

Partnerships in Community Living Testimony
Chris Schwarz, Employment Director
Senate Committee on Human Services and Early Childhood
Invited Testimony on eXPRS Billing
February 10, 2015, 3:00pm, HR B

My name is Chris Schwarz and I work for Partnerships in Community Living in Monmouth; an organization that provides services to Oregonians with disabilities residing in Polk, Marion, Linn, Benton, Clackamas, Jackson, and Josephine counties. These services include supports to help people to be successful in their own home, or their family home, residential services to provide supports around the clock, and employment services to help people learn job skills and to find and keep jobs in their communities. Services are specific to each person and can include: assistance with meals and eating, medication and medical supports, assistance with government benefits and finances, safety supports to prevent injury, and employment supports to help a person with a disability to learn skills to get and keep a job. Services are provided by Direct Support Professionals, highly trained and skilled staff people that provide the hands-on supports that people need to be safe and successful.

Employment services can include all of the previous supports as well as individual work assessments, job search, retention services, and follow-on supports that may include going with the person each day to their job to assist with communication, interpersonal interactions, safety, and productivity. The level of supports can vary significantly depending on the degree of individual impairment, some job seekers may only need assistance with planning and follow up, while others may require "hand over hand" learning to acquire a skill to do a job. It is these employment services that have changed the most in the last year. Pursuant to the Governor's order (13-04) community employment services providers like PCL have been tasked with eliminating less integrated employment environments and developing capacity to assist people with disabilities on their journey towards individual integrated employment.

As Oregon transitioned from daily billing to hourly billing for employment services in September 2014, PCL was prepared for the change. Our internal data collection and billing systems were aligned to provide the data we needed to submit billing in a timely manner. PCL participated in the ODDS hourly billing pilot program beginning in July 2014. We hired an administrative specialist to focus on data synthesis and billing, designed systems to capture data, trained over 60 Direct Support Professionals to use the system and implemented two weeks ahead of schedule to allow for testing and correction.

Before and during the course of the pilot our billing expert indicated to ODDS staff how cumbersome the system was to use and recommended an upload option (uploading a spreadsheet with our billing data already in it) to the state payment system. Several ODDS staff agreed that upload would solve problems and further agreed to review the recommendation. We were informed that ODDS had reviewed the proposal and deemed it impossible in the timeframe and with the resources available.

Due to the complexities and idiosyncrasies of the payment system we were unable to bill for September 2014 employment services until mid-November 2014, a 6 week delay. PCL's administrative costs increased over 375% in the initial phase and ongoing administrative expenses for eXPRS billing have increased 311% (see table). We continue to operate 6-8 weeks behind in billing for Employment services due to the time consuming and difficult nature of input into the eXPRS payment system.

This delay impacts our ability to forecast revenue, determine which services a person is authorized to receive, and ultimately, our organization's ability to continue to provide employment services. Anecdotally, we've heard from several providers across the state that haven't been able to bill at all since September 2014 and are currently considering eliminating employment services altogether.

Our experts agree that allowing spreadsheet upload and other user interface solutions could help solve the problem in the long term. In the short term, we request that temporary relief be applied in the form of time limited fiscal relief to address increases in administrative costs incurred within providers.

While we continue to work toward payment system solutions with our partners at DHS, we're told that other IT projects have a higher priority and that this issue can only be addressed if it is prioritized at a higher level. **We understand that other projects may have priority and ask that this be reviewed as soon as possible.**

Thank you for this opportunity, we're happy to answer any questions you may have.

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ADMINISTRATIVE COST ANALYSIS

Daily billing- prior to 7/2014	hours spent entering/reviewing data monthly	monthly training hours	total monthly hours	% of FTE	average FTE salary	# of FTE affected	total cost
Position:							
DSP	5.5	0.5	6	3.45%	\$2,024.00	43	\$3,001.10
Emp. Admin.	0	0	0	0.00%	\$2,436.00	1	\$0.00
SC	6	1	7	4.02%	\$2,800.00	3	\$337.93
AD	4	1	5	2.87%	\$3,200.00	2	\$183.91
Director	2	0	2	1.15%	\$5,000.00	1	\$57.47
Accounting	10	1	11	6.32%	\$4,050.00	1	\$256.03
Initial: July 2014 Rebar data pilot							\$3,836.45
Position:	hours spent entering/reviewing data monthly	monthly training hours	total monthly hours	% of FTE	average FTE salary	# of FTE affected	total cost
DSP	17.25	4	21.25	12.21%	\$2,024.00	43	\$10,628.91
Emp. Admin.	154	20	174	100.00%	\$2,436.00	1	\$2,436.00
SC	11.5	8	19.5	11.21%	\$2,800.00	3	\$941.38
AD	4	4	8	4.35%	\$3,200.00	2	\$294.25
Director	4	4	8	4.35%	\$5,000.00	1	\$229.89
Accounting	152	8	160	91.95%	\$4,050.00	1	\$3,724.14
Ongoing Sept. 2014 to present					Increase:	375.82%	\$18,254.56
Position:	hours spent entering/reviewing data monthly	monthly training hours	total monthly hours	% of FTE	average FTE salary	# of FTE affected	total cost
DSP	17.25	2	19.25	11.06%	\$2,024.00	43	\$9,628.54
Emp. Admin.	88	10	98	56.32%	\$2,436.00	1	\$1,372.00
SC	10	4	14	8.05%	\$2,800.00	3	\$675.86
AD	4	2	6	3.45%	\$3,200.00	2	\$220.69
Director	4	2	6	3.45%	\$5,000.00	1	\$172.41
Accounting	152	8	160	91.95%	\$4,050.00	1	\$3,724.14
					Increase:	311.67%	\$15,793.64