

Testimony – DAIL Attendant Services Program (ASP)

April 12th, 2018

The Statewide Independent Living Council (VT SILC) has maintained an interest throughout many years in the PDAC (participant-directed attendant care) programs within the VT Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL). A unique component of PDAC – generally known as the DAIL attendant services program (ASP) - is one which utilizes State general funds (GF) to assist people with disabilities who require personal attendant care and who either do not meet eligibility requirements for programs under the Medicaid umbrella or who otherwise choose the ASP program.

PDAC programs allow the user of personal attendant care (PCA) services to actively direct his/her own care, including hiring and firing of one's own PCA's and specifying the number of PCA hours utilized, as well as the PCA services utilized.

The SILC is charged, under Federal law (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended), with responsibility for writing the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) and with monitoring independent living programs and services in the State; as such, it works closely with Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) and with appropriate State departments and agencies. Needless to say, the DAIL Attendant Services Program is a vital component for many to live and work independently in a community-based setting. It precludes many people with disabilities from unnecessarily residing in nursing homes or being subject to other institutional placement and is thus cost-effective – saving huge alternative expenditures.

As an advisory body in matters concerning independent living (IL), the SILC would like to share its concern over the proposed and potential elimination of the Attendant Services Program. The SILC recognizes that personal attendant care is fundamental to independent living, indeed a core service if personal integrity, dignity, self-determination and self-sufficiency, as well as community-based living, are to be maintained.

The SILC understands the need for fiscal prudence and constraint while maintaining key services for people with disabilities. We thus think it is a mistake to eliminate Vermont's unique general funded Attendant Services Program. Such a program actually precludes the need for impoverishment and utilization of more expensive public social service programs. It allows many people with disabilities who can and desire to work to do so with the self-directed support of personal care attendants. What could be more representative of person-centered and person-directed care?

The SILC would appreciate greatly being a part of responsible dialogue going forward as the great State of Vermont finds and retains solutions to human service issues. Vermont has always been a leader in doing so and I know the legislature wants that to continue.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify upon the proposed elimination of the DAIL ASP program. Please do not hesitate to communicate with the SILC at any time about this issue or for any other reason.

Sincerely,

Sam Liss
Member, VT SILC