

The Arkansas Department of Human Services will be adding 700 families, pending legislative approval, to a program that provides in-home and community-based services to those who are eligible through Developmental Disability Services.

Currently there are about 4,800 people with disabilities on the Waiver Services program, with around 3,500 on the waiting list for said program.

Due to around \$15 million in funding provided so far by a premium tax in the Provider-Led-Arkansas Shared Savings Entity or PASSE program, which the legislature passed in 2017, the program can now add 700 new slots. That will bring the total number of individuals on the program past the 5,000 mark.

Speaking during a news conference today, Gov. Asa Hutchinson said the program provides a variety of services for those who are applicable.

“The goal of the services is to allow them to live in the community rather than in an institutional setting. With access to the waiver, they can receive services that range from adaptive equipment to supporting living services and assistance in employment,” Hutchinson said.

Melissa Stone, director of the state’s Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, said since the program is expanding, they will need more providers to serve those in the program.

“Although we have a network of providers, we need more. So over the next several weeks we will be having stakeholder meetings to talk about this new provider type and how we believe that we’ll be able to serve these 700 families quicker if we can get people enrolled and certified under this new provider type,” Stone said.

Even with this addition, there are still thousands on the waiting list for the program. Hutchinson said some of those families, around 2000 of them, have been independently assessed and have been assigned to a provider care group and are receiving Medicaid funded services. However, Hutchinson said the quality of those services is not as high as the waiver program.

Additionally, the addition of the slots to the waiver program must be approved by the state legislature. Slots will be available beginning on December 1.