Icon

Description automatically generated**NEVADA GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

**Position on Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) and Other Therapy Types for Individuals with I/DD**

Historically, individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) have received various therapeutic interventions aimed at improving their quality of life, fostering independence, and supporting their overall development. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and other therapy models have been widely used to address behavioral, communication, and social challenges; however, their implementation has raised ethical, practical, and person-centered concerns within the disability community.

**The Nevada Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities (NGCDD) recognizes that therapy interventions should prioritize the dignity, autonomy, and self-determination of individuals with I/DD. We also recognize that the right to choose or refuse any and all forms of therapy is an individual’s choice. Interventions should be evidence-based, individualized, and implemented with full consideration of the individual’s needs, preferences, and rights. Access to a full range of therapies—including but not limited to occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech and language therapy, and mental health services—is essential to supporting the overall well-being of individuals with I/DD.**

NGCDD supports a comprehensive and person-centered approach to therapeutic interventions by emphasizing the following principles:

1. **Dignity and Respect:** Individuals with I/DD have the right to receive therapies that honor their personal agency and promote their well-being without coercion, harm, or undue control.
2. **Informed Choice:** Families and individuals must have access to unbiased, accurate information regarding therapy options, including potential benefits, limitations, and alternatives, to make informed decisions about their care, including the right to refuse any or all therapy types.
3. **Least Restrictive and Positive Approaches:** Therapy models should emphasize positive reinforcement, skill-building, and self-determination rather than compliance-based interventions that focus solely on behavior reduction.
4. **Trauma-Informed Practices:** Therapists and providers must incorporate trauma-informed care principles to ensure interventions do not contribute to distress or retraumatization.
5. **Ongoing Evaluation and Accountability:** Continuous assessment and oversight of therapy practices should be in place to ensure ethical implementation, effectiveness, and respect for the rights of individuals receiving services.

**Policy Recommendations:**

1. **Promote a range of evidence-based therapeutic interventions** beyond ABA, including speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, mental health services, and other holistic approaches that support diverse needs and learning styles.
2. **Ensure state funding and insurance coverage for multiple therapy options** to prevent a one-size-fits-all approach and allow families to choose interventions aligned with their values and individual goals.
3. **Require transparency and accountability** in the implementation of ABA and other therapies to ensure they align with ethical standards and prioritize the well-being of individuals with I/DD.
4. **Support professional training in alternative and non-aversive strategies** to expand the availability of therapies that emphasize autonomy, communication, and meaningful skill development.
5. **Strengthen oversight and regulation** of therapy providers to prevent harmful practices and ensure interventions remain person-centered and supportive of long-term well-being.

By adopting these recommendations, Nevada can move towards a more inclusive, person-centered system of support that respects the rights and dignity of individuals with I/DD while providing access to a range of high-quality therapeutic interventions.

Last Review Date: