

Address Workforce Challenges in Disability Services



[HF 4940](#) *Virnig*; [SF 4931](#) *Maye Quade*

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People with disabilities and their families are being impacted by a shortage of support staff and services to help them live and work in the community. Staffing shortages have been described as a crisis in Minnesota for at least a decade, and the pandemic made it worse.

The number of people with disabilities eligible for long-term services and supports in Dakota County has increased 16 percent since January 2020. Over that same time, there has been an 8-percent decline in the number of direct support staff. As a result, there are longer waitlists for services and concerns about service quality for those who get support. There is also a growing number of people with disabilities being forced into institutional care rather than community settings.

In November 2022, Dakota County convened a Staffing and Provider Shortage Workgroup of people with disabilities, family members and community organizations. The workgroup developed recommendations for the Dakota County Board of Commissioners to address these workforce challenges. Given Minnesota's state-supervised, county-administered human service system, many workgroup recommendations will require state action.

Solutions include:

- Allowing maximum flexibility in self-directed programs, such as by clarifying that goods or services that support community inclusion are allowable expenses.
- Streamlining paperwork requirements. For example, eliminate the need for people to

complete new paperwork for each phase of a job search or support.

- Increasing the availability of assistive technology to supplement paid caregivers. For example, create an Assistive Technology Resource Center to train, certify and build awareness.
- Providing support and technical assistance to businesses and other organizations to promote inclusive communities. This can be accomplished by allocating \$500,000 to Dakota County to pilot a two-year Communities for All program.
- Developing an online application that uses a "gig economy" approach for matching requests for support with available staff in real time. This can be accomplished by allocating \$500,000 to Dakota County in 2024 to develop and test an application.

State funding requests:

- \$500,000 to Dakota County for two-year Communities for All pilot program
- \$500,000 to Dakota County for development of "gig economy"-style online application to match support requests with available staff

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