

Achieve Services
Parents & Families Meeting
March 22nd, 2023



PRESENTED BY TOM WEAVER
CEO – ACHIEVE SERVICES

WELCOME!!

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Meeting Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- Update on Policy Challenges
 - DWRS Funding
 - Task Force to Eliminate Subminimum Wages (14c)
- Advocacy: A-Team MN
- Achieve Wings Project
- Q&A

DWRS Background

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- Our services are paid for primarily through “waivers,” with 50% state \$\$ and 50% federal \$\$.
- Because federal dollars are used, the federal government through the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) must approve our rate structure.
- In 2008, CMS instructed MN to change its rate system from a county-by-county system to a uniform system that better reflected the costs of services provided.

DWRS Background

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- In 2013, the Legislature passed the Disability Waiver Rate System (DWRS), which totally restructured how rates are set for disability services.
- The DWRS creates a major shift in funding for many, creating some “winners” and many “losers.”
- To maintain some stability in the system, the legislature included a 6-year banding period, during which rates wouldn't change by more than .5 – 1%/year. The 6-year banding period expired on 12/31/19.

DWRS Background

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- Banding protection has expired, and Achieve Services has lost around XX% of our rate revenue.
- First year of unbanded rates was 2020, but impacts were masked by the COVID pandemic.
- Some DWRS losses will be mitigated by “inflationary” and “competitive workforce factor” (CWF) adjustments”, but annual losses could still exceed \$400,000/yr.

DWRS Impact on Achieve

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- Achieve’s historic rate enabled us to pay staff better wages and benefits.
 - Achieve’s staff turnover rate in 2016: 7%
 - Achieve’s turnover rate in 2019: 21%
 - Achieve’s turnover rate in 2022: 29%
 - Nationwide DSP turnover rate: Over 50%
- The DWRS is a “dumbing down” of programs like Achieve, and will continue to cause high staff turnover until meaningful changes to the rate formula occur.

Current Environment

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- Today, Achieve serves about 160 participants, down from our Pre-Covid roster of 195.
- We currently have well over 100 people on waiting list to join Achieve.
 - Some of those on the list are in other programs
 - Many are waiting at home with no services
- The reason we can't serve more: We can't find staff willing to work for the wages we offer!!!

- We have a core group of rock-star staff who've been with us for years – and due to longevity, their wages are better (but still not enough).
- Biggest problem is entry level positions, where our starting rate for DSPs is only \$16.50/hour.
- That wage is a reflection of the funding we get from the state to provide our services – **IT IS NOT ENOUGH!!**

Funding Opportunity

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- The State's \$17+ billion surplus presents a unique opportunity to address this issue!!
- DHS's own study last year confirmed that DSP's wages are 16.76% below wages for comparable jobs.

Legislation to Support

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- **Best Life Alliance (BLA) Bill**
 - HF999 (Hanson)/SF1015 (Fateh)
 - Accelerates inflationary adjustments and fully-funds competitive workforce factor in the rate formula.
- **Please weigh in with your support for this bill!!**

Honoring Personal Choice

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Recognizing that we all have unique needs and desires, Achieve strives to provide a range of service options - so that our participants can *choose* the services that are most appropriate to their individual wants, needs, and circumstances.

Choices

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- Competitive Community-based Employment
- Center-based work
- Non-employment Services

THREATS TO CENTER-BASED WORK

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What is Center-Based Work?

- Piece-work performed on-site at Achieve for a variety of employment partners.
- Examples include packaging greeting cards and ink cartridges, picking foam bricks, sorting rubber gaskets, etc.
- Wages are based on productivity: the Dept. of Labor requires we time-study each job, and subminimum wages must be commensurate with productivity.

THREATS TO CENTER-BASED WORK

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What is Center-Based Work? (cont'd)

- The federal regulation that allows the payment of a “special minimum” or “commensurate” wage is commonly referred to as **14c**.
- Pre-COVID, about 130 of our participants were consistently doing 14c work. Today, with COVID and staffing challenges, that number is closer to 106.

