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November 21, 2022

To: AA Executive Directors

From: NH Developmental Services Quality Council

Re: American Rescue Plan funding for staff recruitment, retention and training

On October 19, 2022, the Quality Council met for its regular monthly meeting. At this meeting, Council members shared concerns and questions regarding the use of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for staff training, recruitment and retention.

We have reviewed your spending plans but have additional questions and concerns regarding the allocation of these funds and the impact on families.

The Quality Council is concerned about the equitable families distribution of funds to area agency employees and recruits, provider agency employers, and recruits and direct support professionals employed or recruited by PDMS families. Only one of the Area Agency spending plans (Community Crossroads) mentions payments to family employed staff. At the Quality Council meeting, only one of the family member representatives said they received funding for their PDMS staff. Other families said that they were not aware that funding might be available to them, particularly as a recruitment tool.

In addition, it is critical that family members who are working as DSPs should receive retention funds too.

The Council is writing today to share these concerns and ask that you help us understand your allocation process by answering the following questions regarding the spending of ARPA recruitment, retention and training funds in your region.

1. Have you made ARPA funds available to families who are participating in PDMS?
  - a. If so, how are you informing families of the availability of these funds?
  - b. If not, please explain why the staff or potential DSP staff of PDMS families were excluded from this critical funding?
2. How did you determine the proportional distribution of funding for area agency employees, provider agency employees and PDMS employees?
3. Did you ask families in your region for input about how you plan use ARPA funding to recruit, retain and train staff?
  - a. If yes, how was this input solicited?
  - b. In no, why was family input not solicited?

4. Did family members who are working as DSPs for their family members receive retention bonuses?
5. Could you explain your approach to the 20% admin expense allowance? Did you pass the 20% along to vendors for their use or did you retain the 20% of the initial amount you received for use by your Area Agency?

We appreciate you taking the time to respond to these questions. It is our hope to use this information 1. To see if there are time and resources available to rectify the situation with what we believe is the exclusion of PDMS families in receiving funds to assist with recruitment, retention and training, and 2. To learn from what happened and improve our collective approach for the future.

We request that you please respond in writing to [nhcasdqc@gmail.com](mailto:nhcasdqc@gmail.com) by December 10, 2022. Thank you.

cc: Ellen McCahon, Community Support Network Inc Via Email: [Emccahon@helmsco.com](mailto:Emccahon@helmsco.com)

Jessica Gorton, HCBS Waiver Administrator III, NH Department of Health and Human Services Bureau of Developmental Services Via Email: [Jessica.D.Gorton@dhhs.nh.gov](mailto:Jessica.D.Gorton@dhhs.nh.gov)