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## **Aetna and BridgingApps launch pilot program to share information on consumer-directed services in Texas**

HOUSTON (February, 2025) – For families and caregivers managing care for someone with a disability, there are many challenges. For those that qualify, applying for supports and services is near the forefront.

Even after your family qualifies, there's still a pile of forms, rules, and choices. One choice many people don't know about is consumer-directed services (CDS) for hiring caregivers.

Traditionally, assigning professional home care was the job of staffing agencies. However, for families that would rather choose and train their own caregivers, CDS is a helpful alternative. Under the consumer-directed arrangement, the healthcare recipient, or consumer, becomes the actual employer—personally interviewing, hiring, and managing caregivers. (For salary and tax payments, the consumer has help from a Financial Management Services Agency.)

There are many reasons CDS may be the best decision. A consumer may prefer caregivers they already know and trust. Or they may want to make important decisions (such as replacing a caregiver) without the hassles of agency approval. Whatever the reason, the CDS option is easier than most people might think.

BridgingApps developed comprehensive educational materials that enable Texas residents to learn more about available options, including CDS, to care for those with disabilities. The resources were supported by a \$75,000 grant from Aetna to Easter Seals Greater Houston.

“Aetna identified a significant community need, and we are so grateful for their support, which allowed BridgingApps to create a [free, easy to use guide](#) for people with disabilities,” says Easter Seals Greater Houston’s CEO Elise Hough.

The resource includes:

- A series of short videos (in English and Spanish) summarizing the process
- A Help Guide explaining things in detail
- Informational handouts/infographics in English and Spanish
- A list of recommended apps for managing CDS activities (for example: tracking service visits; organizing medical records; sharing schedules)

“Navigating the health care system and understanding available options can be complex,” said Stephanie Rogers, CEO of Aetna Better Health of Texas. “Easter Seals Greater Houston created a helpful guide in BridgingApps that empowers people with disabilities with information on options to direct their own services.”

At BridgingApps, we believe that everyone, regardless of ability or disability, can live a productive life. We also know that life is about more than managing limitations. With this new resource for the CDS-or-agency decision, we expect that many families will see reduced frustration, better care management—and more time for other important activities.

### **About BridgingApps**

BridgingApps, a program of Easter Seals Greater Houston, provides the access, education, and resources needed to effectively use mobile, touch-based devices to help people with disabilities communicate, exceed educational goals, and reach their fullest potential. BridgingApps includes a website, app reviews by therapists and special education teachers, a custom app search engine, assistive technology labs, training and certification options for parents, organizations, and schools. For more information, visit [www.bridgingapps.org](http://www.bridgingapps.org).

### **About Easter Seals Greater Houston**

Since 1947, Easter Seals of Greater Houston, Inc. has provided help, hope, and answers to Veterans, Service Members, children and adults with any type of disability, and the families who love them. The local non-profit is leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access through essential resources and supports for every stage of life. Through therapy, training, education, and support services, Easter Seals Greater Houston creates life-changing solutions so that people with disabilities can live, learn, work, and play in our community. For more information, visit [www.eastersealshouston.org](http://www.eastersealshouston.org).

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