

**Department of Developmental Services
Annual Family Support Plan
FY '12 (July 2011 – June 2012)**

Human Service Agency Overview of Family Support

A. Background

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has been providing flexible family support services since 1995. These services are provided to children and adults living at home with their families who are eligible for services from DDS. In July 2002, Chapter 171 of the Acts of 2002, “An Act Providing Support to Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families,” was signed into law. This legislation specifies that all named state agencies, with substantial consultation from families and individuals with disabilities, need to prepare and submit on an annual basis an individual and family support plan that explains how the department intends to provide flexible supports to families and individuals. This is the ninth Annual Plan for Family Support to be submitted by the Department.

The Department is organized into four regions with Regional Directors and 23 Area Offices with Area Directors, all under the umbrella of Central Office. Each DDS region has a Director of Family Support, who works with the Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Planning and Children’s Services, the Central Office Director of Family Supports, and the Project Manager for the Autism Division. Assistance and supports to individuals/families is provided by the Department’s Service Coordinators. Each Area Office has a Children’s Coordinator position who generally works with children under the age of 18 years and their families, and a Transition Coordinator who works with individuals generally between the ages of 18 and 22. Individuals over the age of 22 who have met the adult eligibility criteria for DDS services are assigned a Service Coordinator and participate in an Individual Service Planning process.

B. Overview of Family Support

The primary goal of family support is to provide a variety of options to families of individuals with disabilities that enable them to stay together and to be welcomed, contributing members in their home communities. The Department’s Family Support system is based on the principle that individuals and families know their own needs. For this reason, and because of the individuality of each family, the range of services available under the program is broad. This approach allows families the flexibility to identify the resources that will be helpful to support their family member in her/his home. Families are always encouraged and supported to identify resources within their community that can offer assistance. Family Support Centers and other family support program services are designed to be responsive to the dynamic and changing needs of the individual with a disability and his/her respective stages in life within the family context.

The Department has established *Guiding Principles for Family Support* which serves as the foundation for the delivery of services through the Family Support Centers and all of the other family support program services funded by the Department.

Family support strives to achieve the goal of helping families stay together through:

- ❖ developing families' natural capacity to meet the needs of family members;
- ❖ offering additional supports such as staff resources, goods and services, and financial assistance; and
- ❖ enhancing the capacity of communities to value and support people with disabilities and their families.

Operating principles that guide family support activities are:

- ❖ Individuals with disabilities and their families are recognized as primary decision makers about their lives and supports.
- ❖ Family support focuses on the whole family and recognizes that benefits to the whole family also benefit the person with a disability.
- ❖ Family support requires flexible options that are responsive to families' unique needs, strengths, and cultural values.
- ❖ Families are afforded opportunities for increasing control in the planning, implementation, management, and evaluation of satisfaction of family support services.
- ❖ Families are encouraged and supported to develop their natural capacities for innovation, initiative, and leadership.
- ❖ Family support operates in ways that respects individuals with disabilities and their families as valued members of their communities.
- ❖ Family support should be equitably and fairly available throughout the state.
- ❖ Family support is pro-active and encourages family independence and capacity-building.
- ❖ Family support builds on existing natural and community supports and maximizes the use of generic resources.

This past year saw many changes in the delivery of family support services related to several major re-design and re-structuring initiatives that were planned during the previous year. One was the re-design of services through the competitive procurement of family support services that was required in FY '11, and was influenced by the significant budget reductions that had occurred in FY'10. The second was the approval of three new Home and Community Based Waiver Programs for adults. These Waiver programs required the "unbundling of services" which many families had historically purchased through stipends or 'flexible funding' allocations, such as respite, adult companion, and individualized home supports, as examples. The Department has established master lists of qualified providers to deliver these services which offer individuals and families increased choice in selecting a provider and in the method of service delivery they prefer. This is consistent with the Department's overall commitment to enhance self-determination. In addition, these new Waiver programs provide individuals and families increased options for self-direction of services through a new model called Agency With Choice or through use of the Fiscal Management Service, Public Partnership Limited (PPL). The creation of these services through the Waiver programs will enable the Department to increase its Federal Financial Participation (FFP), a requirement of the legislature.

