

Good Evening My name is Pam Fields, I reside in Meriden CT and am the CEO at MidState Arc. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the five-year plan. I am in favor of this 5-year plan with some additional expansions.

This plan is critical to the future health and wellbeing of people with intellectual disabilities. Ensuring that all people with IDD live in a supported and inclusive community environment is essential and the programs and services developed must reflect this approach.

We are excited to see Assistive Technology as part of the Plan. MidState Arc created the Assistive Technology Center located in Meriden CT.

Through our work in the Center with providers across CT and the nation we know firsthand how critical it is for people to have access to a network and a variety of services and resources. Every person is unique, as are their needs and their family structure. A wide variety of options and solutions must be available in order for people with IDD to live inclusive lives in their communities and to have their health and safety needs met.

No longer do we live in a one-size fits all world. As mentioned throughout the plan the range of services must include new and innovative services

such as expanding the use of Assistive Technology, individualized supported living options, greater access to affordable housing, the resources to ensure and support person-centered lifestyles AND creative employment and volunteer options for all level of disabilities.

The pandemic has exacerbated an already existing staffing crisis. This has brought to the surface not only the increased need for collaborative opportunities but also a need for a wide-wide range of community-based options that are supported by a funding system which allows individuals to flow from one support to another as needs change and evolve. The system needs the bandwidth to provide the mentoring and training for not only the providers, but for the families and individuals with IDD to transition to these new and innovative options. As mentioned in the plan this menu of services must also include supports for individuals and families with complex behavioral and medical needs. Those specific services are the most complicated and are staff and time intensive. This area is mentioned in the plan under the Healthy Living Section, however more concentration on building the capacity for this population within the provider sector is greatly needed.

The addition of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director is a great addition if the concentration will be equity of services throughout the system.

Creating an inclusive service model with a wide variety of services will allow CT not only to meet the needs of all its residents with IDD but also meet the requirements from CMS. Connecticut was once the leader of innovative and inclusive services and we need to make sure we rise to this level again.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.