
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2188 Session of
2020

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YOUNGBLOOD AND LEE, JANUARY 10, 2020

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND INDUSTRY, JANUARY 10, 2020

AN ACT

1 Providing for support service providers, grants and funding; and
2 imposing duties on the Department of Labor and Industry.

3 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
4 hereby enacts as follows:

5 Section 1. Short title.

6 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Support
7 Service Providers Program Act.

8 Section 2. Definitions.

9 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
10 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
11 context clearly indicates otherwise:

12 "Center for independent living." A consumer-controlled,
13 community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential private
14 nonprofit agency that:

15 (1) is designed and operated within a local community by
16 individuals with disabilities; and

17 (2) provides an array of independent living services.

1 "Department." The Department of Labor and Industry of the
2 Commonwealth.

3 "Individual who is deafblind." An individual:

4 (1) Who has a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in
5 the better eye with corrective lenses or a field defect such
6 that the peripheral diameter of visual field subtends an
7 angular distance no greater than 20 degrees or a progressive
8 visual loss having a prognosis leading to one or both
9 conditions.

10 (2) Who has a permanent hearing loss so severe that it
11 impedes communication.

12 (3) For whom the combination of impairments described
13 under paragraphs (1) and (2) causes extreme difficulty in
14 communicating, achieving psychosocial adjustment or obtaining
15 a vocation.

16 (4) Who despite the inability to be measured accurately
17 for hearing and vision loss due to cognitive or behavioral
18 constraints, or both, can be determined through functional
19 and performance assessment to have severe hearing and visual
20 disabilities that cause extreme difficulty in communicating,
21 achieving psychosocial adjustment or attaining vocational
22 objectives.

23 "Support service provider." A person trained by a center for
24 independent living or otherwise to link an individual who is
25 deafblind to the environment by:

26 (1) Guiding the individual who is deafblind.

27 (2) Assisting informal communication between the
28 individual who is deafblind and other individuals.

29 (3) Providing information to the individual who is
30 deafblind about the individual's surroundings so that the

1 individual may make informed decisions.

2 "Training." Instruction that includes a curriculum
3 addressing the following:

4 (1) Strategies to provide visual and environmental
5 information in an appropriate and timely manner to an
6 individual who is deafblind.

7 (2) Human guide and basic orientation and mobility
8 techniques for an individual who is deafblind.

9 (3) Strategies to provide access to information that
10 enables an individual who is deafblind to make informed
11 decisions.

12 (4) Basic knowledge of deafblind culture.

13 (5) Strategies appropriate for working with an
14 individual who is deafblind and the various blindness and
15 deafness specific professionals involved.

16 (6) Basic knowledge of equipment that an individual who
17 is deafblind may utilize, including, but not limited to,
18 mobility devices, adapted household or workplace devices,
19 low-vision devices, amplification devices or communication
20 devices.

21 (7) A code of professional conduct approved by the
22 department.

23 (8) Procedures for the adult protective services and
24 older adult protective services mandated reporter training.

25 (9) Administrative procedures for the submission of
26 reimbursement or payment of services rendered.

27 (10) A formal complaint process.

28 Section 3. Grants and funding.

29 (a) Purposes.--The department shall provide grants in
30 accordance with this act to:

1 (1) Persons within this Commonwealth that provide
2 services to individuals who are deafblind unless the
3 individuals are enrolled in a high school program. A grant
4 under this subsection shall be used to provide assistance to
5 individuals who are deafblind who are working toward
6 establishing and maintaining independence.

7 (2) Persons within this Commonwealth that train support
8 service providers. A grant under this subsection shall be
9 used to:

10 (i) Provide the necessary training for a person to
11 become a support service provider in this Commonwealth.

12 (ii) Schedule services for a support service
13 provider upon request.

14 (iii) Pay a support service provider for services
15 rendered.

16 (iv) Advocate for a support service provider and for
17 services rendered.

18 (v) Provide resources to assist residents of this
19 Commonwealth who are individuals who are deafblind.

20 (vi) Advance the support service provider
21 profession.

22 (b) Amounts.--

23 (1) Subject to the availability of Federal and State
24 money, grants under this section shall be in the amount of at
25 least \$900,000.