The Department has specific funding designated for the delivery of family support services through the Family Support Appropriation Account in the state budget. This funding has been vulnerable during the past several fiscal years due to the fiscal challenges facing the nation and state. In FY 2010 this account was funded at \$46.5 million, a reduction of almost 10 million dollars from the previous year. The budget appropriation for FY 2011 was \$ 45,004,298 dollars, and for the upcoming fiscal year, FY 12, the amount is \$41, 004, 298. Of this total appropriation, approximately \$35-36 million is for specific family support services and the remainder for other community support services. The Department will be looking at ways to address the reduction in funding this fiscal year of about 4 million dollars to minimize impact on direct services to families. The array of family support services provided with this funding is described in more detail in Section III, Family Support Resources and Funding.

C. Process for obtaining substantial input from families on current family support services:

The Department uses both formal and informal approaches to seek input from families and individuals with intellectual disabilities in order to help assess the Department's current system of family support services, and to get input on policy development and future directions. This information is helpful in the development of this Annual Plan for Family Support. Department leadership is committed to continuing to expand and strengthen avenues to obtain input and engage individuals and families in discussions about Department's services and priorities, especially during difficult budgetary periods.

Identified below are some of the key ways the Department has obtained feedback and input this past year. There have been several specific overarching planning activities in which family member consultation and participation was important.

Family Support Implementation Work Group: To support implementation of the newly funded Family Support Centers a work group was established which included several family members from the Statewide Family Support Council, Family Support Center directors, some of whom are family members as well, and DDS regional and area office staff. This group collaborated to develop operational guidance for the Centers, jointly developed plans and forms for use by the Centers, and assisted in the dissemination of this information. This group continues to meet on a less frequent basis to review the delivery of program services to suggest ways for enhancement, as well as discuss ways to provide clarification and support to the Centers. Having the perspective of families as part of this work group has been invaluable.

Autism Commission: DDS leadership staff have been active members of the Autism Commission authorized by the Legislature to develop a plan and recommendations to address the growing needs of children and adults with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. DDS staff participate both in the large Commission meetings as well as on the established sub-committees. Numerous family members, as well as staff from the DDS funded Autism Support Centers, many of whom are parents of children with ASD, have been actively participating on the Commission and sub-committees where their input has helped to shape the plans and recommendations being proposed.

Proposed Reorganization of Children’s Services by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS): Leadership staff at DDS are actively involved in this planning activity initiated by EOHHS with the other human service agencies who provide services to children and their families. This includes the Department of Children and Families, Department of Youth Services, Department of Mental Health and some services through the Department of Public Health. The overall goal of this proposed reorganization is to provide a more coordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of services to children from birth to age 18 and their families. Feedback and input on some of the initial ideas was sought from families, including members of the Council and MFOFC, (Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change) and the Arc of Massachusetts. Family input will be integral as this planning process proceeds in the upcoming year through involvement on both a *core planning team and advisory group*. It will be important that any proposed reorganization will be responsive to the specialized needs of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

The Department’s **Statewide Family Support Council** is an important and ongoing vehicle to obtain input and consultation on family support services, practices, policies, and needs. This Council, established in 2004, is comprised of parents from across the state who have children and adult family members with disabilities. The Council meets four times a year with the Commissioner and other leadership staff, with conference calls scheduled at other times to discuss emerging topics and issues. This past year the Council provided important consultation related to priorities and decisions about how to best utilize family support budget resources in response to proposed potential reductions.

Council input has stressed the importance of having an infra-structure of Information and Referral and other supportive services provided through the Family Support Centers, as well as continued funding for specific specialty family support programs, and making flexible funding available to families to help them purchase services and goods that are beneficial in supporting their family member at home. Council members also offer input and guidance on communication approaches with families and review relevant information materials as they are developed. The Council will continue to play an important role in guiding and providing feedback about the delivery of family support programs and services. During the past seven years the Council has evolved into an important vehicle for communicating the perspectives of families as policy and service decisions are being made.

The Commissioner and other Central Office leadership staff meet regularly with representatives of family and individual advocacy organizations to seek input and obtain feedback on services and future directions. This includes representation from the Arc of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change (MFOFC), Advocates for Autism in Massachusetts (AFAM), the statewide self-advocacy organization, Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS), and the Developmental Disabilities Council. Monthly meetings are also held with the leadership of ADDP, the Association of Developmental Disability Providers.

