

## **A Brief Report on Recipient Use of Credit Cards in Home and Community Based Services or Supports for Community Living Waiver Programs**

Prepared for the Kentucky Council on Developmental Disabilities

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At the request of the public policy committee, we conducted a study to determine if states are issuing credit cards to participants in Home and Community Based Services or Supports for Community Living programs for their use in purchasing medical equipment and supplies. If such cards were in use, we were to determine the costs and benefits of such use. We first reviewed all state 1915-c waiver plans. We then conducted a brief telephone survey of agencies in the 47 states offering such programs. None of the thirty-two states that responded provide credit/debit cards for use by recipients.

The Home and Community Based Waiver Program, also called Supports for Community Living (SCL), is utilized by most of the U.S. states. All states except Arizona, Rhode Island and Vermont provide HCBS programs using waiver authority authorized by Section 1915 (C) of the Social Security Act.

The forty-seven states offering HCBS programs use two major forms of service delivery. One is agency –based provider services; the second is self-administered or self-directed services. Self-Administered Services or participant directed service is a form of services in which individuals and/or their chosen representatives hire individual employees to perform a waiver service/s. The individuals and/or their chosen representatives are then responsible to perform such functions as supervising, hiring, assuring that employee qualifications are met, scheduling, and assuring accuracy of time sheets of the individual’s employee/s. Nineteen of the forty-seven states provide traditional services only whereas the remaining twenty-eight states give their enrollees the freedom to choose between traditional services and self-administered services.

In addition, provision of extended specialized medical equipment and supplies also vary among states. Although thirty-seven states explicitly specify in their plans that extended specialized medical equipment and supplies are available to their recipients, the remaining 10 states are vague about availability of such equipment

and supplies. They either do not provide those equipment and supplies or they combine those items with other services.

We conducted a telephone survey to determine whether states provide recipients a credit/debit card to use in purchasing specialized medical equipment and supplies. We were able to talk to representatives of thirty-two state Medicaid/Developmental Disability agencies. We have not found any state that allows the use of credit/debit cards as a payment method for extended specialized medical equipment and supplies. The only state that is experimenting with the use of credit cards is South Carolina. The state issues debit cards for service recipients to use as a payment method for "attending care services." The state has done this to eliminate the need to cut and mail checks. The agency representative indicated that such an experiment has been on and off for quiet some time and it will take even a longer period to reach its mature stage.