

## State Program Standing Committee (SPSC)

April 18, 2024

Meeting held virtually by ZOOMGov

### Attendees

**Committee Members:** Barbara Lee, Max Barrows, Collins Twing, Chad Cleverly, David Ballou, Bethany Drum, Chery Thrall, Barb Prine, Jennifer Stratton, Susan Yuan, Ed Place, Annie Jackson

**State Employees:** Jennifer Garabedian, Jessica Bernard, Chris O’Neill, Hilary Conant, Ellen Booth, Tina Fede, Lisa Hewes, Joy Barrett, Melanie Feddersen, Carolyn Bowen, Julie Abrahamson

**Guests:** Mary Gyori, Colette Wilson, Jen Hayes, Judith Jackson, Jessica Blais, Donna Hatcher, Kara Artus, Ashleigh Goldberg, George McWilliam, Kirsten Murphy, Marie Lallier, Rachel Cummings, Jess Moore

### Roll Call and Review of Agenda and minutes –

March minutes were approved by Bethanny Drum and 2<sup>nd</sup> by David Ballou Ballou.

Agenda items:

- CSAC Re-designation – Chris O’Neill & Ellen Booth
- Review of Context Document – Kirsten Murphy, Collette Wilson, Marie Gyori
- DAIL Workforce Marketing Campaign—Carolyn Bowen
- Conflict of Interest—Jennifer Garabedian

### Misc

Judy will resend out the ballot form for voting on the re-designation.

### CSAC Re-designation

Chris O’Neill, Ellen Booth, and Joy Barrett presented a review of CSAC’s re-designation. CSAC was found in good standing and in lieu of a detailed review, the committee was invited to ask specific questions of the review team and CSAC representatives. CSAC’s plan of correction included issues with documentation related to the Emergency Fact Sheet. Joy explained that in 2021, CSAC’s E.H.R. system “Credible” had some issues that were part IT/tech related and part training related. The system was failing to pull necessary medication information into the document. The issue was not affecting the care of folks in services, but those details needed to be fixed. It was reported that the glitches have been fixed and folks are now trained.

The committee asked about CSAC’s staffing, particularly for folks who have complex and unique needs. Greg Mair, Director of CSAC, explained that it was not going well. At 30-40 percent, CSAC has the lowest vacancy rate compared to the other DA’s and SSA’s in Vermont. Greg

explained that despite extensive reviews of CSAC's benefit packet and salaries, they are just not getting applications for DSPs and Case Managers.

Committee members were curious to know how CSAC has managed to get a glowing review from the quality team while being extremely short-staffed. Greg explained that they've kept the focus on the quality of services. He said that staff are often working 90 hours a week and the paperwork/documentation doesn't show this side of things. CSAC has implemented a "Service Delivery Re-Design" that is geared toward improving the workforce crisis.

The quality team emphasized that CSAC has been committed to the delivery of services for individuals and their families and that staff, including management, are quick to "roll up their sleeves", jump in, and help.

Rachel Cummings, a representative from CSAC, explained that the agency is not hierarchical and that to ensure continuity of services, many folks have been working 6 days a week to keep things together. She stated that this is unsustainable and that CSAC needs help. She cited the ongoing challenge to adequately pay staff, resulting in a need to cut positions to pay a higher rate. The Service Delivery Re-design project includes a demographic study to understand what is happening. Addison County has the oldest population in Vermont and with many people retiring, this is contributing to the workforce shortages. She stated that CSAC is committed to be proactive, innovative, and creative in their approach to addressing this issue.

Committee members expressed concern over the failure of the state to adequately respond to the workforce crisis and emphasized the need for increased wages for Direct Support Professionals and that we need to keep our hearts and minds open to solutions.

Chad Cleverly added that the workforce crisis is not "just about the pay" but also a lack of agency leadership, stating that employees who have left their jobs stated they were not being treated fairly or respected by agency management, often being shuffled around, and often not being paid for the overtime they provide.

Max Barrows, Outreach Director for GMSA stated that he understands this issue and how passionate people are in their efforts to find resolution. He commended CSAC's commitment to their local advocacy group, "Speak Up Addison County" and mentioned that CSAC is sending lots of people to Voices and Choices.

Cheryl Thrall commented that the budget will play a large role in revitalizing the workforce. She stated that providers asked for a 6.5% increase but that only 3.5% is on the table. She said that the backing and credibility to support a larger increase should come from advocates, families, and staff. She stated that folks can't find respite, home providers are getting tired, and that amidst all of that, we are going through many system changes all happening at once. Fluidity of workplace, what do I do in this stressful environment.

Self-advocate Bethany Drum spoke about her personal challenge finding respite staff and home provider burn out. She expressed fear of losing her home provider and having to find a new place to live.

Self-advocate Edwin Place added that he has had 4 different Case Managers and how the turnover makes it difficult for him. He stated that he gets used to a new Case Manager helping him and then they leave, and then he's having to adjust to a new one. He said having a steady Case Manager makes quite a difference.

Greg Mair spoke more about his Service Delivery Re-design, stating that CSAC has contracted with "Aspire" to provide support in areas where it was needed, especially targeting folks who need staff. Contracting Case Management has also helped to drop caseload sizes, providing time to focus on other areas.

Standardized Assessment Workgroup—presentation of the "DS context document"

Presented by Kirsten Murphy, Collette Wilson, Marie Gyori

The Standardized Assessment Workgroup presented a "context document" that aims to provide additional "context" information about a person's life. For example, where someone lives or might want to live.

#### **Feedback/Questions:**

How many questions does the context document have?

125 questions in total, but they are meant to be "prompts"/conversation starters. It is not required or necessary to answer every single question. A person/team may choose to answer a few questions or only those that apply.

At what point is the context document used?

The Standardized Assessment team recommends that it is used as part of the planning process for creating the person-centered plan.

Additional comments/feedback can be sent to Jessica Bernard

#### **Added agenda item: Marketing Campaign**

Carolyn Bowen presented DAIL's Marketing Campaign.

The campaign leverages \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act or "ARPA" funds (money that the Federal government provided during the COVID public health emergency) to assist with a media campaign designed to attract work in the areas of direct support.

This is a partnership with the Adult Services Division, Department of Mental Health and the Division of Substance Use and will include other programs, not just Developmental Services. The organization heading up the campaign is called “Place Creative”, the same company that helped with the rebranding of Hireability.

Carolyn emphasized that the presentation uses “stock photos” and that the intention is to have real Vermonter’s depicted as well as reflective of a more diverse population.

### **Feedback/Questions**

#### **Will the marketing materials be used on Instagram, TikTok, and other social media platforms?**

There is lots of research being conducted regarding traditional marketing and more modern, online areas, so there is potential for this. The state does not allow use of TikTok due to privacy concerns.

#### **Can there be a page or two that is specific to DS? A page that shows how fun providing community support can be?**

The marketing needs to be inclusive of all Departments/programs.

#### **If people are photographed, will they be paid?**

Carolyn will investigate this and report back.

### **Comments:**

Committee members felt the materials were lacking in diversity and not reflective of the services provided by DS.

Susan Yuan commented that there has been lots of historical work done to move away from the word “care” towards the use of the word “support”.

Kirsten Murphy stated that there is conversation to be had about whether we can appropriately blend the DS population into caregiving. Direct support work is about empowerment and facilitation. The DS spaces are different and not entirely provided in the home.

Annie Jackson commented about the importance that the “real” photos represent diversity and how the current pictures are not culturally sensitive in that the caregivers are all depicted as younger minorities while the people receiving care were all depicted as white and elderly.

Carolyn—feedback to org was to remove “in-home” supports as well as different streams that emphasizes the different type of work (in home vs. community, etc.)

Joy Barrett commented that the pictures represent a medical model (elderly folks in pajamas, hospital gowns) and how this is problematic.

### **COI Update**

The RFI (request for information) has been drafted and is expected to be released later this spring, sometime May, or June. This will be another opportunity to give feedback. Jen stated that we do not expect there to be plain language version, so we are developing a complementary document that can be presented at the SPSC that walks through the RFI in plain language.

## **Updates**

### **GMSA News—**

Max reminded folks that Voices and Choices are around the corner. The conference is sold out with 580 people registered to attend. The conference will feature a variety of workshops related to relationships, guardianship, talent shows, drumming, art project, and a dance.

### **DD Council—**

Kirsten Murphy stated that the Council has been preoccupied with the Statehouse and that the legislature feels to be “changing by the minute.” She said the council felt the strongest opportunity was related to housing and that the focus was on two strategies. One related to funding for the 3 pilot planning projects from Act 186 which has received support on the Senate side (due in part to lots of calls about this issue). The Council is working to pipeline language from the current bill to the “big bill” (Budget Bill). The budget bill has to pass, so the strategy is to secure priority housing resources/projects.

### **Vermont Care Partners**

Marie gave an update on the Forensic facility

Language about people with ID “going into a facility” language removed. Bill is still going through to have a policy established. Focus is on judicial process.

Barbara Lee reminded people the SPSC has historically taken a break in the summer and asked that folks think about that.