There is regular information-sharing, discussion, and solicitation of input from the Department’s Statewide Advisory Council (SAC) and the regional and area offices’ Citizen Advisory Boards (CABs). These advisory groups play an important role in helping to inform and educate the public and other decision-makers about the needs of

individuals and families and the importance of and benefits of the flexible services and supports that are provided.

Strategies and efforts will continue to evolve, through both organized and informal mechanisms, to gather ongoing feedback about the Department's array of family support services and the implementation and effectiveness of this Plan.

D. Focus Areas: Review of Activities and Accomplishments in FY 2011 and Proposed Initiatives for FY 2012.

The following section provides a brief description of ongoing efforts as well as new activities the Department has undertaken this past year, and includes where relevant, initiatives for development in the upcoming fiscal year.

I. Family Empowerment

What is the agency currently doing to promote or enhance family input or direction in the development of agency policies and procedures, program development, and evaluation of services?

The Department seeks input from individuals and families about agency services and new directions both formally and informally through a variety of organized groups and mechanism. This includes regular communication with the Family Support Council, the Statewide Advisory Council, the regional and area Citizen Advisory Boards, Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong, and the Arc of Massachusetts, and periodic consultation with other family advocacy groups, such as AFAM and the Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress. This past year family members were integral participants in a Family Support Implementation Work Group by providing input on the services, processes, and reporting mechanisms to support implementation of the newly funded Family Support Centers.

When the Department was engaged in several major policy development and program development planning activities related to the development of the Home and Community-Based Waiver programs and the re-design of family support services, input and directions was sought from representative family members and individuals with disabilities. Family member participation on a planning team focused on the implementation of the Family Support Center services has been instrumental in helping to ensure they are family-friendly and responsive to the needs of families. Additionally, the Department's Family Support Council members have the opportunity to review materials as they are developed as a way to seek broader input and feedback

How will agencies change how they are currently doing business to make their agency and services more family-friendly and provide opportunities for families and individuals to have greater input and influence?

Beginning in the fall of 2011, the Department will initiate a comprehensive planning process to set the course for the future of Family Support Services as we

move toward the next decade. This will result in the development of a Strategic Plan that is responsive to the needs of families and individuals who benefit from this vital service. An organized approach will be developed and implemented across the regions of the State to obtain input and ideas from families using a variety of approaches including: focus groups, larger forums, written surveys, etc. This information will help identify essential services for family caregivers across the lifespan, different models for providing supports, and help document the needs and cost-benefits of providing these services. This information will be used to guide agency planning and budget development to expand resources over the next decade to support families caring for their family member at home.

The Department's Home and Community Based Waiver Programs provide increased and enhanced opportunities for individual and family empowerment, through increased choice in service providers, choice of service delivery method, and portability of services, which allows individuals under most circumstances, to choose to have their services moved to another service provider. The Department will continue to provide education to individuals and families so they are aware of the options available and support them to exercise their rights and choices.

The Waiver programs also expand opportunities for individuals and families to engage in self-direction of services. There are two forms of self-direction available based on the amount of control preferred. One option is the *Agency With Choice*, a newer provider model that allows individuals/families to have an increased level of self-determination when they share responsibility for the hiring and management of employees who provide services to them. Individuals/families who want to completely direct their own services can do this through use of the *Fiscal Management Service* the Department contracts with, Public Partnerships Limited (PPL). Information and education on these self-directed service options needs to be provided on an ongoing basis so individuals and families are aware of the opportunities available to them.

During the past year, every DDS Region hosted multiple educational forums for families to provide more family-friendly information about the Department's new Home and Community Based Waiver Programs and to assist families in understanding both the service options available to their family member and the choices they have in selecting providers and/or using self-directed models of service. Multiple approaches were used in organizing these forums, from large sessions to smaller meetings, coordinated with the local Area Offices and with different partnerships which included the local Area Citizen Advisory Boards and Family Support Centers. Hundreds of families were reached through these forums.