THREATS TO CENTER-BASED WORK

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During the 2021 Special Legislative Session, the legislature passed HF 33, a bill creating a *Task Force on Eliminating Subminimum Wages*:

“...established to develop a plan and make recommendations to phase out payment of subminimum wages to people with disabilities on or before August 1, 2025.”

See HF 33, Article 17, Section 14
(Beginning on line 492.6)

THREATS TO CENTER-BASED WORK

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Task Force Recommendations:

HF 2513 (Hanson)

SF 2669 (Maye Quade)

- Beginning on Aug 1, 2023, employers cannot hire any new workers with disabilities at less than minimum wage;
- Beginning on Aug 1, 2025, special minimum wage work (14c) no longer allowed in MN.

THREATS TO CENTER-BASED WORK

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- Governor's Recommendations

HF 2847 (Noor)

SF 2934 (Hoffman)

- Beginning on Aug 1, 2026, employers cannot hire any new workers with disabilities at less than minimum wage;
- Beginning on Aug 1, 2028, special minimum wage work (14c) no longer allowed in MN.

The Truth About Center-Based Work

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ACHIEVE PARTICIPANTS ALWAYS HAVE A CHOICE!

- Achieve workers have the option of seeking competitive, integrated community-based employment; or
- Performing subminimum wage work in accordance with US Dept. of Labor guidelines that ensure compensation is commensurate and fair; or
- Performing volunteer work and receiving other life-enriching services; or
- Some combination of the above.

The Truth About Center-Based Work

- While it's true that “commensurate” wages are sometimes less than the state's minimum wage, our more productive workers earn wages that are much higher than the minimum wage.
- Workers/families/guardians frequently *choose* center-based work because:
 - They are working in a safe, supported, well-staffed environment;
 - They enjoy working with their friends and peers;
 - They have complicated support needs and don't feel comfortable working in the community; and
 - They feel much more vulnerable out in the community.

The Truth About Center-Based Work

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- If subminimum wage work is eliminated, thousands of people with I/DD will lose their jobs – *and most will have no other employment options.*
- They will lose much more than a paycheck. They will also lose:
 - Their sense of purpose, and piece of their identity;
 - An important connection to a social peer group;
 - An opportunity to contribute;
 - An opportunity to be valued; and
 - The dignity of having and performing a job.

The Truth About Center-Based Work

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- At Achieve, we believe we should all be working to provide *more* employment choices, *not fewer*; and
- We should respect and honor individual choices instead of dictating what's best for others.
- Achieve strongly opposes the elimination of 14c work as a choice for the people we serve!

A-Team Minnesota

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- A-Team MN is a state-wide organization comprised of parents and families of people with disabilities.
- A-Team MN is at the legislature advocating on behalf of people with disabilities, including
 - Increased funding to increase DSP wages
 - Preserving 14c as an employment option
- Sue Hankner (Co-Founder) – A-Team MN
- More info at ateamminnesota.com

What Can YOU do?

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Get Involved!!

- Join A-Team MN!
- Share your story
- Contact your legislators
- Sign up to testify
- Disability Day at the Capitol – March 28th
- LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD
- Grassroots input from FAMILIES is critical!!

What Can YOU do?

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Support Achieve

- Attend and/or contribute to our fundraisers
- Tell your network about Achieve
- Include Achieve in your “planned giving”
- Buy/subscribe to Achieve Clean

Resources

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- Achieve’s “Advocate” web page (under “Support Us” tab)
 - www.achieveservices.org
- A-Team MN: www.ateamminnesota.com

- Watch for Achieve and/or A-Team “Action Alerts”

Resources (cont'd)

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- Who are my legislators?
 - <https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>
- Where can I find the language/status of bills in the legislature?
 - https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/status_search.php?body=House

Achieve Clean Laundry Detergent

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- Wash with a Cause!
- All natural, unscented, powerful cleaning formula.
- 60 loads/bottle
- We employ Achieve participants to label and fill bottles, fulfill orders, and help with sales and marketing.
- Price: \$20



A C H I E V E C L E A N . O R G

Achieve Wings

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Achieve Wings

Northtown Mall

Blaine, Minnesota

QUESTIONS?