

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING SUPPORT TO PARENTS DURING THE
COVID-19 EMERGENCY IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

April 23, 2020

Note- Many of these questions were asked and answered during the DAIL town hall held on 4/21/20. In the case of any discrepancy, this written document is considered the official response to those questions.

PROCESS QUESTIONS

1. How quickly will our Designated Agencies have processes and move forward with this relief to our families?

Answer: *Funds have been made available to agencies and they can move forward with processing requests now. DAIL is providing more guidance to the providers and ARIS on the details of implementing these changes. A statewide provider training will be held on 4/27/20.*

2. How did DAIL tell people about the Town Hall?

Answer: *The Town Hall was publicized through the DD Council and VFN networks and DAIL sent it to various stakeholder groups. The Town Hall was recorded and is posted on the DAIL website for those who could not attend during the meeting.*

3. Will agencies be sharing this information with families?

Answer: *Yes, agencies will be asked to reach out to families to share information about the options. DAIL will also publicize the availability of these support options widely.*

4. How will families of another language or without internet connectivity receive this information?

Answer: *DAIL will send information related to these options to family caregivers who are employers of record through an ARIS mailing. It will include how to have the information translated at the bottom of the notice. Agencies will provide information to families about options and will offer translation as needed.*

5. Could primary care, pediatricians and school special ed departments receive this information to help with outreach?

Answer: *We do not have access to those distribution lists, but we can share the information with our state partners, so they can share.*

6. Did you involve family input in defining this financial relief package? Why were those families and your department more supportive of a one-time stipend instead of paying families a predictable recurring payment for the duration of the pandemic?

Answer: *The Department received multiple requests to assist families during the State of Emergency and the options were developed in response to those requests. DAIL typically spends more time engaging stakeholders in decision-making. Given the desire to quickly create ways to support families during the crisis, DAIL researched its options within what was allowable under Medicaid, including seeking short-term variances from the Federal government, and came up with these options.*

7. Families have been told by ARIS, DAs, Transition II and DAIL that they are in consultation with management or legal departments on how to handle payments but no tangible information on how much our families will receive, when or how to access it. There are many questions about how these payments will be made. When will there be clear guidance provided by DAIL?

Answer: *DAIL acknowledges that in its eagerness to let families know that some options were going to be made available, that some of the operational details had not yet been finalized. DAIL has been working to quickly address this and get those details out to agencies and ARIS ASAP.*

8. What are the options for families who have blended their Children's Personal Care Services with their Developmental Disabilities Services into a Unified Service Plan?

Answer: *A Unified Services Plan (USP) is a way of blending different funding streams so that services are accessed through a single provider entity in the form of a Developmental Disabilities Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) plan (i.e. a "DS waiver"). CPCS is one of the main funding sources that can be blended with DS HCBS into a USP. When CPCS funds are blended into a USP, they are no longer available separately because the services they are intended to cover will be provided through the agency overseeing the USP. Families who have USP's can access the options described under #1 & #2 in the document.*

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

9. I can't figure out which program(s) my family is in and therefore don't know how much stipend or financial relief I'm entitled to. How do I know if I'm in CSHN or DAIL Waiver program or something else altogether?

Answer: *If you have a case manager or other contact at a Designated or Specialized Service agency, you should check with that person for assistance. If you are receiving Children Personal Care Services (CPCS), which is administered through the Vermont Department of Health, CSHN, you are receiving regular notices from that program to authorize or re-authorize that service. You can check your paperwork or contact VDH directly to confirm whether you are currently enrolled in the CPCS program.*

10. We have high tech nursing and respite. I don't know what we fall under.

Answer: *The high technology nursing program is not included in the Developmental Services options. Most likely the respite is provided through a Developmental Disabilities Services agency, so families should check with them regarding their options.*

11. An adult child, a client of the regional Developmental Services Agency, not utilizing ARIS, with prevention of crisis funds (which they are not able to utilize because of the COVID-19). They go home to stay with parent because of mental health/autism and difficulty remaining on their own without support. Are prevention of crisis funds blended in with this change? Can the parent submit invoice for prevention of Crisis funds from the Developmental Services agency?

