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Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Audit Notes Accomplishments and Reveals Problems

The Tennessee Comptroller's Office has released the Sunset Performance Audit for the Tennessee Department of Intellectual and Development Disabilities (DIDD). While the audit report notes several accomplishments, it also includes 14 findings and 9 observations.

DIDD is responsible for administering services for Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and has celebrated multiple achievements since the Comptroller's last audit reports of the department in 2013. These achievements include resolving federal lawsuits, closing the Clover Bottom and Greene Valley Developmental Centers, and becoming accredited by the Council on Quality and Leadership.

In 2016, DIDD collaborated with TennCare to launch the Employment and Community First Choices program to fill critical gaps in the state's service delivery system. Auditors noted several concerns with the launch of the program including DIDD's failure to transfer critical information to TennCare about Tennesseans who were on a waiting list for services.

Comptroller auditors also found that DIDD did not always make adequate attempts to contact individuals known to have an aging caregiver. This communication was necessary following the passage of legislation allowing individuals on the waiting list to qualify for additional services if their caregiver was a certain age.

Although DIDD has made improvements since the prior audits in 2013, the Comptroller's Office still found problems with improperly developing individual support plans, not performing timely background checks and newly required registry checks on employees and volunteers, and not implementing adequate controls over resident trust fund accounts and personal property.

The audit report also describes an emerging issue in Tennessee. The state faces a critical shortage of caregivers for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This shortage is largely driven by the demands of performing physically and emotionally challenging work at low pay. A 2015 study found that Tennessee ranked last among 16 states in its average hourly wages for both entry-level and experienced direct support professionals.

The Comptroller's Office will present the DIDD audit report to the Education, Health and General Welfare Joint Subcommittee of Government Operations on December 13, 2017 at 9 a.m.

To view the DIDD audit report online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/sa/>

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