

# A COMMUNITY SERVICE SYSTEM AT RISK

## BACKGROUND

For the last several years, Idaho and other states across the country have moved away from providing services to people with disabilities in institutions and other segregated settings and toward serving people in their homes and communities. This has been facilitated by changes in federal programs like Medicaid that provide funding for community services. But the investment in community-based services has been inadequate to meet people's needs. While we seem to be able to find the dollars to provide services to people in institutions, the same commitment is not there to invest in less-expensive community-based alternatives.

## WHAT ARE COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES?

There are a range of services that people need in order to live in their own homes and be part of the community. These include:

**Developmental Therapy** – Developmental therapy involves helping kids and adults with developmental disabilities learn and develop day-to-day living skills. Skills that might be addressed could include communication, social skills, relating with others, cooking, etc. A person might receive developmental therapy for several hours each day or only a few times a week. Through this therapy, individuals are able to do more on their own and participate more fully at home, at school, and in the community.

**Supported Living and Residential Habilitation** - Supported Living and Residential Habilitation are generally the terms used to describe a type of support or service provided to people with developmental disabilities in their homes. Services consist of teaching people the skills and providing the supports they need to live everyday life. This includes support to accomplish activities of daily living such as bathing, using the restroom, eating and dressing. Support is also provided so individuals can be active in the community - going to work, school, church, movies, shopping, sporting events. Through these supports, individuals are able to choose to live in their own homes, remaining in the local community near family and friends.

**Psychosocial Rehabilitation** - Psychosocial Rehabilitation (PSR) is a short-term program providing long term benefits. PSR teaches people with severe and chronic mental illness the skills necessary to live as independently as possible within their community while managing the symptoms of their disorder. PSR significantly reduces the use of higher costing community resources such as hospitalization and jail.

**Intensive Behavioral Intervention (IBI)** – Challenging behaviors can impede a child’s ability to be successful at home and at school. IBI therapy helps kids learn new ways to communicate and get their needs met so they don’t have to resort to challenging behaviors. With the support of IBI therapy, kids can remain in their homes as part of the family, stay in school with their peers, and go out into the community just like other kids do. Early intervention can result in fewer or no supports being needed later in the child’s life.

**Supported Employment Services** - Community Supported Employment is a service that assists individuals with disabilities to work in jobs in their communities along side people without disabilities, by providing job coaching services. The job coach helps the individual to learn their job and provides the support needed to ensure that they continue to perform it in a way that satisfies their employer. Some people with disabilities only need a little bit of coaching support intermittently, while others may need continual support in order to maintain their job.

### **TALKING POINTS**

1. People with disabilities want and deserve the same things as everyone else – to live, work, go to school and participate in their community.
2. People with disabilities and their families are having difficulty accessing consistent, quality, accessible services.
3. Idaho needs to invest in its infrastructure to support community-based services.
4. A formula or method of determining payment for services must be put in place that is based on the actual cost of providing the services.
5. If we do not adequately invest in a system of community services, it will result in people:
  - having to move to an institution to get the services they need
  - losing their independence
  - being incarcerated

All of these options are more expensive than the community alternative.

### **ACTION NEEDED**

For the 2009 Legislature, to approve an additional \$3.5 million in general funds in the Medicaid appropriation (to be matched with federal Medicaid funds) to begin to bring us in line with what provider reimbursement rates should be as recommended by an independent consultant.