26 (2) Beginning on the effective date of this section and
27 annually thereafter, the minimum grant amount listed in this
28 subsection shall increase at the rate of inflation as
29 outlined in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers
30 in the Northeast Region for the most recent 12-month period

1 for which the figures have been reported by the United States
2 Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. If the rate
3 of inflation does not increase, the minimum grant amount
4 shall remain the same as it was for the previous year.

5 Section 4. Application forms.

6 The department shall develop annual grant application forms
7 for entities described under section 3(a). At a minimum, the
8 forms shall contain the following information:

9 (1) The name, address and contact information of the
10 entity requesting grant money.

11 (2) The amount of grant money requested.

12 (3) The proposed use for the grant money requested.

13 (4) Evidence of the entity's long-term sustainability,
14 including the entity's financial soundness, organizational
15 capacity and technical expertise in providing the required
16 services or training. Technical expertise must include at
17 least five years of demonstrated successful experience and
18 expertise in effectively managing both the budget and
19 operation of, and facilitating the activities of, services to
20 individuals who are deafblind, which must include at least
21 one of the following:

22 (i) Attendant care.

23 (ii) Community integration.

24 (iii) Interpreter referral services.

25 (5) A strategic plan to provide the required services or
26 training, including, but not limited to, the number of
27 individuals who are deafblind to be served or the number of
28 support service providers to be trained.

29 (6) Evidence of the entity's ability to manage issues,
30 conflicts and ethical concerns that may arise regarding the

1 individuals to be served or the support service providers to
2 be trained.

3 (7) The proposed presence of an orientation and mobility
4 specialist certified by the Academy for Certification of
5 Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals to teach
6 the mobility portion of the requisite trainings.

7 (8) A budget of the entity, including administrative
8 direct costs. The following shall apply:

9 (i) The budget shall not list indirect costs unless
10 the applicant has an indirect cost rate agreement with a
11 Federal agency.

12 (ii) For purposes of this paragraph, "indirect
13 costs":

14 (A) are the expenses of doing business that are
15 not readily identified with the grant, project
16 function or activity, but are necessary for the
17 general operation of the entity and the conduct of
18 activities that the entity performs; and

19 (B) include expenses relating to heat, light,
20 accounting and administrative personnel.

21 (9) Any other information that the department deems
22 necessary and appropriate.

23 Section 5. Public notice.

24 The department shall provide information regarding the
25 availability and award of grant money on the department's
26 publicly accessible Internet website.

27 Section 6. Award of grants.

28 (a) Criteria.--After review of the information specified
29 under section 4 and within 60 days of the submission of the
30 grant application, the department shall determine whether to

1 award grant money to the entity and, if so, the amount of the
2 grant money awarded.

3 (b) Considerations.--In awarding grant money to an entity,
4 the department:

5 (1) Shall consider the geographic and demographic
6 diversity of the entities applying for the grant money and
7 the individuals to be served and the support service
8 providers to be trained.

9 (2) May require documentation of past services provided
10 by the entity or of any license or certification received by
11 the entity, including any disciplinary action taken against
12 the entity or an employee or agent acting on behalf of the
13 entity.

14 (3) May require job descriptions, resumes or documented
15 experience for the staff of the entity.

16 (c) Notice.--

17 (1) The department shall provide written notice to the
18 entity of the award or denial of the grant money.

19 (2) Notice of the award of grant money shall include the
20 amount of the grant money awarded and any conditions or
21 restrictions on the use of the grant money.

22 (3) Notice of the denial of all or part of the grant
23 money requested shall include the reasons for the full or
24 partial denial.

25 Section 7. Reports.

26 (a) Preparation.--By June 30, 2021, and each June 30
27 thereafter, the department shall prepare a report that lists
28 each entity that received grant money under section 3 for the
29 previous year, including the amount of grant money received,
30 along with the activities of each entity regarding the services

1 provided to individuals who are deafblind and the training of
2 support service providers.

3 (b) Publication.--The report under this section shall be
4 posted on the department's publicly accessible Internet website.

5 Section 8. Rules and regulations.

6 The department may promulgate rules and regulations for the
7 implementation and administration of this act.

8 Section 9. Effective date.

9 This act shall take effect in 60 days.