The Department has also created some materials to provide more user-friendly information about these service options. One publication, "A User Guide for Individuals and Families on Choice, Portability, Provider Selection, in the Massachusetts Medicaid Home and Community-Based Waiver Program" has

been developed and shared with interested individuals and families and is posted on the Department's web-site. This publication was developed collaboratively by DDS staff and stakeholders, including provider representatives and individuals with disabilities. The Department needs to work on ensuring informational materials are disseminated widely and available to individuals and families when needed.

II. Family Leadership

What training opportunities does the agency currently offer to families/individuals that would enhance their repertoire of skills?

The Department provides funding for five regional Family Leadership programs designed to provide education, leadership training and mentoring for families with children and adults with disabilities living in the community. A key feature of this family leadership training is that all of the training and mentoring is developed and provided by families who have a family member with a disability. The Department has partnered with Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change to implement these Family Leadership programs. One vehicle for family leadership development is the sponsorship of a Family Leadership Series, which occurs across approximately 6-8 days over a several month period. This past year three regional Leadership Series were held. Families who participate in this training develop and build their knowledge and skills and graduates of the Series frequently move into new leadership roles.

The Department's Family Support Centers and Autism Support Centers provide an array of educational events and trainings on relevant topics of interest to families of both children and adults. Each Center offers a minimum of six trainings per year designed to address the common topical areas relevant to families across the lifespan and to help them develop their repertoire of skills in supporting their family member at home. Family Support Centers also promote parent networking and mentoring, and sponsor parent support groups, 1:1 parent connections, and sibling support opportunities.

During the past year a number of specific leadership events were held which will be highlighted here. A Self-Determination Forum was sponsored in April 2011 by the Family Leadership Project in western Massachusetts and MFOFC in collaboration with the Central/West DDS Regional Advisory Board. Held at Holyoke Community College about 100 people participated in this Forum that exposed individuals with disabilities and their families to the concept of self-determination, shared examples of how individuals and families have utilized the process, and provided workbooks to help people in their journey. A very successful Family Support Symposium was held in May in western MA featuring a national speaker from Human Services Research Institute with expertise on family support services across the country. Seventy-five family leaders, family support providers and DDS staff came together for a thoughtful and thought-provoking discussion about the current state of family support and ways to promote sustainability in the future. This Symposium provided an opportunity to

strategize and brainstorm about changes needed in our State, with a particular focus on how to develop stronger community linkages and resources.

What new ideas or proposals would the agency initiate to give families/individuals more opportunities to develop and/or exercise their leadership skills?

Families have opportunities to further develop and/or exercise their leadership skills through the Department's Family Support Centers which are expected to actively engage families and seek their consultation to identify interests and needs in developing activities and the array of service options to be offered through the Center.

There are new Home and Community-Based Waiver Program services, Peer Support and Family Training, which participants in the Waiver programs can purchase with their individual resource allocation. These service options can provide interested and qualified individuals and families the opportunity to provide training and mentoring to others as well as provide learning opportunities for self-advocates and families who want to enhance their own leadership skills.

III. Family Support Resources and Funding

What are the current resources/funding that the agency allocates to family support? What are ways that the agency provides flexible funding to families that allow them to customize their services?

Family Support Centers have been designed to establish a local presence and act as a hub for offering a wide range of general family support services and activities to families of children and adults who are eligible for DDS services. There are 33 Centers funded across the State with funding totaling approximately 6.8 million dollars. There is at least one Family Support Center available in each DDS Area across the state, and in some areas more than one Center or larger Centers, to respond to the size of the population and the needs of families. Family Support Centers also administer flexible funding/stipends to families who are prioritized to receive an individual allocation. These individual allocations can be used flexibly by families to purchase allowable services and goods as defined in the Department's updated Addendum to the Family Support Guidelines and Procedures.

Family Support Centers provide the following array of services and supports to any family that is seeking assistance: information and referral, including access to technology, support groups, family trainings, parent networking and mentoring, facilitation of social/recreational events, among other activities. Information and Referral services can include individualized consultation and support over a course of a few meetings for families who need and can benefit from more "hands-on assistance." Centers also provide Service Navigation for families that include: comprehensive and individualized information, guidance, and support to families to address their needs, connect them to potential resources, assist with problem-solving and help them navigate the service system. Family Support

Centers are designed to be highly integrated within their local communities, to develop strong local affiliations and partnerships with other State and grassroots community agencies, to become experts in generic resources and services, and work to maximize natural supports.

