

**Ability Alliance of West Alabama
Strategic Plan for Developmental Disabilities Services
January 2024 - January 2026**

Board Name: Ability Alliance of West Alabama

Area served: Bibb, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa

Description of Services/Supports Provided:

- AAWA remains the entry into the Alabama Department of Mental Health’s Division of Developmental Disabilities.
- Assessment and evaluation for eligibility determination and placement on the statewide waiting list for Medicaid home and community-based services from the Department of Mental Health Division of Developmental Disabilities.
- Support Coordination services once approved and enrolled for services.
- Medicaid Waiver Services for individuals receiving waiver services through the Department of Mental Health Division of Developmental Disabilities.

Population(s) Served:

Children and adults with developmental disabilities who are eligible for services from the Department of Mental Health’s Division of Developmental Disabilities

County	Receives Support Coordination	March 2024 CWP Intakes	Waiting List
Bibb County	10		1
Pickens County	13		7
Tuscaloosa County	334		N/A
CWP Pilot Program	66	9	37
Totals	423	9	45

Update on 4/23/24

Mission Statement:

It is the mission of Ability Alliance of West Alabama (AAWA) to affect positively the quality of life for persons with intellectual disabilities by helping to ensure that appropriate and quality services and supports are available and accessible throughout their lifespan. AAWA expects that all services will ensure full participation in all life experiences through a person-driven, family support, proactive, and creative system which allows services and support options to be tailored to the individual and family’s needs.

Vision Statement:

Promoting community inclusion for persons with developmental disabilities in Bibb, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa Counties of West Alabama.

Description of Planning Cycle:

The AAWA planning cycle is for a two-year period. We developed a plan for 2024-2026. A meeting with people, families served, and providers is held annually to gather information regarding needs and satisfaction with services provided and the agency's mission statement. The collected data is compiled into a report reflecting current issues for the individuals we serve. As of 3/31/2024, Support Coordination Services has a 93.3% overall satisfaction score from the consumer satisfaction surveys.

Planning Cycle Timeframe:

The planning cycle time frame is from January 2024 to January 2026. Update of plan occurred from January 2024- April 2024.

Key Stakeholders & Roles:

Key stakeholders involved in the planning process included individuals, families, providers of services, support coordinators and other community members.

Method of Needs Assessment:

General methods used to assess needs include:

- Survey of needs
- Annual meetings with individuals, families, and providers
- Review of the waiting list and needs for services.
- Review of financial resources currently expended for services.
- Review of retention and turnover data for staff
- During this planning cycle the following activities were conducted and updated from January 2024-April 2024.

The survey was conducted by mailing surveys and conducting telephone interviews with all individuals supported. See attached survey results.

Summary Results:

A total of 86 surveys out of 417 persons served were completed by individual or family members:

Satisfaction with Support Coordination	82%
Not satisfied with Support Coordination	4%
Satisfaction with waiver services	92.8%
Not satisfied with waiver services	7.2%
Satisfaction with annual PCP Process	92.8%
Not Satisfied with annual PCP Process	7.2%
Concerns	Lack of home visit, ICAP scoring process, not able to reach SC, issues with the EVV system, high SC turnover rate, and delay in returning calls to the family.

- A meeting with people, families served, and providers will be held on April 25, 2024
- Mission statement and plan will be reviewed in a public meeting on April 25, 2024
- The agency conducted phone surveys to persons and families served in February and March 2024. A portion of the surveys were mailed out to be completed by individual or family members.
- Review of quality improvement plan updates

Greatest Area(s) of Unmet Needs:

- Needs from 2024-2026: Employment, finding resources, transportation, Remote Supports, Tuscaloosa People First Chapter (PFC) and housing. Based on input form satisfaction survey. Additional needs are to be identified at the public meeting on April 25, 2024. These continued to be identified as needs in the Public Meeting on April 25, 2024.
- The agency has also experienced moderate issues with staff recruitment and retention. However, 4 new support coordinators were hired during May 2023-January 2024. AAWA has 3 vacancies for a support coordinator before AAWA would be considered fully staffed. In 2023, AAWA's starting hourly wage for support coordinators increase by 82 cents. AAWA continues to have high demands placed on the Support Coordinators by the DMH, but the requirements have not become overbearing at this time. The turnover rate for 2022 was 32% vs. the turnover rate for 2023 being 24.5%.
- The agency's building space has been reevaluated and the Board of Director's have considered that the current location is the best location economically at this time. During 2023 the agency investigated other locations, but none of the buildings considered were feasible for the agency. The parking lot was recently repaved in areas that were impassable. Additional lighting was added to our parking lot to ensure safety while leaving or returning to the staff's vehicle.

