid budget provision for one-time bonuses up to \$2,000 for eligible direct care workers and support staff. NC Medicaid's goal is to provide a bonus that is as close to the legislative goal of \$2,000 as possible. This bulletin provides details on the eligibility and process for those one-time bonus payments. NC Medicaid has created a process for eligible Medicaid- and NC Health Choice-enrolled providers to submit required information to participate in the direct care worker and support staff one-time bonus.

Eligibility Requirements:

To receive funds for direct care workers and support staff they employ, providers must be Medicaid- or NC Health Choice-enrolled and recognized by NC Medicaid as one of the following service providers or as a participant in one of the following waivers:

- ▲ Personal Care Service providers (home care and adult care home)
- ▲ Intermediate care facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities (ICF/IID) including ICF/IID-level group homes
- ▲ Home health providers
- ▲ Nursing homes
- ▲ Behavioral health residential facilities including Level III and Level IV residential treatment facilities, psychiatric residential treatment facilities (PRTFs), medical management and crisis stabilization facilities and facilities providing inpatient substance use disorder treatment
- ▲ Participation in waivers:
 - The Community Alternatives Program for Children (CAP/C)
 - The Community Alternatives Program for Disabled Adults (CAP/DA)
 - The North Carolina Innovations waiver
 - The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) waiver

All providers who are eligible to participate in the direct care worker and support staff one-time bonus are responsible for identifying each of the direct care workers and support staff employed by their facility who meet the following direct care worker and support staff definition and eligibility requirements:

- ▲ For purposes of the Direct Care Worker and Support Staff One-Time Bonus, NC Medicaid defines direct care worker and support staff as “non-licensed employees of an eligible provider under S.L. 2021-180 section 39.21 who by virtue of employment either interact directly with patients or clients or provide direct care support services at a licensed health care facility”. Support Staff are defined as “individuals who prepare and serve food, medication aides, staff who provide housekeeping or maintenance and individuals who provide social and recreational support.
 - Note: NC Medicaid must provide a uniform bonus amount for all eligible direct care workers and intends to provide as close to \$2,000 per worker as is fundable given the available funds and number of eligible workers. NC Medicaid requests that each eligible provider also separately identify the number of licensed direct care employees who meet the eligibility criteria below, so that it can be determined whether including those employees would affect the uniform amount that could be provided to all non-licensed and licensed workers. Licensed employees meeting

the direct care worker and support staff definition and eligibility requirements may only be considered eligible if funds remain available to provide the legislative and NC Medicaid goal of \$2,000 bonuses per eligible employee.

- ▲ To be eligible, a direct care worker or support staff must meet ALL of the following:
 - Interact directly with residents/patients or clients, or provide direct care support services at a licensed health care facility
 - Be employed by the same eligible provider since March 10, 2020, through August 1, 2021
 - Have worked at least 1,000 hours providing direct care services between March 10, 2020, and August 1, 2021
 - Not be not an employee of the State or otherwise eligible for any other employment-related bonus under the Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2021

Submission Process:

NC Medicaid has established a Direct Care Worker and Support Staff Eligibility Portal for providers to submit the number of eligible direct care workers they employ. The portal will be made available for registration and submissions on Jan. 18, 2022; a link will be distributed through a Special Bulletin.

All providers should identify one executive or authorized employee as the point of contact (POC) to register for access to the eligibility portal. The designated POC will request access through the Direct Care Worker and Support Staff Eligibility Registration page, establishing themselves as the authorized submitter. These individuals will request access through the Direct Care Worker and Support Staff Eligibility Portal by submitting one of the following registration codes:

- ▲ Single Provider Service Location: Authorized users submitting an attestation for a single provider service location will use a combination of NPI and location code; example: 123456789-001.
- ▲ Single Provider with Multiple Provider Service Locations: Authorized users submitting an attestation for a single provider NPI with multiple provider service locations will use a combination of NPI and location code; example: 123456789-001.
- ▲ Multiple Providers: Authorized users submitting attestations for multiple providers using multiple NPIs should use one provider NPI and location combination as the registration code. Upon registration, the user must email Medicaid.DCW.HelpDesk@dhhs.nc.gov with the following information to receive the ability to submit for multiple provider NPIs:
 - Registration username