Cultural/Linguistic-Specific Family Support Centers are designed to respond to the unique needs of specific cultural and linguistic family groups in specified areas or regions of the State. English is not the primary language for many of these families, and as a result face linguistic barriers in accessing services and require more individualized and specialized assistance to learn about and access the service system. These Centers offer a similar array of services as the Family Support Centers described above. There are ten funded Cultural/Linguistic-Specific Family Support Centers with funding totaling approximately 1.2 million dollars.

Autism Support Centers provide an array of information and referral services, resources, and supports to children and young adults with autism spectrum disorders. The array of services and supports includes information and referral, family clinics, support groups, access to the latest information on autism, family trainings, parent networking and mentoring, and social/recreational events, among other activities. There are five large and two small regional autism support centers funded at approximately 1 million dollars.

The Intensive Flexible Family Supports (IFFS) Programs are designed to help families who are experiencing severe stress which can lead to the child being at-risk of an out-of-home placement. The service consists of an intensive case management service designed to help families integrate the variety of available resources to support their family member in crisis, and flexible funding to purchase additional supports or goods. Annually, about 425-475 children between the ages of 3-18 and their families receive services through these 22 programs statewide funded at approximately 2 million dollars.

The Medically Complex Programs support families who are caring for children/young adults up to the age of 25, with significant cognitive, physical, and complex health care needs who are living at home. It is a comprehensive wrap-around support which consists of an intensive medical wrap-around case management activity that helps families integrate the variety of resources and supports they are receiving and offers flexible funding/stipends to assist the family in the purchase of additional supports and goods not covered by health insurance. This program complements and is supplemental to other MassHealth, State plan and third party insurers. This program provides vital assistance to families who need help in coordinating all of the in-home care they receive, which helps to prevent pediatric nursing home placements. Annually, these programs provide services to about 275-325 individuals and their families. These five regionally based programs are funded at approximately \$650,000.

Planned Facility Based Respite Programs for Children provide planned out-of-home respite services for children to provide short-term temporary relief for families, and includes overnight, weekend, and/or vacation stays. These programs also provide individuals with a variety of recreational, social, cultural and/or educational activities during their stay. There are two planned facility based respite center programs for children funded across the State, one in the Central/West region and one in the Metro region, for a total of approximately \$385,000. On average, 110-120 children and their families are able to utilize this service annually.

Family Leadership Development provides education, mentoring and support to families to enable them to care for their family member. A major focus is a comprehensive and intensive family leadership series which provides information and education about “best practices” for services for people with disabilities. A second goal is to help families gain knowledge about policy making at the local and state level to help them assume leadership roles in their local community and the disability community. There are five regionally based Family Leadership Programs funded for a total amount of approximately \$275,000.

The Autism Division at DDS, established in 2005, provides community based supports for children with autism through a network of Autism Support Centers located across the Commonwealth. The Autism Division also oversees an Autism Waiver Program. In fiscal year '11, the Division received about \$4 million dollars to provide services and supports to children with autism. Of this total budget, the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services Autism Waiver Program received an allocation of \$3 million to provide intensive supports for up to 170 young children with autism who meet the established eligibility requirements. More than 140 children were enrolled in the Program over the course of the year. These children receive a comprehensive package of services to address their identified needs of up to \$25,000 per service year for the first three years, and then children move into a Step-Down Program where they may remain until they reach 9 years of age. The Division funding is also used to cover staffing infrastructure for the Waiver Program as every child works with an Autism Support Broker located at one of the Autism Support Centers and with a DDS Autism Clinical Manager.

The community-based programs offered by the Autism Support Centers provide information and referral resources to families and provide other social skills and sensory based autism programs for children, as well as community outings for children and families. These programs reached at least 1500 families from across the Commonwealth over the past fiscal year. The Autism Division also helps fund a specialty community program designed to train first responders called the Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition (ALEC). The program remains a successful initiative and trained another 2000 EMC, Fire, Police and Hospital personnel in this past fiscal year. Training is focused on how to react to and work with children with autism during an emergency and is coordinated by a

father of a son with autism who is also a fire fighter. The consistent budget of the Autism Division reflects positively on the acknowledged need for services of this growing population of children. In FY'12, the Autism Division's budget increased to approximately \$4.5 million. The additional funds will help support an increase in the number of children served on the Autism Waiver Program.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education & Department of Developmental Services Community Residential Education Program is a successful collaborative initiative. The DESE/DDS Program is designed to provide supplemental supports to children/young adults determined to need services to prevent a more restrictive educational or out of home residential placement. This Program also provides an increased level of support services to families whose child returns from a residential school placement and requires assistance to remain at home. The intent of the program is to increase family capacity to support their child in the home and community, as well as to provide an individualized plan of supports that promotes skill building, independence, and social integration across the spectrum of the child's home, school and community.

During the past year there was uncertainty about the funding level for this Program which presented difficulties for some families and resulted in an increase in the number of residential placements. During fiscal year 2011, 341 children participated in this program. Due to funding constraints over several years, there are approximately 97 individuals/families who have received partial funding. Looking ahead to FY '12, the budget situation appears to be more solid with an increased level of funding. This will allow these 97 participants to receive full funding based on their assessed needs and at least 100 students will move off the waiting list and start the assessment and planning process to receive supports from the DESE/DDS Program.

IV. Accessing Services and Supports

What are current examples of ways the agency is educating families on how to access services in a timely and effective manner? What are some illustrations of different services and resources which promote good access to information and referral?

In addition to information that is provided by the Department's Service Coordinators to families of both children and adults, a core expectation of the Department's funded Family Support Centers is to provide timely Information and Referral services to families of children and adults within their geographic area. This includes assisting families to identify resources and service options available in their local communities, to learn about other financial and/or state services for which families may be eligible, and to provide guidance on how to navigate the service system. These Centers also use a variety of approaches to disseminate information to families, including email, list-serves, on-line newsletters and training calendars, webinars, social media, etc. as well as create and maintain a "library" of resources.

The Department has made strides to develop and disseminate publications and informational materials on specific topical areas to help families understand and access services. Examples include a guide on transition from school to adult life, "The Road Forward" which is posted on the DDS web-site. The Office of Quality Management within DDS produces semi-annual newsletters, "Living Well" which provide important information for individuals, families, and their supporters to promote the health and well-being of individual's and improved quality of life. A publication, "School Days to Pay Days: An Employment Planning Guide for Families of Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities," was developed by Department staff with the support of the Institute of Community Inclusion and the Work Without Limits federal grant and about 4,000 copies have been broadly distributed this year to families, school personnel, providers and other interested parties. This guide provides helpful resources, information, and guidance, and is being distributed both to families with young adults of transition age and school systems, and is posted on the DDS web-site. Additional copies of this booklet have been printed and will be available for distribution to families of transition-age young adults as well as to schools in the upcoming year..

What new initiative(s) will the agency undertake to promote good local access to information and resources?

The Department will work collaboratively with providers of Family Support Centers, families, DDS staff, and other information and referral entities to promote best practices and information-sharing about effective approaches for facilitating access to local services. Areas of focus will include newly identified community and generic resources, innovative partnerships that expand community linkages, and enhanced use of technology to provide trainings and resource information to individuals and families. This type of information-sharing occurs through regularly held regional meetings of the Family Support Centers, however, in the upcoming year plans are underway to host several statewide meetings to promote information-sharing among providers across the State about promising practices which should enhance services available to families.

The Department developed a 'Statewide Family Support Directory' which was widely disseminated through DDS, providers, and is posted on the Department's web-site. This Directory will make it easier for families to find the Center in their area and promote easier access to this information and referral resource. Some Centers have been doing a great job at outreach in their local communities with schools, health centers and doctor's offices, and with early intervention programs to share information about their Center and the services they can provide to families.

The DDS Office of Quality management has developed a variety of helpful health-related resource information that could be beneficial to families and the Department will make concerted efforts to share these resources more widely through the Family Support Center network. The Department will continue to

expand use of our website as a vehicle for sharing resource information with individuals and families.

V. Culturally Competent Outreach & Support

What are the current activities or services that the agency offers that ensure culturally appropriate access and supports to ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse families and individuals?