Answer: *It depends. "Prevention of crisis" is a term used by a specific provider and does not describe a service category in DDS. If the funds were being managed by the family and are unspent, they could possibly be accessed under option #1 as described. If the funds have already been spent or a child returns home to receive care, the family may be eligible under option #2. For a final answer, you must consult with your provider.*

12. I want to know why children's personal care hours can go directly to the parents hour for hour and why waiver families with adults are limited to a stipend. Between the coronavirus and just typical call outs before that, I'll have a lot of unused waiver money at the end of June.

Answer: *The Children's Personal Care Program and the Developmental Disabilities Services Programs each have their own rules and regulations. Solutions for assisting families were designed within the rules of each program. The intent of both programs was to help support families for the additional care they are providing given that paid supports are not available.*

13. If my minor child has a DS Waiver with a Designated Agency AND a family managed respite budget with the same agency, which stipend(s) do I qualify for?

Answer: *Individuals are eligible for either the Developmental Disabilities Services Home and Community-based Services (HCBS) (also known as “waiver”) or the Family-Managed Respite (FMR) program, but not both at the same time. Some children receiving HCBS have respite as one of the services that is funded in the plan and the respite is managed by the family. However, this is not the same as the Family-managed Respite program. Families whose children have HCBS may be eligible to receive the stipends under option #1 & 2. Families whose children receive or are eligible for FMR, may access funding through option #3.*

14. Since there are already for years several states in the Union who do ‘reimburse or allow’ paid family and parent payment for ‘unfilled support positions’ ..,or also regular staff, service coordinator positions’ ..,like CA, WA , FL (and about 10 others) it should be possible to find out how those states have started out/ handle especially this emergency situation,.. considering, that most family members and/or parents would only part-time fill also those roles of paid support staff in other states,.. Additionally interesting, how the State of VT handles Medicaid Waiver supports.

Answer: *DAIL has previously researched how other states pay parents. State Developmental Disabilities Services Programs each have their own rules, regulations and operations. Solutions for assisting Vermont families were designed in alignment with the structure of the Vermont program.*

15. Our family has an account which lists NCSS as the agency, it is family managed respite and the statements from ARIS day the program/payor is VT_FMR-VT Medicaid. I contacted NCSS and was told to be careful what I'm looking at (the info in the group about receiving funds from DAIL) because NCSS is not a waiver agency. They implied that my family managed respite paid by VT Medicaid that has them listed as the agency isn't included in this stipend payout DAIL is doing. So, basically I cannot have any of that respite money even though I have a balance?

Answer: *NCSS does operate the Family-managed Respite program with ARIS serving as the Fiscal/Employer agent. NCSS operates the majority of its services for children under the Integrating Family Services framework. So, it is accurate the DDS Home and Community-based Services options described under #1 and #2 do not apply for children. Under option #3, additional funds are available if needed in FMR, but those funds cannot be converted into a stipend.*

APPLICATION/PROCESS QUESTIONS

16. Process needs to be expedited.

Answer: *DAIL is working as quickly as possible to operationalize the procedures for application, approval and payment of these funds. See also response to question 1, page 1.*

17. What about those of us in the midst of a re-evaluation/renewal?

Answer: *This question probably pertains to Children's Personal Care Services. For DDS, agencies have been given some flexibility regarding re-assessments and renewals of Individual Service Plans. People currently receiving HCBS will continue to be eligible for services and will not be terminated during the state of emergency, except in a few rare circumstances such as moving out of state or into a nursing home.*

18. What do we need to do and when do we need to do it to receive the stipend?

Answer: *Families should work with their provider agency to determine which option pertains to their circumstance. The agency will provide assistance with the process. Funds are available through 6/30/20, so families should contact their agency by early June to ensure enough time to process payments.*

19. Who is eligible to be our employer? Spouse? What will a single parent do?

Answer: *No employer of record is need for these payments through DDS.*

20. To access the stipend under section 1, would I reach out to my CSHN social worker?

Answer: *For DDS, families need to contact their DDS provider agencies.*

21. It's unclear in the DAIL guidance as to whether parents have to initiate the request.

Answer: *Parents may initiate requests. Agencies will also inform families currently receiving services of the options, so then parents can make a request.*

22. If a family is receiving services through a specialized services agency (SSA), would it be the SSA or the designated agency (DA) who is responsible?

