

**Today's Quote:** *"People usually are the happiest at home."* William Shakespeare 1564-1616, British Poet, Playwright, Actor

## Sean Howlett – Individualized Budgeting Pioneer Howlett family chose Provider-Managed Option

The year Sean Howlett moved into the Woodbine Developmental Center in Cape May County, Richard Nixon was US president. Gasoline cost 38 cents per gallon and Don McLean's "American Pie" and Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" were the #1 hit songs playing on the radio.

Much has changed in America since the early 1970's, when Sean's mother (spurred by concerns from relatives regarding her own health) made the emotionally wrenching decision to ask the state to take over his care. The best example of how much has changed for people living with developmental disabilities may be Sean Howlett himself.

In January, Sean moved out of Woodbridge and into his own home. Of course, Sean is not the first person to move from a developmental center into a home in the community under the state's Olmstead plan, "Path to Progress." Yet, the process that placed Sean, 42, into his new one-bedroom apartment was unimaginable 35 years ago.

Specifically, Sean is the first person to move to the community with an individual budget that allows him and his family to determine how he will receive services and supports he needs; these are based upon decisions made during six months of transitional planning that preceded his move and are described fully in Sean's Essential Lifestyle Plan (ELP). Sean's ELP was created with the strong support of his family and other members of his "Learning Community."

Sean's individual budget is provided by the Division of Developmental Disabilities, and he and his family chose to manage it through the Provider-Managed Option. As a result, Sean's day-to-day support is directed and provided by Allies, an agency his mother, Shirley, selected after studying proposals from a number of agencies.

"I liked what Allies proposed, and the way the agency wrote about him," said Shirley.

Under the Provider-Managed Option, Allies provides all the service and support needs outlined in Sean's ELP. Agency staff provides the support, and the agency is responsible for hiring the staff, paying their salaries and fringe benefits, and hiring any consultants that might be required to address specific needs.

Allies also makes sure Sean's rent and utility bills are paid, and that household supplies and groceries are purchased on a regular basis. The key to this arrangement is the fact that the budget belongs directly to Sean, allowing Sean and his family to remain in control of everything from the choice of a meal/activity to changing providers.

"Trace Baxter (Support Coordinator for Caregivers of New Jersey) is a member of our family now," said Shirley. "He made me feel at ease. His kindness and goodness on top of everything else was wonderful. (Caregivers employees) Eileen (Coyne) and Ronnie (Veronica Trathen) were wonderful also. Communication was excellent."



*Sean enters the community room at his new home to greet friends and family during his house-warming party.*

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**Sean Howlett** *continued from page one*

Shirley is also enthusiastic about how well community living is working for Sean, who now lives near Trenton, just 15 minutes from his mother and sister. He enjoys his one-bedroom apartment, which his mother describes as “gorgeous.” After many years of limited contact with his family, Sean has been very excited to have relatives so close and to see them more often.

Sean, who is able to walk short distances and can eat by himself once food is prepared to help avoid choking, often receives assistance from friends as well as paid staff. He also enjoys socializing. Staff uses adapted sign language in order to communicate such activities as eat, drink, more, finished, sit, stand and bathroom.

Sean responds with sounds, facial expressions gestures and body positioning. At the same time, he is a loner who benefits from being able to live in his own apartment.

“I would tell other families that it is a good idea to have their relatives live in the community,” said Shirley. “Staff is with Sean around the clock and he gets one-to-one attention. He also sees the same doctor I do, and I know he is a good family doctor. Like me, I’m sure that other families will find that it is quieter and more peaceful for their family member. They will also have more peace of mind because they can see the kind of care their loved one is getting.”

***How many people have recently moved to the community from developmental centers?***

July 2006 - June 2007 = 86  
July 2007 - June 2008 = 121

**Self-Directed Plan -- An alternative to the Provider-Managed Option**

The Howlett family chose the Provider-Managed Plan as a way to handle the budget assigned to Sean by the Division of Developmental Disabilities when he left Woodbridge. However, as an alternative, individuals and their families can choose the Self-Directed Plan. Under this option, individual and their family members are responsible for managing and directing all aspects of the individual’s Essential Lifestyle Plan (ELP), including the individualized budget. They also are responsible for recruiting, hiring and managing the staff that provides the supports and services outlined in the ELP, although such staff is paid through a fiscal intermediary.

The Self-Directed Plan is a good alternative for those who want to be very hands-on about their care. All the details are their responsibility and it does not involve hiring someone to make decisions on their behalf.

**Olmstead Plan - DDD exceeds FY 2008 goal**

DDD exceeded its Olmstead target for FY2008, successfully moving more than 100 people out of institutions and into community residences with supportive services designed to meet their needs. By the end of the fiscal year (on June 30), a total of 121 people had been transitioned into the community. The men and women ranged in age from 20 to 72, and at least a few lived in developmental centers (DC) since their childhood. The need for services varied, as did the type of residences. Many moved to group homes while others moved into apartments or home with family.

“All seven developmental centers were involved in transitioning residents into the community,” said DDD Assistant Commissioner Kenneth Ritchey. “I applaud the staff at the DC’s and in the regional offices for their hard work and commitment to making these placements happen. I also want to thank the support coordination agencies that have contracted with us to serve these individuals in the community and family members who have supported our efforts.”

Under DDD’s Olmstead Plan, “Path to Progress,” 1,850 people are scheduled to be moved out of institutions into the community over eight years. The goal for FY 2008, which was the first year of the plan, was 100 individuals.