

DS State Program Standing Committee (SPSC)

November 16, 2023

Meeting held virtually by ZOOMGov

Attendees

Committee Members: Max Barrows, Barbara Lee, Bethany Drum, Ed Place, Barb Prine, Cheryl Thrall, Collins Twing, Karen Price, David Ballou and Lehana Guyette

State Employees: Jennifer Garabedian, June Bascom, Jeff Nunemaker, Hilary Conant, Carolyn Bowen, Julie Abrahamson, Jessica Bernard, Chris O'Neill, Nikki Marabella and Judy Spittle

Guests: Jess Moore, Jen Hayes, Kirsten Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Jessica Stehle, Colette Wilson, Katrina D, Gloria Quinn, Annie Jackson, Delaina Norton, Ben Gallagher, Ashleigh Goldberg, Tracy Fisher, Rickey Tate, Will Manley, Michael Kasper, Sharon Ryan, Marie Lallier, Tonya Mason, Chuck M, Elizabeth Walters, Rebecca Bessette, Anne Vernon, George McWilliam, Mark Prior Tracy Fisher, Ashley Wight, Kara Artus, Rachel Cummings and Marie Lallier

Roll Call and Review of Agenda and minutes –

October meetings were approved and seconded by Bethany Drum and Collins Twing after making the below correction.

Correction: SPSC members expressed the desire to keep membership as a Governor appointment

DDSD Director Updates

Invitation to a joint state standing committee meeting with the children's and adult mental standing committees to discuss agency rules on designation and the impact these rules have on the State standing committees and their responsibilities of the committees on preferred language, the rule uses "consumer". Public meeting on November 29th – noon to 1:00 pm.

Barb Prine suggested having a meeting prior to this invite to hear from the other Committees on and how they work. Maybe making this a 2-hour meeting. to get baseline information on how these other groups work. Others agreed with Barb that this would be helpful. Jennifer will take this back to Sean and Eva.

Paying Parents proposed policy went to CMS, got back their feedback. Still getting more feedback and setting up public sessions in mid-December.

Need to follow-up with DVHA and with the rule process (regulation)

Jennifer hopes to present with more detail at next month meeting

Act 186 planning grants update – still going through the approval process. Final formal announcement coming shortly. Timeline? Susan A wanted more details in the timeline – permission to release the facts in the proposal.

Providing care to their adult child and being paid for it.

GMSS Designation Review Update

Champlain Community Services – partnership with GMSS. E Walters was serving the interim Executive Director– has been ongoing hired as the Executive Director. GMSS has addressed many of the areas of concern. Administrative was the main area of concern. Direct services to individuals were not a major area of concern.

Change in leadership and in the Board membership. Quality review service was in October 2023 and progress has been made.

Elizabeth Walters

Oversight – to protect the people we serve. CCS and the entire network has come together to keep the services. GMSS staff very grateful.

Retiring the MOU with GMSS/DAIL/CCS – still working out some of the details. Less than an oversight role and more of collaborative relationship.

GMSS still have financial problems – did not have proper billing, benefit practices – a crockpot of things toward the budget problems. A series of bad decisions and practices and now the reins have been tightened.

Howard Center Re-Designation

Chris O'Neill presented on Howard Center's Re-Designation:

Howard Center met 14 out of the 16 quality assurance outcomes for designation. Notably, Howard is recognized for their exemplary work with hiring peer monitors. In the area of Comprehensive Services, there was one minor deficiency related to the restructuring/closing of group homes. DDSD recognizes the hardships Howard Center has experienced with staffing issues, Shared Living Provider shortages, and the challenges of the workforce crisis. DDSD further recognizes agencies right to do this.

Howard Center added that they did not choose to “close the homes” and added that two individuals living in one of the homes did not go to an institutional environment. The owner was selling the property. In addition, the location of the home was very dangerous, close to roads. Howard Center added they've transitioned the programs and stated that the review did not explain this very well nor does it reflect the fact that individuals did not lose their services or housing.

Chris stated that DDS does not want to discount all the hard work and commitment from the Howard Center and its staff. While Howard Center did not meet Outcome 4.7 Comprehensive System and DDS recognizes this is a resource issue as well as a statewide issue.

Attendees shared concerns related to the need for stabilization steps. For example, when someone is transitioning out of a hospital, returning to their previous environment isn't always the best plan and other options are not available. There are no step downs in place.

It was acknowledged there is a stabilization gap in the Vermont System. VCIN has three intensive beds which are intended to be short term 2-3 weeks, but there have been people staying for 6-9 months or longer. The problem with these resources is that individuals are "living" in these resources which in turn makes it unavailable for other's in crisis or need.

Chris discussed a minor deficiency with outcome 4.9.7 "Person Centered Services" which was attributed to medical documentation and ISA quality. This has been an area identified in the Quality Services Review.

Howard has provided a plan of correction to address these deficiencies and it is an adequate plan. Overall, Howard Center is doing a good job. They are the biggest agency, serving over 800 people.

Tonya mentioned Howard is working on residential issues, further developing a partnership with Vermont Housing Authority.

Locks on Doors

Concerns around the locks on doors policy were brought up. For example, there may be instances where a home provider needs to get into a locked room to help the person. Many Shared Living providers do not want locks on their doors and have concerns.

Max mentioned the Federal Settings rule and that Shared Living providers are paid with Medicaid dollars, so they must follow the rules.

Tenant rights were mentioned—a landlord must ask permission to enter your private space.

Jennifer explained that there is a process in the settings rules which allows for "exemptions" to the rule. If someone has a concern, they are encouraged to speak to their service coordinator and come up with a plan to address it. Person centered planning is about making sure the right type of support is in place for the person and that their plan is designed for their specific needs. There are safeguards built into this rule that ensures that responsible household members have access to a key to the person's door in case of an emergency.

DOL Section 14 © stakeholder engagement

Paying sub minimal wages to people with disabilities

Max was on the call and heard people with disabilities testified against this.

Vermont has not had Sheltered Workshops since 2002

Sherry asked to have a December agenda item included: discuss the current accessibility regulations, process, and survey results.

<https://legacy.drupal2.uvm.edu/sites/default/files/Center-on-Disability-and-Community-Inclusion/Research/Data-Briefs/Supported-Employment-2023/2023-Supported-Employment-Data-Brief-FINAL.pdf>

Other updates

GMSA

Celebration of the 30th anniversary of the closing of Brandon Training school at the Zen Barn. Representative Theresa Wood was the speaker. Highlight self-advocacy started. It will be 30 years this year for GMSA

Hopes and dreams from Self advocates were shared.

DD Council

Green Mountain Care Board – monitors all health care in Vermont and will be having public input sessions on November 21st, 10 am to 12 noon. Kirsten will send a flyer to be shared widely.

VCP

The written position is to Act 27 working group – by tomorrow (11/17/2023)