Answer: *If a family is working with an SSA, for options #1, 2 & 4, they would continue to work with their SSA. If a family has Family-managed Respite (FMR) currently, they should work with their current provider. If they are newly applying for FMR, they need to apply through their DA. Families wanting to apply for Flexible Family Funding should apply at their DA.*

PAYMENT/BUDGET/FINANCIAL QUESTIONS

23. How can a family access the full remaining balance on the waiver budget(s)?

Answer: They cannot access the full remaining balance of the DDS HCBS budget. They may access up to \$5,000 of funds that they family-manage remaining through 6/30/20. Families may also want to consider whether they want to utilize the full remaining budget if the emergency ends prior to 6/30/20 and workers can be hired to provide care again.

24. When will I receive my payment(s)?

Answer: For the \$2,000 stipend (option #2), this will come from your provider agency. Families will need to work with their agencies to request the funds. Each agency may have a specific process and time frame for making the payments, but the intention is to get them out to families quickly. For the funds under option #1, which are a conversion from the existing budget, once a decision has been made regarding the amount of funding to be converted and ARIS is notified of the change, the family will be able to submit the request for payment and ARIS will process the payment as they do timesheets according to the DS pay period.

25. When do I qualify for hourly pay v. a one-time stipend?

Answer: Both the CPCS program and the DDS program are allowing for stipends to be paid. CPCS payments to parents are based upon the number of hours per week authorized in the plan of care, but the payment is not for hours of service as an employee. In DDS, the one-time stipends are available for options #1 & 2. In option #4, these are one-time payments, but are not considered stipends.

26. Will there be another stipend available to our families if the pandemic lasts past the current stay at home order?

Answer: The stipends in DDS are available until 6/30/20, the end of the current state fiscal year. DAHL will determine if there will be funds available in the next fiscal year which starts 7/1/20 depending on available funding.

27. What time period is this stipend intended to cover? The entire pandemic starting effective with the stay at home order?

Answer: April 1 through June 30, 2020. The one-time funds available under option #4 will remain available until they are all given out by the agency and can carry over after 7/1/20.

28. Do I need to report stipend and or hourly payments on my 2020 income tax?

Answer: *The stipends paid through DDS in options #1 & 2 may be considered tax-free difficulty of care payments. DDS is not offering hourly payments. The department cannot offer specific tax advice because there are so many individual circumstances. Please consult a tax advisor if needed.*

29. What is the impact of the payments on other benefits such as unemployment, SSI, Fuel Assistance, Reach Up, Food stamps etc.

Answer: *DAIL is unable to answer this question. Each program has its own rules related to what is considered income. Families will need to direct their questions to those programs. What DAIL can say is that for the stipends paid in option #1 & 2, these are considered tax-free difficulty of care payments.*

30. If we have a budget for respite via ARIS, hourly and/or 24 hr periods, how do we know how many hours to request/bill if we're doing 24hr days 24/7? Also, is the employer the same as the employee if the same parent who typically does the admin. payroll, paperwork is also the one caring for the DS dependent?

Answer: *Family caregivers will not be considered employers or employees when receiving the stipend payments. Parents will be requesting an amount of money, not hours or days of service. The amount that can be requested is up to \$5,000 for option #1. The amount requested cannot exceed the total funds left until 6/30/20. Families should consider whether they would like to reserve some funds to pay workers now if available or if the state of emergency ends prior to 6/30/20.*

31. Given that these programs are designed to support individuals with the highest level of need, the amount and the one time nature of the payments doesn't provide reassurance that it could sustain a family member cutting back on outside working hours given that the pandemic could last for a year or more.

Answer: *The funds being made available are to support families who are providing additional care due to the unavailability of workers. They are not intended as replacement for lost wages of caregivers. DAIL will review providing additional funds past 6/30/20 depending on the circumstances at the time and available funds.*

32. If you don't have any funds left in your waiver to convert to a stipend of \$5,000.00, then you would be eligible for a lesser amount, \$2000.00 from a flexible COVID fund? For instance, because I have no one coming in everyday anymore, that money is just sitting there. Therefore, I am entitled to the full amount in the waiver. However, if I had spent it all, then I would be eligible for a lesser amount from a different funding stream?

