



Montana Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP) Rate Reimbursement Project: What It Means For Consumers

By Doreen Boyer

In the fall of 2000, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) conducted a review of the Montana 1915 (c) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver. A conclusion from the review stated, "Montana utilizes a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for contracting with providers. This process violates the freedom of choice for providers. Freedom of choice is limited for consumers because of the restriction of provider choice."

In response to the CMS review Montana developed a corrective action plan. The plan stated that Montana would utilize its current contracting system for two more years and in that time a steering committee would be formed to initiate system changes that would offer choice to consumers and demonstrate Montana's effort to comply with CMS rules. As a result of the committee's work, a procedure was developed that allows any qualified person or organization to become a qualified provider of Developmental Disabilities (DD) services. The committee also approved the development of a Resource Allocation Sheet (RAS) that would identify resources that would be available to each individual recipient of Waiver services if they chose to "port" to a different provider.

Although these were substantial changes, they fell short of true choice and the CMS rules. Two major problems still persisted. First, the service rates were

not uniform across services throughout the State so consumers could not always buy what they needed. This problem was identified by CMS in a follow up visit to Montana. Second, the amounts of resources identified in the Resource Allocation Sheet were not reflective of what individuals' needs were. In most cases, providers simply divided the number of consumers they served by the amount of dollars in their contract, which might lead to individuals taking too much or too little resources with them when porting.



In the past two years, DDP worked to improve on this system by developing a published rate reimbursement system and a process to clearly identify the amount of dollars an individual would need to access community-based services. In March 2003, a meeting was held with DD providers to identify a reimbursement system. Providers and DD staff studied the options for either a cost based, or a fee (rate)-based, system. Their decision was to use a fee-based system.

In November 2003, DDP contracted with Mercer Human Resource Consulting to develop a published

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rate system for services and a method to allocate available resources based on the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. The Montana Resource Allocation Protocol (MONA) assessment tool was developed in an effort to provide resources to individuals. The protocol is used to determine how much money a person could receive to purchase services. Individuals will not collect "actual dollars," but will receive an individual cost plan against which their chosen provider can bill.

Both the rates and the rates reimbursement system are due to be completed by the end of 2004 with a pilot population of approximately 160 adults slated to begin in January 2005. The pilot of the children's system is slated to begin in March 2005. Full implementation of the rates reimbursement system may take an additional one to two years

to complete.

With this new rates reimbursement system, DDP hopes to provide individuals with the information and control to give them more independence and freedom of choice. DDP will no longer be entering into contracts with individual providers, but will be entering into service agreements. Individuals receiving services from providers will enter into a contractual relationship with the provider of their choice for receipt of their services.

Questions about Rate Reimbursement Project can be addressed to the Developmental Disabilities Program, (406) 444-2995.

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Answers to Some Common Questions about the MONA

What is the purpose of the Montana Resource Allocation Protocol (MONA)?

The purpose of the MONA is to develop a fair way to distribute dollars to people receiving services.

Why is the MONA important to me?

The MONA identifies the amount of support you need that is paid for by public funds. The MONA identifies how much money you may receive to help purchase your services.

How are my public dollars determined?

The MONA calculates your dollars in two steps. The first step determines a "base" or beginning amount. The base will change depending on your age and where you live. The questions asked in the MONA are the second step and determine whether more money will be added to the base.

What is included in the base?

The base includes the costs of certain services such as respite and some services provided to people who live in a group home.

What can I do if the MONA does not provide enough money for me to purchase the services I need?

The MONA serves as a guideline for the allocation of public dollars you can use to purchase services.

QUALITY MATTERS

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You may need to adjust your request for services to stay within your public dollar allocation.

You will need to be sure all available resources such as the Medicaid State Plan, the Department of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, community resources and any personal resources are used to obtain the supports you need. Remember that you always have the right for reconsideration and a fair hearing.

Will the MONA affect my services?

The MONA, itself, does not affect your services. It serves as a tool to calculate the amount of public funds that are available for you to purchase services.

Does the MONA change the services I can get?

The services and support you purchase are your decision based on what you need. You will still need to follow the guidelines and criteria set by the Department.

Who can complete the MONA?

Only trained raters, central office or region Developmental Disabilities Program staff can complete the MONA with you.

How will the MONA be completed?

The rater will have a scheduled time to talk with you about your need for supports paid for by the Department. The MONA will be completed when your needs change, but at least every three years after that.

What is my role in the MONA process?

You have a critical role in the MONA process. The MONA is based on the principles of self-determination — authority, responsibility, supports, confirmation/self-advocacy and freedom. Based on these principles, the MONA cannot be done without your participation.

Who participates in my MONA?

The MONA is your assessment based upon your support needs and should reflect what you believe are your needs for supports paid for by public funds. At a minimum, your Case Manager will be involved in the process. If you are a child, your mother, father, or someone with legal responsibility will also participate. If you are an adult with a legal guardian or advocate, that individual will participate with you. You have the option of inviting others to meet with you and your Case Manager. You and those who know the most about you are the best sources of information about your need for paid supports. This may include your friends or your mom, dad, or other family members. You are not obligated to include anyone else in the MONA process if you do not want his or her involvement.

What does the MONA cover?

The MONA looks at activities and tasks in specific life areas. They include: Living in the Community (supports needed to take part in community activities), Challenging Behavior (supports needed because of serious or frequent, harmful behaviors), Current Abilities (supports needed for activities of daily living), and Health and Health Care (supports needed to maintain your health.)

The MONA for children includes the same domains, with distinctions for age. The children's MONA will be applied to children, in waiver services (IFES — Intensive Family Education Support) between the ages of six and twenty-two. The MONA for Adults includes an additional area related to employment.

What does it mean when I sign the MONA?

Your signature means that you met and talked with the rater about your need for paid supports. You do not need to wait until you know how much money you can use before you sign your MONA. Signing **does not** waive your right to object.





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Project to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities

The Montana Center on Disabilities at Montana State University-Billings has received a \$325,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Civil Rights, to establish a Montana Project to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities.

The primary benefactors of the project will be women with disabilities. Additionally, disability service organizations and victim service organizations will benefit through education, technical assistance, and outreach activities.

A 1996 survey that asked women with a variety of disabilities to rank the most important research topics affecting their lives was used as the basis for the grant. "Over 90% ranked violence as their top priority," said Linda Henry, who is the director for this new project.

We were able to pull together a unique group of partners to plan and implement this project including the Montana Center on Disabilities, the Billings Area Family Violence Task Force, the Montana Coalition

Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, the Montana Mental Health Association, Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow, and the Montana Independent Living Project.

The goals of the project are as follows:

- 1) Cross-training to project partners on domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking as it relates to women with disabilities, as well as on disability awareness, discrimination, and accessibility;
- 2) Outreach to a minimum of 40 organizations serving women with disabilities;
- 3) Develop or revise education and outreach materials and distribute to a minimum of 100 community organizations;
- 4) Develop or revise a minimum of six training modules related to violence against women with disabilities;
- 5) Train a minimum of 50 shelter and victim service organizations on federal and state anti-discrimination laws, accessibility, and the nature of disability;
- 6) Coordinate three statewide conferences focusing on violence against women with disabilities;
- 7) Convene quarterly statewide advisory council meetings, and four bi-annual community meetings that will service as conduits for sustainability of services. Products created under this project include an accessibility audit, which will offer no, low, and high cost solutions to enhancing accessibility, and six training modules.

For more information about the new Montana Project to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities, call Linda Henry at the Montana Center on Disabilities at MSU-Billings, at (406) 657-2083 or (888) 866-3822 (voice/TDD).