



**State Fiscal Year 2015-16 Executive Budget
February 27, 2015**

**Helene DeSanto, Deputy Commissioner for Service Delivery
New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities**

Good morning Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblyman Farrell, Senator Ortt, Assemblywoman Gunther and other distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly, I am Helene DeSanto, Deputy Commissioner for Service Delivery at the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Governor Cuomo's 2015-2016 Executive Budget proposal for OPWDD.

The Governor's Executive Budget supports the ongoing reform of OPWDD's service delivery system and the implementation of our Transformation Agenda by providing resources to continue assisting individuals to receive services in integrated settings and providing access to community-based services. OPWDD's budget also supports our agency's vigilance in the oversight of both state and not-for-profit providers while providing our agency with the funding and flexibility to plan for the future.

The Governor proposes making significant investments in the hard-working people who form the backbone of our service delivery system by providing resources to support compensation increases for direct care and clinical staff who are employed at OPWDD's not-for-profit provider agencies. This funding is sufficient to support both the 2% increase for direct support professionals that took effect on January 1st of this year and another 2% increase scheduled to take effect on April 1st for both direct support and clinical staff.

The Executive Budget will enable us to build on our accomplishments of the past four years, during which we worked together to overhaul the OPWDD system, enhance accountability, ensure the health and safety of individuals with developmental disabilities, and offer greater opportunities for employment, community living, self-direction and independence. Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, OPWDD had many successes in 2014.

In 2014, 521 individuals successfully transitioned from Developmental Centers, Intermediate Care Facilities, and skilled nursing facilities into community-based, person-centered services. There are now approximately 500 individuals living in six developmental centers, which is down from a high of over 27,000 living in 20 developmental centers in the 1970's. This budget dedicates \$42 million to assist more individuals in institutional settings in transitioning to community services.

In 2014, an additional 1200 individuals began receiving residential services funded by OPWDD; 813, or more than two thirds of whom moved from their own home into a certified setting. The Executive Budget proposal seeks to invest \$120 million additional dollars in new residential and day services. These new resources will support expanded services throughout OPWDD's continuum of care, including certified and non-certified residential opportunities, day programs, employment, case management, and respite services and will be allocated based on OPWDD's person-centered processes, which include an individualized needs assessment and planning process and will be made available to those leaving institutional settings and those living at home in need of services.

I am happy to report that in partnership with our stakeholders, businesses and the education system, we made great gains in helping people with developmental disabilities achieve competitive employment. As of January 1st 2015 there were 7,444 individuals competitively employed in an integrated setting; a number we hope to see greatly increase in the coming years with enhancement to our supported employment service and our new career exploration and readiness service launched last year, Pathway to Employment.

We also made great strides last year in seeing more people take control of their services through self-direction. In 2014, we saw a three-fold increase in the number of people self-directing their services and educated more than 9,500 people in self-direction as an option. 2014 also saw a major redesign of our self-directed service options and we will continue to look for ways to streamline our services to offer more choice and flexibility to individuals.

While we have made significant progress in the initial stages of our transformation, we recognize that work still needs to be done. We have gathered a panel of experts charged with examining the challenges of implementing managed care in our system, turning the initial success of our transformation agenda into lasting change and ensuring the long term fiscal and programmatic sustainability of our system. Over the course of the next several months, the panel will meet and receive substantial public input and feedback, leading to a set of clear and actionable recommendations that will guide our path forward.

In addition, we have heard the many concerns raised about the current and future availability of services for those now living at home who may want and need to access residential services. In response to these concerns, OPWDD will spend this year conducting extensive outreach to those individuals who have requested residential services through its residential registry. Through this process, OPWDD will advance its promise to serve individuals in the most integrated setting while ensuring a full continuum of housing is available to meet each individuals' needs and goals. The information gained through this assessment will be used to ensure that current needs are identified and met and project support needs into the future. This review will help us to ensure that services and supports can be developed and made available to individuals when they need them.

OPWDD looks forward to working with our partners in the legislature, and all of our stakeholders, in the continuing effort to achieve real and lasting transformation in our system. I welcome your questions.