

I am submitting testimony in support of House Bill 8117.

Since 2014 we have been under the consent decree with the Department of Justice and have had to answer to the court to make sure the individuals we support are out in the community and receiving person centered individual service plans. Recently, the court monitor has recently put requirements on the case workers and have added to the work we currently do, requiring documentation that these actions have taken place in very specific time frames. Although this work may seem small, it adds up to our daily tasks and have added stress and anxiety about meeting timelines to the workers. Caseloads are between 190-205 with new cases being assigned to workers every other week from eligibility and sometimes getting hit twice with the Youth in Transition. People are coming into our system younger and younger to access their BHDDH funds while still in school. This means that typically when someone turned 21, case management would get the case and the case worker would start working to secure supports. Now, people as young as 18 are wanting to access supports, which adds to the numbers and work for case workers. For new cases and Youth in Transition cases, workers need to meet with families to discuss services, fill out paperwork for our waiver so they can access their funding, make referrals and reach out to agencies to see if they have any openings, attending IEP and ISP meetings, read and either approve or deny someone's plan, approve Goods and Services, deal with Medicaid issues which means constantly reaching out to DHS to try to fix the problem, deal with any emergencies that come up, discuss residential with families looking for 24 hour placement, work with Quality Assurance if requested, and monitor conflicts between family and agencies. We have to answer to the court and put aside anything important we may have planned to meet their deadlines, YIT administration who is constantly requiring us to attend to matters and then our everyday tasks that all add to workers being stressed to stay on top of it all. We have brought concerns about moral and stress levels to our administration who constantly say that we need to be flexible as these requirements from the court need to be met.

Ten years ago, case loads were at 140-160. In the past 10 years, cases have increased, with higher demands, more expectations and new case management systems. The number of workers has remained the same. Our consumers ISPs are person centered but it is difficult to attend every ISP with such high caseloads, which makes it difficult to make sure that they are happy and receiving the supports they want and need. We currently have supervisors, supervising a Unit of 6 plus carrying a caseload. A worker went on educational leave and her caseload, of 180 cases, was split between all the workers, which resulted in higher caseloads.