Answer: *The funds for option #1 & #2 come from different sources. In option #1, the funding is coming from the existing authorized service plan. Parents are now being allowed to be paid a stipend to provide a portion of the care that had been provided by workers they had hired, because of the unavailability of those workers. In #2, the service plan funds have already been spent by the family. DAIL decided to appropriate additional funds for these families because some of them are also providing additional care related to the unavailability of agency-hired workers. The amount is lower due to more limited availability of funds from that source.*

33. Is there an age limit for the child, if a parent is caring for their child who is an adult (parent is guardian) and normally has a home budget through ARIS funded by a Medicaid waiver?

Answer: *For Developmental Disabilities Services, funding options are available for children and adults. There are no age limits.*

34. Where will we be able to get the answers from DAIL?

Answer: *DAIL will post information on its website. Families should contact their provider agency for assistance.*

35. Are other family members, beside parents, who are primary caregivers eligible for these funds?

Answer: *Yes, other unpaid primary caregivers may be eligible to receive these funds.*

36. Are these funds a loan?

Answer: *No.*

37. Does this include home providers that are not family members?

Answer: *No. There is a separate process for supporting shared living home providers.*

38. What is the timeline for requesting the conversion funding?

Answer: *Families may make requests now. DAIL is planning training for providers on the process for converting funds. A process has been set up for ARIS to process the payments.*

39. Do I have to fill out an ARIS employee form for myself if I am the employer under DD HCBS?

Answer: *No. Parents/family caregivers will not be considered employers or employees when receiving the payments under options #1 and #2. They should reach out to their service coordinator to discuss which option they are eligible for and the service coordinator will gather needed information in order to process payments.*

40. Is our "Service Coordinator" our daughter's Case Manager? Or is it someone else?

Answer: *Yes, The term "service coordinator" means the same as "case manager".*

41. Is Option #2 available for families whose services are totally agency-managed?

Answer: *Yes, if the individual is not receiving some of their direct services (home, community, employment, respite) due to the unavailability of workers due to COVID-19 emergency.*

42. Currently my son's services are completely suspended and we have zero respite left. Am I eligible for a payment?

Answer: *It depends on why the services are suspended. Agencies are required to suspend billing for services in certain circumstances. These funds are being made available to assist families whose family member is not receiving some services due to the COVID-19 emergency. If there are other reasons a person is not receiving services and billing is suspended for that reason, the family might not be eligible for the payment. The family should reach out to the service coordinator to discuss their circumstances.*

43. What is an example of family "needs" exceeding \$2,000?

Answer: *Some examples are if there are new needs beyond the lack of receiving regularly provided services, or changes in circumstances that impact the health and safety of a person or others.*

44. Are these funds only available if the caregiver has had to stop work to care for their family member or also for folks who have continued to work and have been using natural supports in the home to care for their family member?

Answer: *No. The intention of the payments is to provide support to families who are providing care that had previously been provided by paid workers. The family's employment status is not a factor in making the decisions regarding payments.*

45. My question is why can't the waiver in whole be converted even if there aren't any other self-managed services?

Answer: *Parents/family caregivers may receive a payment up to \$2,000 even if there are not any unused or available family-managed funds. Those who have all agency managed services may receive the funding if they are not receiving a portion of their agency managed services.*

46. If a family still has a budget currently but runs out of respite in mid-June, could they then still apply for the \$2000 payment if they didn't receive a payment for option 1?

Answer: *Yes, if all the family-managed funds were depleted and the person was not receiving a portion of their agency managed service due to the unavailability of workers during the COVID-19 emergency.*

47. If a family of a person under 18 has a budget for PCA hours, can they get the FMR new funds? And is there anything like this for PCA funds (ie, you can get the money that you would be paying PCA's)

Answer: *The Family Managed Respite (FMR) guidelines outline the eligibility for these funds. The guidelines do allow for children who receive Children's Personal Care Services to also receive FMR funding. That being said, agencies look at the overall needs of the child and family and what resources are currently available when making decisions about the need for FMR funds. The Vermont Department of Health (VDH) that oversees the Children's Personal Care Services program has just issued information regarding allowing parents to receive payments during the COVID-19 emergency. More information from VDH can be found here:*

https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/CPCS_COVID%20changes%204.16.20.pdf

48. Do you know if ARIS will deduct taxes from the \$5000? Or would the parent be responsible?

Answer: *The payments to families are considered difficulty of care payments and not considered income by the federal government. Therefore, ARIS will not be deducting federal taxes from these payments and parents would not be responsible for paying federal taxes on these payments.*

