

# HCBS Waiting Lists Harm Georgians!

Talking points for making a case to end the HCBS waitlist in GA

Georgians with disabilities have the right to live and receive services in their chosen communities, but **about 8,000 people are stuck on waiting lists** for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS).

**HCBS helps make sure that people with disabilities do not have to live in institutions to receive services.** HCBS are a waiver from traditional institutional supports. In Georgia, these are called NOW and COMP waivers.

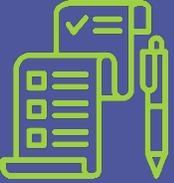
Waiting lists (in GA this is called the Planning List) for NOW and COMP waivers are harmful because they delay access to essential services for people who need them most. **Long waiting lists also deprive Georgia of the benefits of lower service costs, more people with IDD in the workforce, stronger families, and better quality of life for people with IDD.**

**Reducing HCBS waiting lists promotes equity, especially for traditionally underserved communities (like racial minorities).** Research shows that people of color and their families are more likely to be on waitlists and struggle because of them. HCBS are cost-effective, support family stability, and strengthen communities.



**This document shares evidence-based information from national and GA data to help make a case for ending the waitlist.**

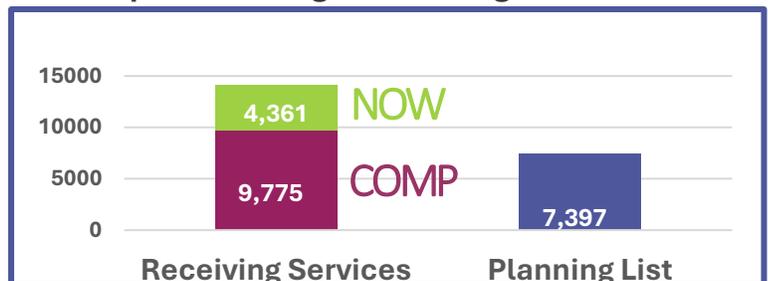
*Advocates can use this information during Legislative Days to highlight the importance of decreasing the HCBS planning list*

Challenges	What Does the Data Say?	Ways Forward
<p>Too many Georgians are on the HCBS planning list waiting for services</p> 	<p>More than 8,130 people are waiting for NOW and COMP HCBS waivers. Some people wait more than 10 years for services and on average people wait nearly two years from the time they initially applied to when they begin receiving services<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>The number of HCBS waivers can be increased. A GA statewide study<sup>2</sup> and the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities recommends adding 2,400 more spots per year for three years<sup>3</sup></p>
<p>People with varying needs are waiting on the HCBS planning list</p> 	<p>Officials of the Georgia’s Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities are considering a proposal to restructure the waiting list into a three-tiered system of people with urgent needs, people who are expected to need services in the next one to five years, and people who may need services even further in the future, which may help prioritize service delivery<sup>4</sup>. Other proposals include developing new waivers or new assessment tools to improve responsiveness to peoples’ needs.</p>	<p>In addition to more waiver slots, improving planning list processes, such as reorganizing the list to ensure that people who are most in need get services they need as quickly as possible, will help avoid long wait times for services for people with immediate or intense needs.</p>
<p>Provider organizations do not have the capacity to provide services to all people on the waitlist</p> 	<p>About 12% of full-time and 20% of part-time DSP positions are vacant in Georgia. Additionally, Georgia has a high DSP turnover rate of about 32%, with 30% of DSPs leaving their roles in less than one year<sup>5</sup>. Fiscal year 2024 state budget approved investing \$107 million more (\$320 million total) to increase provider rates for waiver services, including raising the DSP hourly wage from \$10.63 to \$16.70, a 57% increase, and a 43.6% total rate increase across services<sup>6</sup></p>	<p>Continued support of DSP training through apprenticeships, certification programs, and credentialing are needed to continue to expand and retain the disability services workforce<sup>7</sup>. Continuing to raise DSP wages in alignment with rate study recommendations is also needed.</p>

In 2025, 14,137 people received NOW and COMP waivers, but there are currently 8,130 on the waiting list

**1 out of 3 Georgians needing services are still waiting**

People Receiving and Waiting for Services



<sup>1</sup> Georgia Department of Audits & Accounts: <https://www.open.ga.gov/openga/report/downloadFile?rid=33476>

<sup>2</sup> GA Senate Study Committee on People with IDD and Waiver Plan Access <https://senatepress.net/senate-study-committee-on-people-with-intellectual-and-developmental-disabilities-and-waiver-plan-access-approves-final-recommendations.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://gcdd.org/images/2024/Legislative\\_History-Waivers-FINAL.pdf](https://gcdd.org/images/2024/Legislative_History-Waivers-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gpb.org/news/2026/01/02/georgia-agency-proposes-changes-waiting-list-for-services-for-people-disabilities>

<sup>5</sup> NCI State of the Workforce in 2023 Survey Report: [https://idd.nationalcoreindicators.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2023-NCI-IDD-SoTW\\_241126\\_FINAL.pdf](https://idd.nationalcoreindicators.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2023-NCI-IDD-SoTW_241126_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Georgia DBHDD: <https://www.nasddd.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/How-a-Rate-Study-Became-a-Game-Changer-in-Georgia.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Georgia DBHDD: <https://www.nasddd.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/How-a-Rate-Study-Became-a-Game-Changer-in-Georgia.pdf>