The Cultural/Linguistic-Specific Family Support Centers provide bi-lingual and bi-cultural assistance to identified groups of families for whom English is not their primary language, and as a result face linguistic barriers in accessing services and require more individualized and specialized assistance in navigating the service system. These Centers are also expected to conduct broad outreach and provide services to families from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic communities in the geographic area they are serving. Many times these Centers staff are called upon by other organizations to help provide interpretation and translation assistance to families. Department staff will work collaboratively with providers to share positive practices and support them as they further develop their capacity to provide culturally responsive services to increasingly diverse communities.

The Department is committed to make available translated informational materials and letters for individuals and families in multiple languages based on the needs of families in local communities. The Department has established very positive working relationships with several entities that provide these interpretation and translation services. These entities have developed a good understanding of disability terminology and concepts that leads to providing more culturally relevant and responsive information.

There are active Diversity Councils in each of the regional offices as well as in central office that offer a variety of opportunities for education, training, and cultural experiences that promote increased understanding of different cultural and linguistic groups, and supports the delivery of culturally responsive services.

What new ideas/initiatives will the agency propose to outreach and meet the needs of culturally diverse families and individuals?

The Department will provide opportunities to bring together staff from the Cultural/Linguistic-Specific Family Support Centers across the State for information-sharing, networking and strengthening of efforts to provide more culturally competent services to families.

The Department is exploring the development of a partnership with the Office of Refugees and Immigrants to help expand access to services to newly settled refugee and immigrant families.

VI. Interagency Collaboration

Department staff participate in numerous inter-agency activities with other EOHHS agencies to promote more effective service delivery and maximization of resources. Regional and area office DDS staff participate in local inter-agency planning teams to promote more effective communication, and when there are individuals involved with multiple agencies, to work toward coordination and collaboration in service delivery. Representation on these teams typically includes staff from the Department of Children and Families, Department of Mental Health, Department of Transitional Assistance, Department of Public Health, and in some situations, representatives from local school systems.

DDS, in partnership with the Office of Elder Affairs and other human service agencies, were successful in receiving a three year *Lifespan Respite Grant* from the Administration on Aging. This grant provides funding resources to support the development of a statewide lifespan respite coalition, to develop a database on varied respite options, and to identify training approaches and innovative models to expand the network of respite providers available to caregivers. A unique aspect of this project is the cross-disability/special needs focus across the lifespan which brings many different entities together from organizations working with young children with special health care and developmental challenges, to organizations working with elders or individuals with Alzheimer's or chronic illnesses such as Multiple Sclerosis.

The Department continues to work collaboratively with the Office of Medicaid, and the Departments of Mental Health and Children and Families, on the implementation of the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI). DDS makes information available to the Department's children's service coordinators so they are knowledgeable about the eligibility criteria and service options available in order to facilitate access to these services for children and families who may be eligible. Information on CBHI is also shared with all providers of family support services.

Leadership staff in the Department have been involved on the planning team charged with implementation of the Children's Mental Health Bill which included the development of a Unified Planning team model, training for staff, and participation in unified planning team meetings when requested. Department staff continue to participate on the *One Child, One Plan* EOHHS initiative.

During the past year Department staff were actively engaged with EOHHS and the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy (HCFP) to work cooperatively on the establishment of standard rates for relevant family support/family stabilization services. These rates were promulgated and officially implemented as of July 1st, 2011.

Leadership staff in the Department have been and will continue to be actively involved in a statewide planning process to develop a comprehensive set of

recommendations for improving service delivery for children, youth and families in Massachusetts.

What new activities or initiatives does the agency propose to demonstrate the above goals?

Department staff will continue to work closely with the Office of Elder Services and other human service and community organizations, family members and individuals to successfully implement the federal Lifespan Respite grant. A statewide caregiver event is scheduled for November 2011 at the State House.

The Department will continue to work in partnership with the Office of Medicaid in the implementation of the Home and Community Based Waiver Programs for adults, and the Autism Waiver Program for Children. Additionally, Department staff will collaborate with MassHealth staff to identify the specific needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, especially those with significant medical and health challenges, to promote access to necessary services to successfully live in the community with their families.

Department staff will work collaboratively with EOHHS and the other designated human service agencies named in the Chapter 171 legislation to coordinate activities and efforts to expand flexible support services for individuals and families. This includes efforts to promote coordination of training opportunities for both staff and families across human service agencies on relevant topics as they relate to flexible supports and access to services.