49. Re #3, is this payment for families or just an increase in budget to hire workers. not clear...

Answer: *Option #3 is just an increase to available funding in the Family Managed Respite program to allow for the family to hire respite workers. It is not a payment to families.*

50. How do I find out how much money I have left in our accounts?

Answer: *There are a number of ways to get this information. ARIS sends reports to families after payments are made and the reports include the balance of funds remaining in the budget. Agencies also receive these reports, so your service coordinator can help review the information with you.*

51. As a service coordinator, I am looking for guidance on how to start the process for option 1. The family has been approved by my agency for the full \$5000. I have been told the family provider must complete a "non payroll request.". Are there any plans to send out instructions on how to complete the forms and where it needs to be submitted for approval? I'd like to get the family some funds as soon as possible. They have not received direct support in over a month and are currently experiencing some financial limitations.

Answer: *DAIL was eager to let families know that some options for support were going to become available, so information was sent out ahead of having all the operation details in place. DAIL has finalized the processes for ARIS and agencies and will be sending that information out ASAP A training for agency staff is scheduled for April 27th.*

52. Would we use the Aris COVID payment request form that's on Vt Department of Health website?

Answer: *No. That form is for requests related to the Children's Personal Care Services program overseen by the Vermont Department of Health. Families should contact their provider agency to request support in Developmental Disabilities Services.*

53. Vermont used the federal March 13 Emergency Order as the measure of the beginning of the emergency. Since States are apparently making their own decisions about when and to what extent to relax the stay-at-home orders in place, what will actually signify the end of the emergency for purposes of the funding exceptions being discussed today in Vermont—a designation by the Governor, and specifically what type of designation? Also, if undertesting or the unavailability of a reliable antibody test still makes it impracticable for families safely to rehire caregivers, will the emergency be extended for emergency funding purposes even if certain segments of the population are released from the stay-at-home order?

Answer: *The timeframe for the availability of these funds is until 6/30/20, which is the end of the state fiscal year. If the state of emergency continues past that date, the state will need to evaluate whether additional funds will be made available to families dependent on*

available funds. The one-time funds described in option #4 may be available past 7/1/20. Agencies can carryover those funds into the next year if they have not all been allocated.

54. Is ARIS still open and can you get the \$5000 from number 1 and then restart your child with respite before the new fiscal year July 1?

Answer: *ARIS is still open and performing all their functions as the Fiscal/Employer Agent. They will be able to process the requests for conversion funds. It is possible that a family could receive a payment for \$5,000 and if funding was still available in a person's budget after that payment, it could be used to hire workers prior to 6/30/20.*

55. My son requires full time care. I'm able to use one caregiver but I'm down 2 others. Can I still receive the benefit of a stipend since I am covering 50 percent of the care along with the other caregiver?

Answer: *Yes, you can receive a payment and continue to pay workers within the available budget. If the budget is exhausted, the parent/caregiver could possibly be able to receive additional funds under option #2.*

56. Can money come out of community support fund?

Answer: *Yes, funds that are managed by the family, including the community support category, can be converted into a payment under option #1. If a person has agency managed community supports, they may be eligible to receive a payment under option #2 if they are not receiving that service due to the unavailability of workers due to the COVID-19 crisis.*

57. If we know our ARIS budget, and know which program pertains to us, can we contact them directly?

Answer: *No, you need to contact your provider agency to explore the options and they will notify ARIS regarding the agreed upon amount of the payment.*

58. What does happen to those community support funds which are not being used?

Answer: *Depending on the circumstances, some funds are returned to the State, and some remain with the provider agency. During the COVID-19 emergency, agencies have been authorized flexibilities to move funds around to meet the needs of those they are serving.*

59. My daughter requires full time care. I am currently covering days while my husband covers nights. Are we both eligible for a stipend?

Answer: *The total payment must follow the parameters described. It is possible to split the payment between parents when both parents are providing care, but in separate households. The service coordinator can assist in the discussion with the parents to determine the amounts for each parent.*

60. I have heard that families can receive up to \$5000 in unused respite funds as cash or \$2000 in unused community support. Is it an either/or, or can it be combined to more than \$5000? What's the maximum that a family could receive, \$7,000?

