

January 9, 2018

Hon. Elizabeth Connolly
Acting Commissioner
Department of Human Services
P.O. Box 700
Trenton, NJ 08625-0700

Re: Public Partnerships, LLC

Dear Commissioner Connolly:

For several months, Disability Rights New Jersey, along with the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, has received numerous complaints from individuals and family members of individuals eligible to receive services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities' self-directed program and the Division of Disability Services' Personal Preference Program, all involving the transition to a new fiscal intermediary for these programs. Despite multiple communications and promises of remediation, significant problems remain. Attached is a spreadsheet listing 104 individuals and families. None of these names should be new to the Division or to the fiscal intermediary. Their problems are longstanding and, as of January 5, 2018, have yet to be resolved.

All these complaints are consequential, and they all have had serious adverse impact on the individual and the individual's family. Families are not able to enroll new direct support personnel, approved direct support personnel are not being paid, and approved goods and services for programs and transportation are not being paid. Individual budgets are not even treated similarly in the two programs. The Personal Preference Program allows only 4.3 weeks each month, resulting in a lack of funding when a month contains five weeks.

As a result, individuals have lost direct support personnel, and many are at home without programs or activities. Some families are attempting to pay for programs and services with the hope of ultimately receiving reimbursement. Other family members are losing wages because they have to stay home from work when they are unable to hire staff.

Despite months of complaints, there has been no noticeable improvement in the fiscal intermediary's customer services and its ability to resolve complaints. Individuals and families are not assigned to a specific person who is familiar with their concerns. When calls are returned at all, they are given inconsistent and conflicting information. When a problem is resolved, it is usually only a short term fix, with the same problem inevitably reappearing. In its efforts to assist individuals and families to resolve their complaints, DRNJ staff has experienced these

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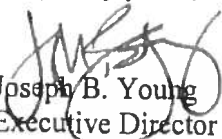
same problems. When pressed, staff at the fiscal intermediary are too often too willing to blame the individual and the families rather than their ineffective system.

Most egregious of all, the Division of Disability Services has terminated the services for two individuals because they or their family members complained too impolitely to representatives of the fiscal intermediary about the problems the families were experiencing.

While behind closed doors, the Department may be working to resolve the current fundamental inability of the fiscal intermediary to administer these programs, the public perception is that the Department is indifferent to the hardships that individuals eligible for these programs are experiencing. There is no evidence that the Department's efforts to hold the fiscal intermediary accountable in any way matches the degree of deprivation and hardship experienced by these individuals and their families. In fact, the Department has already demonstrated that it is more willing to terminate the services of individuals who complain, in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the First Amendment, than it is to even criticize the fiscal intermediary.

DRNJ is, again, requesting that the Department immediately ensure that sufficient resources are deployed to fix these problems immediately and permanently.

Very truly yours,


Joseph B. Young
Executive Director

JBW/md

Attachment

cc: New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities