

DS State Program Standing Committee (SPSC)

December 16, 2021

Meeting Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Committee Members:

Max Barrows, Dawn Danner, Bethany Drum, Karen Price, Barbara Prine, Cheryl Thrall, Lyn Ujlaky, Connie Woodbury, Susan Yuan

Guests: Joe Greenwald, Jess Moore, Jenn Hayes, Lee Reilly, Gary McKenzie, Ben Gallagher, Jessica Stehle, Marie Lallier

State Employees: Jessica Bernard, June Bascom, Kirsten Murphy, Lisa Parro, Judy Spittle, Ellen Booth, Jeff Coy, Jackie Rogers,

Role Call and Review Agenda

A roll call was completed, and the meeting agenda was reviewed.

Meeting Minutes, SPSC Member Check-In

The SPSC meeting minutes from the November 21, 2021 meeting were reviewed. Bethany Drum made a motion to accept the meeting minutes, Ed Place seconded the motion, and the motion was passed.

DDSD Director Updates

Jessica Bernard is Acting Interim DDSD Director while the recruitment for the position is continuing.

DDSD is happy to report the positions onboarding now versus the ones still under recruitment:

- DDSD Director – Continuing recruitment for this position.
- Assistant Director – Amy Roth will be retiring effective 12/17/21 and Jeff Nunemaker will be moving into the Assistant Director position
- Administrative Services Coordinator III – Judy Spittle has filled this position and is in training.
- DDSD Senior Auditor and Program Consultant – Hilary Conant has been hired for this position. She started in November 2021

- Quality Management Reviewer – Jessica Nadeau has been hired and will start on 1/3/2022
- DS Public Safety Consultant – Robert Knelson has been hired and will start on 1/10/2021
- DS Children’s Specialist – Rachel Wassel is transferring from VDH to DDS effective 1/3/2022

Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentages (FMAP)

There are no new updates since the SPSC meeting last month. DAIL is still waiting to hear from the Agency of Human Services (AHS) about drawing down the funds. If any information is received, DAIL will let you know.

Conflict of Interest in Case Management (COI)

AHS was notified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) the need to address the conflict of interest in case management within the Vermont system and was given 60 days to submit a plan to comply. The due date is tomorrow. The plan that is being submitted does not have anything about how this will be done, it just has the areas that need to be figured out. DDS does not yet have a final draft of the plan, and there may be some last-minute tweaks; but the final plan will be posted publicly, and Jessica will send the link to the SPSC Committee.

Jessica Bernard and Angela McMahon from DAIL are on the AHS team and Dylan Frazer from the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) interacts with CMS; Jessica is not sure yet who the leads for the other departments will be.

AHS is asking CMS for 5 years to implement the plan, the maximum time allowed, and is asking for technical assistance. AHS will put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) asking for a project manager to support this initiative. The people involved in the plan will be experts and provide information for the project, but the project manager will be necessary to be sure the deadlines are met and to collect the necessary information across DAIL and the Department of Mental Health (DMH), which the departments do not currently have the staff take on this project. The hope is that the funding source for the RFP will be paid by the FMAP money; however, if the money is not able to be drawn down yet or is not approved for this project, AHS would need find another funding source.

The AHS team needs to identify all the steps that will be needed, including: How to define ‘case management’ from services currently being provided; What is the best way to engage consumers and community partners and obtain input in a structured way, how to have voices heard in different ways; How will it affect statutes, rules, manuals – what needs to be rewritten, be submitted to the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR); What entities need to come aboard and how do they get paid; What is the budget; How is data reported, etc. There is a lot to be figured out.

The encounter data has come a long way, but there is still some information that needs some improvement, and the service levels at this time are not typical; however, it is expected that 1-3 years out there will be better data to provide for the plan.

Conflict of interest in case management will be discussed at each monthly meeting moving forward.

DS Payment Reform

The work on DS Payment Reform and any future budget modeling or service impacts will align with conflict free case management, which may change some engagement and timelines. While budget modeling development and stakeholder engagement will continue in the future, the changes are now scheduled to happen later and be in line with the Conflict Free Case Management changes, which we are planning to have happen several years from now. Whenever possible, alignment of work for the two will be done together to prevent multiple changes being implemented separately.

Conversations were started in 2018, with stakeholder engagement groups, and after about a year a recommendation was made for the SIS-A. It is not a perfect tool but is the best out of all of the choices, and Vermont was able to add some supplemental questions based on stakeholder feedback. Training for the SIS-A evaluators was done in the Summer of 2021, and then it moved into the phase of performing the SIS-A for a wide spectrum of people across the system to get more information about how the tool will be used in a future payment model. It is not affecting services or budgets currently, but hopefully individuals are talking with the assessor about scores if they do not agree with the results. Once this moves into the phase for service planning, there will be an appeal process, as well as consideration for specialized budgets. A second request to pause the SIS-A was received; however, the State has decided not to pause the SIS-A. There continue to be improvements made to the assessment process, with the hope of bringing more equity to the DS system.

The State acknowledges that we are in tough times with workforce shortages, and our agencies are coming together to quickly address situations and acknowledges that everyone is working very hard. Families are not receiving services at the same level which is very challenging, and people are doing their best. The State is working closely with the agencies for contingency planning when needed, so we can come together as a service system to try to meet the needs of consumers during this very challenging time.

Some concerns that were voiced by the meeting attendees: Would like this committee to recommend that DAIL have a committee with the agencies to address crisis; a concrete statewide plan of what to do and where to go in a situation of a crisis is needed; would like to discuss a plan in case something happens to an agency; pay raise for workers is needed; agencies need help now but also need ongoing help; overall exhaustion - going to be another group of staff that is exhausted; would like to see the committee recommend a group for planning.

DAIL is ensuring that the message about funding and wage increase is clearly getting to the people who need to know. The advocacy lives outside the department. There is a weekly meeting with the community partners to talk about options; however, there are only so many options.

Updates

Green Mountain Self Advocates (GMSA) continue to provide TA to local groups in VT. They just had a board meeting and heard from self-advocates who are running for officer positions. Elections will be next month.

GMSA continues to hold Zoom meetings for self-advocates and other advocates across the nation.

GMSA received a planning grant for peer mentors who will help people get ready for person centered planning meetings.

Today Max will be representing GMSA with legislators about stake holder comments that Speaker Krowinski and Senator Balint already gathered about priorities for spending the extra money Vermont is getting for HCBS services.

GMSA and the DD Council presented to DS directors and key staff about decision making and alternatives to guardianship.

GMSA did a number of national presentations at the AUCD and TASH conferences about the need for and how to translate information into plain language.

VCP

The presentation with GMSA on decision making was very good; Agencies appreciated it.

Ongoing weekly crisis planning because of workforce issues.

DD Council

The DD Council had an opportunity available for 5-10 grants for small organizations, agencies or allies who want to pilot or jump start an initiative. <https://ddc.vermont.gov/plan-and-projects/seeds-grants> The DD Council awarded approximately \$100,000. About \$43,000 to smaller projects, peers for person centered planning, helping VT Adaptive Ski and Sports to

expand in the Mad River Valley; and further training on decision making are just some of the grants awarded. \$60,000 was awarded to Green Mountain Self-Advocacy.

A supported sensory program in Rutland area that is opening up; Sensory room with recreational focus.