- Registration email
- All NPIs submitting for
- Corporate name

Upon registration, the authorized submitter will receive a username and one-time password to access the portal and the Direct Care Worker and Support Staff One-time Bonus Eligibility Form. The submitter must download, sign and attach a PDF copy of the Direct Care Worker One-time Bonus Attestation to each submission. The attestation will be located in the knowledge base on the home page of the Portal. Please note that all entry fields on the eligibility form must be completed prior to submission.

Timelines:

- ▲ **Jan. 24, 2022:** Providers must identify and notify all employees of direct care worker bonus eligibility no later than 5 p.m. EST on Jan. 24, 2022.
- ▲ **Jan. 31, 2022:** Providers must submit the Direct Care Worker and Support Staff One-time Bonus Eligibility Form with the total of all eligible direct care workers and support staff to NC Medicaid no later than 5 p.m. EST on Jan. 31, 2022. Providers who do not meet this deadline will be considered ineligible for participation in the one-time bonus.
- ▲ **Feb. 15, 2022:** Providers must finalize and submit all re-determinations of eligibility resulting from the appeals process no later than 5 p.m. EST on Feb. 15, 2022.
- ▲ **March 1, 2022:** NC Medicaid will review all submissions through the month of February 2022 for accuracy. For all approved submissions, NC Medicaid will issue payment directly to providers by March 1, 2022. If NC Medicaid's internal review identifies a discrepancy, the provider will be formally notified by email with the reasoning and number of direct care workers deemed eligible by March 1, 2022.
- ▲ **Within 45 days of funds receipt:** Providers shall distribute the DHHS-specified one-time bonus amount to each identified direct care worker and support staff within the next practicable pay period, not to exceed 45 days from funds receipt.

Direct Care Worker and Support Staff Eligibility Appeal Process:

To ensure that all eligible direct care workers and support staff participate in the one-time bonus, NC Medicaid requires participating providers to notify all direct care workers and support staff (as defined above) of one-time bonus eligibility or ineligibility no later than Jan. 24, 2022.

NC Medicaid requires all participating providers to establish an internal appeals process. The purpose of the appeals process is to enable employees initially notified as ineligible to submit information supporting eligibility. The provider shall deem all employees who submit information satisfying NC Medicaid's definition of direct care worker and NC Medicaid's

support staff eligibility criteria as eligible to participate in the one-time bonus. All newly obtained information through the appeals process should be archived by the provider and made available to NC Medicaid upon request. Employees must submit an appeal to their employing provider no later than 5 p.m. EST on Jan. 31, 2022.

Providers must submit all final eligibility determinations no later than 5 p.m. EST on Jan. 31, 2022. Providers with outstanding appeals beyond the Jan. 31, 2022, deadline must finalize and submit an additional Direct Care Worker and Support Staff One-time Bonus Eligibility Form no later than 5 p.m. EST on Feb. 15, 2022. Only those direct care workers and support staff re-determined as eligible through the appeals process shall be included on form submissions occurring between 5 p.m. EST on Jan. 31 and 5 p.m. EST on Feb. 15, 2022.



Upcoming Webinars:

NC Medicaid will hold webinars to provide an overview of the direct care worker and support staff one-time bonus and submission requirements on Jan. 19, 2022, and Jan. 20, 2022. Registration is now available for the webinars below.

 [One-time Bonus Jan. 19, 2022, 1 p.m. ET](#)

 [One-time Bonus Jan 20, 2022, 1 p.m. ET](#)

For more information:

-  Providers may contact Medicaid.DCW.HelpDesk@dhhs.nc.gov with any inquiries.
-  Direct care workers should talk with their employer to resolve all inquiries on eligibility and payout.

DO NOT REPLY to this email as this is an unmonitored email address. If you have any questions please send an email to IT.Support@trilliumnc.org.

URGENT NOTIFICATIONS FOR NETWORK PROVIDERS

