



Desperately Needed: More NOW/COMP Waivers

Developmental disabilities are lifelong disabilities that begin at birth or during childhood, and significantly impact a person's daily life in areas like self-care, mobility or communication.

If you are a Georgian with significant developmental disabilities, you have three choices. One is to spend your life in a facility, like a private intermediate care facility or a nursing home.

Your second choice is to get a NOW or COMP waiver. These waivers are only available to people whose disabilities are significant enough to qualify for ongoing care in a facility, and provide services and supports that allow people with developmental disabilities to live in real homes in their own communities.

Virtually everyone would choose a life with a waiver rather than be stuck in a facility. But there's a problem: just because you qualify for a waiver doesn't mean that you get one. **And that's the third choice - to hang on as best you can, wait, hope and pray for a waiver.**

Over 7,000 Georgians and their families are desperately hanging on as they wait for a waiver. Meet a few of them & their families.



George Jenkins, Junior, is twelve years old with the blue eyes of an angel. George lives with his mom, dad and two brothers in Columbus.

George has autism and sustained a brain injury at birth. He does not appear to feel pain. When he is frustrated, George bites himself and repeatedly bangs his head on hard surfaces, which has caused serious injury to himself and his mother as she attempts to help him. To be safe, George needs constant supervision.

George has been on the waiting list for a waiver since 2005. Last spring, **his mother had to quit her job** when school let out because there was no one at home to help support George.

George's family has been informed that he is not considered "most in need" for a waiver by the regional office of the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. **His doctor at the Marcus Institute strongly disagrees, and has advised George's family to look into placing George in an institution.** George's mother insists that her son belongs at home with their family, and for now the Jenkins family struggles through each day as they wait in increasing desperation for a waiver.

Thirty-five year old Jerome Nixon's favorite thing in life is music, followed by sports. His sister Priscilla Nixon is a full-time student and more-than-full-time caregiver for Jerome, who has intellectual disabilities and is on the waiting list for a waiver. **"My brother means everything to me. He means the world."** But despite the tremendous love the siblings share, Priscilla is extremely frustrated by their current situation, and she worries how much longer she can continue supporting Jerome without any help.

Every day for Priscilla consists of helping her brother with his daily living activities and trying to provide him with meaningful things to do while juggling her coursework for school. **Jerome does not receive respite care or any other services, so Priscilla is unable to work and doesn't get any down time.** She explains, "My biggest challenge is trying to support us and move throughout the day with no help or break." If Jerome had a waiver, **"My brother would have mental stimulation, physical stimulation, and I would be able to work and provide for my family, not to mention have a regular social life."**



What about the Department of Justice settlement?

The Department of Justice settlement focused on getting Georgians with mental illnesses and developmental disabilities out of state hospitals. **It did very little to address the growing waiting list of Georgians with developmental disabilities who are struggling in the community.**

The state of Georgia offers several different waivers for people with needs significant enough to qualify for facility care. **The NOW/COMP waiting list is by far the longest.**

Waiver Name	Population Served	Active as of 12/31/14	Wait List as of 12/31/14
Community Care Services Program	Elderly & individuals with disabilities	10,731	1,374
SOURCE	Elderly & individuals with disabilities	15,558	0
Independent Care Waiver Program	Individuals with significant physical disabilities	1,343	135
New Options Waiver/ Comprehensive Supports Waiver	Individuals with developmental disabilities	11,808	7,532
Community Based Alternatives for Youth	Youth with severe emotional disorders	Total Youth: 81 MFP: 63 BIP: 18	No Waiting List
Georgia Pediatric Program	Medically complex children under age 5	55	No Waiting List

It's time to throw Georgia families a lifeline. FY 2016 ask: 1,000 more NOW/COMP waivers for Georgians most in need: \$16,493,000

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