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## **Department of Human Services Highlights Service Expansion for Pennsylvanians with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism**

**Harrisburg, PA** - Department of Human Services (DHS) Deputy Secretary for Developmental Programs Nancy Thaler today discussed the expansion of services available for Pennsylvanians with autism spectrum disorder and their families at an event in the Capitol Media Center. Because of Governor Tom Wolf's current and 2017-2018 budgets, combined investments of nearly \$100 million resulted in the second-largest expansion of services for Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and/or autism in the program's history.

"Expanding access to support services can be critical to helping people with an intellectual disability or autism live an enriching life in their community with their family and friends," said Thaler. "This continued investment demonstrates a commitment to supporting Pennsylvanians with an intellectual disability or autism and making it possible for more people to live everyday lives."

Governor Wolf's 2018-2019 budget included \$74 million in support of programs and services for Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder. This funding allows for a significant expansion of services in waiver programs, and all Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities or autism will be able to use support coordination to help find and use resources in their communities.

People with autism spectrum disorder now have access to all support programs offered through DHS' Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) and will be considered for all waiver programs. Previously, only people with autism who expressed interest in waiver services were considered.

This investment in ODP services also ensures that 800 public school graduates with autism will be able to access support services at the time of

graduation. Graduates previously waited up to six months for services – a gap that can result in loss of skills learned during school.

“Our goal is to ensure that individuals with an intellectual disability or autism and their families have support at every stage and transition in their lives. Graduation is an exciting but uncertain time for all students, but for graduates who require additional supports, that life change can bring additional challenges” said Thaler. “Connecting graduates to services eases this change and helps graduates find a job and navigate the next step of their lives with confidence.”

Funding in the 2018-2019 budget supports:

- 100 individuals transitioning from the emergency waiting list to the Consolidated Waiver;
- 800 students graduating in 2018 in the Person/Family Directed Support Waiver and the Community Living Waiver;
- 40 individuals transitioning from the interest list to the Adult Community Autism Program (ACAP).

For more information on DHS, the Office of Developmental Programs, and services available for Pennsylvanians with an intellectual disability or autism spectrum disorder, visit [www.dhs.pa.gov](http://www.dhs.pa.gov).

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Colin Day, 717-425-7606

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