Needed Expansions:

- Continuation of CWP service enrollment
- Referrals sent to local providers for services
- Expansion of services in Bibb and Pickens County from the 110-waiver waiting list pull.
- Availability or flexible funding for good and services
- Increase availability of providers of personal care, CWP, Transportation, Speech Therapy and in/out of home respite.
- Convert from 5-minute increment billing to a monthly billing for TCM for the legacy waiver services (LAH and ID) if approved by the DMH.
- Promote and educate families and providers regarding the benefits of utilizing Remote Support Solutions through Safe In Home support services.
- Update AAWA's website and brochure.
- Enhance AAWA's Technology to the optimum required internet speed for up and downloads to avoid delays while conducting business.
- Increased funding for Support Coordination
- Reenact Tuscaloosa People First Chapter (PFC)

Current Funding Resources:

Medicaid, state match for case management and waiver services
95%+ of individuals with intellectual disabilities served by the Department of Mental Health Division of Developmental Disabilities are served by Medicaid Waivers.
\$1,909,752.13 for Support Coordination funding -Fiscal Year 2023.
FY 2024: Estimated \$1,887,818.28

Future Funding Resources:

Nothing at this time.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Advocate and assist with decreasing the number of individuals on the waiting list for waiver services and increase the number of wavier slots.

Progress:

CWP Waiver started in Tuscaloosa County in October 2021. The agency is currently serving sixty-six individuals.

Minimum success has been made in finding providers to provide residential services for participants in group 4. Currently, there are two providers who provide residential services in Tuscaloosa.

No significant changes were made excluding the 11 pilot counties served except for emergency placements during the previous plan period.

Objective:

Advocate for approval of waiver slots as available to decrease the number of individuals on the waiting list. Assist individual with accessing the Community Waiver Program (CWP).

Numbers to be served in Tuscaloosa:

75 persons receiving services by October 2024
100 persons receiving services by October 2025

Goal 2: Reenact Tuscaloosa People First Chapter by having a collaborative approach with community providers to host monthly meetings at their specific location to increase participation until we out grow meeting within the local provider's facility.

Progress: AAWA's leadership met with Susan Ellis, Executive Director for ADMH on 2/28/24. During this meeting we discussed the importance of an active People First Chapter in Tuscaloosa would add value and create an outlet for expressing themselves among their peers. Several Executive Directors have been contacted by AAWA's Executive Director to discuss the intent of reenacting the PFC. Lastly, Susan is drafting a chapter outline that can be followed to ensure the PFC of Tuscaloosa is a success.

Objective: AAWA's leadership along with Susan Ellis will support persons served who have showed an interest in this chapter by launching the initial PFC meeting on May 29th at 12:30 pm. The location of the initial People First meeting will be held at the ARC of Tuscaloosa under the leadership of Delshonda Thomas, ED. The objective for our initial meeting is to recruit advisors and to assist persons served in electing their leadership. (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Chaplin)

Numbers to be added to PFC in Tuscaloosa:

10 active members with 3 advisors by October 2024

30 active members with 6 advisors by October 2025

Goal 3: Support Coordinators who provide traditional TCM will increase communication with families and individuals, including face-to-face contact per the ADMH's minimum standards every 90-days.

Progress: The agency has made improvements to prevent families and individuals from not being seen every 90 days by recruiting through Indeed and attending job fairs regularly. The Executive Director attends job fairs sponsored by the University of Alabama, where students majoring in social service-related fields attend for networking purposes. One of the University Students who participated in the job fair this past October 2023 was hired in January 2024. The 90-day onboarding orientation for new Support Coordinators has been modified. New staff will shadow the AAWA's training coordinator for at least 60 days based on the progress made in learning the required strategies for being a new support coordinator. The final 30 days within the 90-day probation period are done with the immediate supervisor for observation and feedback.

Objective 1: AAWA's onboarding team plays a crucial role in the recruitment process. They have committed to conducting thorough interviews to better screen the pool of applicants for the Support Coordinator's position. AAWA's leadership recognizes the significance of this commitment in achieving the goal of improving the recruitment and retention process.

Objective 2: Provide proficiency, longevity bonuses and cost of living adjustments within in reason of the annual financial budget.

Number of family and individuals seen face-to-face at least every 90 days:
100% by October 2025

Goal 4: Advocate and educate families and providers about the benefits of utilizing remote support solutions through Safe in Home.

Progress: AAWA has requested Suzanne Hoy, Account Executive for Alabama Safe in Home, to present remote support during one of the monthly CWP employee meetings, the PFC meeting we hosted at AIDB, and AAWA's second Quarterly Staff management meeting, which is scheduled for 4/10/24. As of 4/8/24, there were no enrollments for remote support in Tuscaloosa.

Objective: AAWA's leadership and staff play a crucial role in advocating and educating families and individuals regarding the benefits of utilizing remote support solutions through Safe in Home. Remote support was not designed to replace direct support staff but, in many cases, can be an asset for the participant. Lastly, this is a free service to those with a waiver service.

Numbers to be served in Tuscaloosa:

5 persons receiving services by October 2024

15 persons receiving services by October 2025

Plan Monitoring & Evaluation:

The Quality Improvement Staff of Ability Alliance will monitor goals and strategies. Quarterly but at a minimum six-month report on progress will be included in the agency's Quality Improvement plan.

Darin Prewitt, Executive Director

Date: 4/8/24