



## Trillium Member Advisory Committee Brief (#004): The Importance of the Relative as Provider (RAP)/Relative as Direct Support Employee (RADSE) in Innovations Waiver and 1915(i) Waiver Services

### Introduction:

In the landscape of healthcare services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), waivers, such as the Innovations Waiver and 1915(i) Waiver, are essential in providing necessary support. These waivers are both part of the Trillium Whole Health plan and are designed to give participants flexibility and choice, allowing them to receive care and services in their homes and communities instead of institutional settings. A notable aspect of these programs is the ability for members to utilize "Relative as Provider" (RAP) for caregiving services, enabling family members to take on the role of paid care provider.

This data story explores the usage and significance of the RAP model, highlighting how it benefits members under both the Innovations Waiver and the 1915 (i) Waiver.

### Innovations Waiver: Empowering Families through RAP/RADSE

The **Innovations Waiver** is a pivotal service array for individuals with I/DD, offering access to a wide range of services that help them live independently in the community. Over time, the data reveals a consistent pattern in the number of members utilizing family members as service providers (RAP/RADSE), an option available under this waiver.

For instance, between April 2024 and October 2025, the number of members utilizing a relative as a provider (statewide or within Trillium's catchment?) fluctuated but remained a critical part of the service model. The overall number of members on the Innovations Waiver that are currently using RDSE is approximately 1,323 about 25% of the members on the Innovations Waiver. Specifically:

- In April 2024, 66 new members used a relative as their provider.
- By October 2025, the number rose to 115 new members.

This uptick reflects a growing reliance on family care providers, a trend that's essential for several reasons. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, RAP/RADSE served as a bridge for members needing support to remain within the community but provider staff were unavailable to meet the need.

### Why is RAP/RADSE Important in for Innovations Waiver?

1. **Familiarity and Trust:** For many individuals with I/DD, the idea of receiving care from a relative can be comforting and reassuring. Family members often have a deep understanding of the members' needs, preferences, and behaviors, creating a tailored caregiving experience. This familiarity fosters trust and minimize the anxiety that might come from receiving care from strangers.
2. **Cost-Effectiveness:** In many cases, utilizing family members as providers helps to reduce costs, both for the state and the individual. The option allows families to maintain control over the care process while ensuring that services remain affordable and sustainable. It can also reduce administrative overhead and the need for external professional caregiving services.

3. **Increased Flexibility:** Family members who serve as providers often offer more flexibility in care schedules. This is particularly important for individuals with I/DD who may require around-the-clock care or have irregular schedules. The RAP option allows for personalized care, with family members able to adapt care routines based on the individual's unique needs.
4. **Emotional Support and Stability:** Having a family member act as a caregiver offers not only physical care but also emotional support. The relationships between family members can provide stability and comfort that may not be found in professional care settings, fostering a sense of security for the individual.
5. **Reliability:** For members on the Innovations Waiver, provider agencies sometimes struggle to offer a reliable workforce to meet complex needs of individuals who require the highest level of care and desire to remain in their communities. Ongoing provider staff churn remains a challenge, with provider staff frequently missing shifts, swapping shifts with unexperienced staff or moving between agencies. Even more concerning, there can be instances of provider abuse of members when they are not properly trained to address complex needs and behaviors. When family members serve as paid caregivers, many of these worries are reduced, as the member is supported by someone who consistently shows up and provides experienced support, along with unconditional positive regard.

### 1915 (i) Waiver: Sustaining Independence with Family Support

The **1915 (i) Waiver** offers another avenue for individuals with I/DD to access services, particularly those that allow them to maintain or enhance their independence. This waiver differs slightly in its structure but shares common ground with the Innovations Waiver in offering flexibility and choice in service delivery.

The data shows that:

- The number of Trillium members using the 1915(i) services has been consistent, with 5,445 members utilizing the waiver from July 1, 2024 to October 2025.
- Of those members, the number of individuals using a family member as a provider also remains steady but critical for many families:
  - April 2024 saw 16 new members using a RAP/RADSE.
  - By October 2025, this number rose by 9 new members.

While the number appears lower in comparison to the Innovations Waiver, the RAP option still plays an essential role in helping members receive care in a familiar environment.

### Why is RAP Important for 1915i Waiver Participants?

1. **Flexibility in Service Delivery:** Like Innovations Waiver, the ability to choose a relative as a provider ensures flexibility for members and their families. With family members providing care, there's often less bureaucratic delays, and schedules can be more easily adjusted to accommodate the needs of the individual.
2. **Enhancing Community-Based Care:** The 1915 (i) Waiver aims to support individuals in living independently in the community and having family members act as providers strengthens the community-based nature of care. Members can remain in their homes, receiving the support they need without being forced into institutionalized settings by circumstance.
3. **Emotional Benefits and Reduced Stress:** The emotional connection between the individual and their family caregiver cannot be understated. For many members, the familiarity of having a relative as a provider is not just a practical benefit but also an emotional one. It reduces stress and promotes a sense of belonging and stability that is integral to overall well-being.
4. **Sustaining Family Involvement:** The RAP model allows families to remain actively involved in the care process, providing them with a sense of purpose and connection. This involvement can enhance family bonds and help family members feel more empowered in supporting their loved ones' needs.

## **Conclusion: The Future of RAP/RADSE in Waiver Services**

Overwhelmingly, the number of hours in both waivers are provided by Direct Support Professionals that are not related to the member. However, the data clearly illustrates that the RAP/RDSE model is an important feature of both the Innovations Waiver and the 1915 (i) Waiver. It enables some families to be directly involved in the care of their loved ones, fostering trust, cost-effectiveness, and emotional support. As the number of individuals relying on these waivers continues to grow, the role of family members as care providers will likely remain crucial.

However, the data also suggests the need for ongoing support and training for family members to ensure they are equipped to provide quality care. State and local agencies must continue to invest in resources that empower family caregivers, including training, financial support, and access to respite services. We have seen many situations stabilize for children on the Innovations Waiver whose parents/family members provide RDSE. This might be an issue for advocates to consider related to the policy limitations for children under the age of 18 through 1915 (i). The current policy does not allow RDSE/RAP for children under age 18.

Ultimately, the RAP/RADSE option highlights a deeper, community-based approach to care that allows families to remain at the heart of the caregiving process. It is a model that not only serves the immediate needs of individuals but also ensures that long-term, sustainable care options are available within the context of the family unit.

Through programs like the Innovations Waiver and 1915i Waiver, we see the profound impact that family-centered care can have, ensuring that individuals with I/DD- Autism and TBI receive care that is both professional and personal.