



Proposed FY 2014-15 Executive Budget

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**Joint Hearing of the Fiscal Committees of the State Legislature**

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Testimony of Deputy Commissioner  
Helene DeSanto

February 11, 2014



# Joint Legislative Budget Hearing Testimony

## New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

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Helene DeSanto, Deputy Commissioner  
New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities

Good morning Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblyman Farrell, Senator Carlucci, Assemblywoman Gunther and other distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly, I am Helene DeSanto, Deputy Commissioner of the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding Governor Cuomo's 2014-2015 Executive Budget proposal for OPWDD.

The Governor's Executive Budget supports the continued implementation of important reforms and advances OPWDD's Transformation Agenda. To ensure OPWDD delivers the most integrated and cost-effective services possible, the Governor's budget refocuses the service delivery system on transitioning individuals from segregated settings, such as developmental centers, intermediate care facilities and sheltered workshops, to community-based support systems. The Executive Budget includes \$9 million in new resources to fund more integrated and appropriate service opportunities in the community, which will enable more than 300 individuals to transition from institutions to more integrated community opportunities. OPWDD will also explore new options for community-based housing by participating in the New York State Money Follows the Person (MFP) demonstration program.

OPWDD continues to seek authorization from the federal government to make additional changes that will improve coordination of long-term care, increase the flexibility of services provided to individuals with developmental disabilities, and improve overall service quality and outcomes.

The Budget proposal provides the necessary resources for OPWDD to meet its staffing and contractual needs while delivering quality services to enrich the lives of the people we serve. In partnership with the newly formed Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs, OPWDD's budget supports our agency's vigilance in the oversight of both state and voluntary providers.

Over the course of this year, OPWDD has assisted hundreds of individuals residing in developmental centers to take advantage of the opportunity to live in the community. Most recently, the transition into the community was completed for individuals formerly residing in the Monroe Developmental Center in Rochester and the Wassaic Developmental Center.



The Executive Budget will enable us to build on our accomplishments of the past three years, in which we worked together to overhaul the OPWDD system, enhance accountability, ensure the health and safety of individuals with developmental disabilities, and offer greater opportunities for self-direction and independence.

Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, OPWDD accomplished many goals in 2013, including:

- Transitioning a total of 148 individuals from the Finger Lakes and Taconic ICFs, 54 of whom transitioned to an MFP-qualified residence, in line with OPWDD's transformation agreement and Governor Cuomo's goal of improving the overall quality and cost-effectiveness of community-based, person-centered services.
- Building a sustainable infrastructure for non-certified / non-traditional housing options across all systems - now and in the future. Progress made includes the development of 83 new housing units and the addition of 6 new home owners.
- Increasing supported employment services and competitive employment by fostering partnerships with businesses and the state education system. As of November 2013, there were 10,355 individuals with developmental disabilities enrolled in supported employment. Of these individuals 7,404 were competitively employed in an integrated setting earning at least minimum wage.
- Improving the quality of our workforce by increasing hiring and training standards for direct support professionals and adopting the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals' Code of Ethics.
- Adopting regulations requiring the immediate notification to law enforcement of all incidents of physical and sexual abuse that may be a crime.
- Creating systems to release records pertaining to allegations and investigations of abuse and mistreatment to families, their health care providers, law enforcement or an individual or family's attorney.

In living up to the promise of a government that works smarter, these reforms have reduced statewide expenditures, while simultaneously improving the quality of services and oversight that OPWDD can provide. We will continue to improve the services New Yorkers with developmental disabilities access in the present, and ensure the sustainability of the system into the future.

I would like to thank members of the legislature for supporting our ongoing inclusion efforts. Thank you for caring about the people we serve, thank you for respecting their civil rights and dignity, and thank you for your continued support of our efforts to develop community living opportunities. It has made a difference in people's lives and will continue to do so.

Thank you for your time today and support of our mission. OPWDD looks forward to working with our partners in the legislature, and all of our stakeholders, in the continuing effort to improve our system and make it the best in the nation... one New Yorkers can all be proud of. I welcome your questions.

