

Subject Task Force on Disability Services Accessibility and pilot projects

Authors Hicks and others

Analyst Danyell A. Punelli

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Overview

This bill establishes a Task Force on Disability Services Accessibility, establishes pilot projects to reduce accessibility barriers in disability services, requires a report to the legislature, and appropriates money for the task force and pilot projects.

Summary

Section	Description
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1	Disability Services Accessibility Task Force and pilot projects.
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Subd. 1. Establishment; purpose. Establishes the Task Force on Disability Services Accessibility to evaluate the accessibility of current state and county disability services and to develop and evaluate plans to address barriers to accessibility.

Subd. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this section, defines the terms “accessible,” “commissioner,” “disability services,” “lead agency,” and “task force.”

Subd. 3. Membership. Lists the 23 members of the task force. Requires task force membership to reflect geographic parity throughout the state and to include representation from Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color. Specifies that the membership terms, compensation, expense reimbursement, and removal and filling of vacancies of task force members are subject to the statutory provisions governing advisory councils and committees.

Subd. 4. Appointment deadline; first meeting; chair. Requires appointing authorities to make selections by January 1, 2024; requires the commissioner of human services to convene the first meeting of the task force by February 15, 2024; and requires the task force to select a chair from among its members at its first meeting.

Subd. 5. Goals. Lists the goals of the task force.

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Subd. 6. Duties; plan and recommendations. Paragraphs (a) and (b) list duties of the task force, including developing a plan to conduct an accessibility assessment of disability services provided by lead agencies and DHS; and list the information that must be included in the assessment and, for purposes of the assessment, list the activities that are included in disability services.

Paragraph (c) requires the task force to collaborate with certain other entities to develop recommendations from the findings of the assessment and to create changes to county and state services to improve outcomes for people with disabilities. Lists the items that must be included in the recommendations.

Paragraph (d) requires the task force to oversee preparation of a report outlining the findings from the accessibility assessment and the recommendations developed as a result of the assessment.

Subd. 7. Pilot projects. Paragraphs (a) and (b) require the commissioner to: (1) establish pilot projects with multiple methods of reducing accessibility barriers in disability services; and (2) select six lead agencies to conduct pilot projects through a competitive application process.

Paragraph (c) requires the application to include a proposal for how the county will implement any pilot project for at least five percent of the county's total disability services case load.

Paragraph (d) requires selected counties to use a process to facilitate communication between counties and applicants and reduce incidences of appeal prior to issuing disability service decisions that deny or reduce services or eligibility and to provide recipients with a preview of the service decision. Requires the process to be accessible to recipients.

Paragraph (e) specifies requirements the preview process must meet.

Paragraph (f) requires counties to issue a notice of action within ten days of the final communication of the preview process. Allows counties to change a decision denying or reducing services or eligibility between the preview and the decision based on discussions or information from the preview process. Allows the recipient to request an appeal at any time.

Paragraph (g) requires selected counties to streamline MA service eligibility for people with disabilities by using less frequent disability service needs assessments to save costs and reduce administrative work needed to redetermine service eligibility. Requires the commissioner to seek federal approval for the pilot project if necessary.

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Paragraph (h) requires the commissioner to establish criteria for lead agencies participating in the pilot project to use less frequent assessments for disability services for qualifying individuals.

Paragraph (i) prohibits a change to less frequent assessments from precluding an individual from requesting an assessment earlier than the next scheduled assessment. Requires lead agencies to assess service eligibility at least every three years.

Paragraph (j) requires selected lead agencies to hire or contract with a community program and train and implement a team of peer system navigators to assist recipients with navigating county processes. Requires navigators to be people with disabilities or parents or guardians receiving the same type of services in similar settings. Requires the county to communicate with navigators and pair navigators with participants.

Paragraph (k) requires the peer navigator process to be accessible to recipients. Requires counties to pay peer navigators and provide benefit counseling to navigators to ensure their own services and supports are not at risk.

Paragraph (l) requires selected lead agencies to make options available for disability service recipients to use electronic communications for interactions with the lead agency regarding services.

Subd. 8. Pilot projects; funding and timing. Requires each county selected to receive grant funding to implement, operate, and report on the pilot project. Requires the amount of grant funding to be proportionate to the disability service case load for the selected county. Requires counties to: (1) implement pilot projects no later than July 1, 2024, and to continue projects for at least 18 months; and (2) report on the pilot projects to the task force at six, 12, and 18 months into the pilot projects.

Subd. 9. Report. Requires the task force to submit a report by August 1, 2026, with recommendations to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over health and human services. Requires the report to include any changes to statutes, laws, or rules required to implement the recommendations of the task force and to include a recommendation concerning continuing the task force beyond its scheduled expiration.

Subd. 10. Administrative support. Requires the commissioner of human services to provide meeting space and administrative services to the task force.

Subd. 11. Expiration. Provides that the task force expires on March 31, 2027.

Section	Description
2	Appropriation. Appropriates an unspecified amount in fiscal year 2024 from the general fund to the commissioner of human services for the Task Force on Disability Services Accessibility and requires an unspecified amount of this appropriation to be used to provide grants for pilot projects to reduce accessibility barriers in disability services. Specifies this is a onetime appropriation and is available until March 31, 2027.
3	Effective date. Provides a July 1, 2023, effective date for sections 1 and 2.



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