Answer: *No, \$5,000 is the maximum when converting unused respite or other funding managed by the family.*

61. Can you partner with ARIS to not make families wait the 2 weeks? ARIS pays every two weeks, so it would be helpful to not have them have families wait for the normal pay period.

Answer: *Unfortunately, that will not be possible. The payments can be processed by ARIS according to the normal pay period cycle if the request is submitted by the established deadlines for timesheet submissions.*

62. When will providers receive the option #2 funding to be able to provide to families?

Answer: *Providers should be receiving the funding within the next couple of days.*

63. For #4 FFF option, if a family's household income is adversely affected by the current crisis, can they use their current financial circumstances to qualify--even if they were originally "over income" earlier in the fiscal year?

Answer: *Allocations of FFF are based upon annual gross family income and family size. If these change, a family's eligibility can be reconsidered.*

64. If an individual with a DD waiver who normally lives independently is now staying with a family member full time due to current conditions pertaining to COVID, could that family member receive funding from option 1 or 2?

Answer: *Yes, if they meet the criteria to receive payment as described.*

65. If someone is being provided with community supports through the agency because there are essential needs that have been identified, and also have respite funds through ARIS, does the family still meet the criteria for receiving the funds -- either the \$5000 or \$2000 limits? They aren't able to hire respite staff due to the COVID crisis.

Answer: *Yes, they could convert the unused respite funds up to \$5,000 under option #1. If there was less than \$2,000 of unused respite or other family managed funds, they could receive an additional payment through option #2, with the maximum amount between #1 and #2 being \$2,000.*

66. What are the options for home providers?

Answer: *This information relates to payments to families. Information regarding additional payments for home providers is provided to agencies through separate guidance. Home providers should contact the service coordinator at the provider agency for more details.*

67. For option 1, can families request a portion from April 1 until May 15th and then reassess if additional funds were needed because they choose to keep their child home longer and were not going to have people providing support?

Answer: *Yes, due to the uncertainty of when workers may be available again, a family can choose to reserve some respite funds and then if it does not appear that they will be able to hire workers towards the end of June, they can request the remaining funds in a second request. Families should be aware that they will need to have these requests submitted by their provider agency prior to the deadline for timesheet submissions for the final pay period of the fiscal year.*

68. We are now more than one month into the stay at home rules. What exactly is the nature of the delay in rules and regs for processing? We have been caring for our dependents 24/7, in many cases, since then, trying to juggle "paid work" and extraordinary family care. We are grateful, AND we need to move forward without delays. I've lost half of my income and am trying to supervise my son, while working part-time. The stress and fatigue are beyond manageable. The funds can help ease the burden.

Answer: *DAIL understands the significant stress that families are under due to this crisis. These changes in policy are a significant departure from our standard policies and procedures, some of which required federal approvals. We have been working as quickly as possible to make the changes to be able to offer support to families.*

69. Not sure I understand why distinction between not being able to or willing to bring anyone into the home during this health crisis under option 1-2 vs option 3? Options 1-2 -payment can go to families vs. children's personal care where additions to budget that can't be used unless families want to risk their health.

Answer: *DAIL and VDH have been in discussions with each other regarding how to make the changes in our respective programs. The Children's Personal Care Program and the Developmental Disabilities Services Programs each have their own rules, regulations, and operational procedures. Solutions for assisting families were designed within these.*

70. Do checks need to be cut before the end of June or just have the paperwork in process before the end of June?

Answer: *To receive the payment under option #1, the agency must submit the request by the deadline for submitting DS timesheets at the end of the year. For the payments that will be made by providers to families under option #2, check with your provider regarding the deadline.*

71. We need money ASAP for food. I still haven't received unemployment and am waiting for my family members' being released. Since my son gets SSDI, we don't qualify for food stamps. We need help ASAP.

Answer: *Funds should be available soon. Contact your service coordinator to start the process. You may be able to locate other resources for food. I would recommend you call 2-1-1 who can refer you to available resources.*

72. So are people not allowed to use their respite providers at this time?

Answer: *On a case by case basis, employers should evaluate whether a certain service is "essential" at this time. DAIL provided guidance to assist with making that decision. Families should weigh the risks and benefits of having the service provided and make a decision about whether the service is essential. See pp 2-4 of <https://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/sites/mhnew/files/documents/V.7%20DMH%20DDS%20Guidance%20April%206%202020.pdf>. So, respite providers may work, but some may not be available due to their own personal circumstances or decisions.*

73. Is some agency considering how caregivers who cannot work with individuals due to the virus being taken care of with unemployment or other means so they will be available when this ends?

Answer: *Yes, information was sent to independent direct support workers through ARIS regarding options around unemployment. For agency hired workers, DAİL has authorized flexible use of existing funding as well as provided additional funding to allow for agencies to retain their employees.*

74. Is the budget to fund these stipends solid or is there a chance that it might be depleted to meet other expenses that have been planned or may be emergency, unplanned expenses?

Answer: *The funds under option #1 are currently available through individual budgets. The additional funds for the other options have been or will very soon be sent to provider agencies and these funds are targeted for these identified needs.*

75. If a family still has money in their budget but doesn't want to convert it as they think they will use it by 6/30, can they access option 2 immediately?

Answer: *If the family does have workers available and expects to utilize all their funding by 6/30/20, they can request funding through options #2.*

76. What forms need to be submitted to apply for option 1? Do they need to be submitted directly to ARIS or to the Designated Agency? Do families or unpaid caregivers have to have a discussion with their service coordinator or can they just submit the non-payroll form without any assessment or conversation with the service coordinator?

Answer: *Families must contact their service coordinator who will complete the needed forms and send it to ARIS.*

77. Can a family pay themselves \$3,000 from their respite and then access the \$2,000 stipend?

Answer: *No. The maximum amount that can be paid to the family is \$2,000 when combining options #1 and #2. This is because the funds in #1 were already available and funds for option #2 are new funds from a different source and the amount available is limited.*

78. Will DAİL have another Town Hall to walk through a step-by-step process?

Answer: *DAİL will be partnering with Vermont Care Partners to provide another Town Hall for agencies so they fully understand the options and can explain them to families. The*

Town Hall for families has been recorded and will be posted on the Vermont Family Network and DAIL websites along with this Q & A document.

79. I didn't understand option 4.

Answer: *In option #4, providers receive funds from DAIL that they can make available to people currently receiving services or new people with developmental disabilities. DAIL has asked the providers to prioritize the use of those funds to offer Flexible Family Funding for additional families and to target any crisis needs of people with developmental disabilities. These funds are granted on a one-time basis and are not ongoing. See page 36 of the Vermont System of Care Plan for Developmental Services for more details about the allowable uses of one-time funds.*

80. What wasn't clear to me was whether the added \$2000.00 available to families is from a client's current waiver funds which covered Agency aides? Our adult son lives at home and was receiving 20 hours of services per week by 2 agency staff. We also have a Respite budget through ARIS. Due to COVID measures, he has not had the agency staff services. Where is the funding for those 20 hours per week? Should parents be receiving those funds?

Answer: *The funding for the \$2,000 payment for families under option #2 does not come from individual's budgets. DAIL provided new funds for agencies to make those payments. In the situation described, the family has the option of converting their respite funds into a payment up to \$5,000 if they workers are not going to be providing respite and there are unused respite funds. The total that could be converted is \$5,000 for the person's current budget. If there are no available unused funds in the portion of the budget managed by the family (paid through ARIS) or if there is less than \$2,000, families may be eligible to receive a total of \$2,000 between the funds from option #1 and option #2. The funds from agency managed services are not available to families. DAIL has allowed some flexibilities with the use of those funds to retain employees and to meet the needs of people they serve. An individual's authorized budget is not being reduced and the budget will remain available for when services resume.*

81. Will the process for approval of 2020-2021 budgets for HCBS under Medicaid Waivers be modified to assure there won't be a gap in services at the end of the current fiscal year on June 30, and if so, how? Is a six-month pro rata extension of existing 2019-2020 budgets currently being considered? When will guidance on this become available?

Answer: *At this point, there has been no change to the current practice of approval for the fiscal year 21 budgets which start 7/1/20 and end 6/30/21. Given the uncertainties with the*

State budget, it is not known at this time whether any changes will be needed. It is likely this will be clearer sometime in June.

82. Can families that either (a) elect not to apply surplus HCBS Medicaid Waiver funds to a stipend to themselves, or (b) after paying such stipend to themselves still have additional monies left in their 2019-2020 budget, on a one-time basis, roll the surplus budget funds into their 2020-2021 budget?

Answer: *No, funds do not roll over across fiscal years.*