

DS State Program Standing Committee (DS SPSC)

May 21, 2020

Meeting Notes

Attendees

Committee Members: Max Barrows, Ed Place, Rachel Colby, Barb Prine, Anne Bakeman, Susan Yuan, Lyn Ujlaky, Bethany Drum, David Ballou

Guests:

Note: Not all guests participating on the conference call were identified.

Kirsten Murphy, Lynne Cleveland-Vitzthum, Joe Greenwald, Lee Reilly, Josh Bertini, Leigh Holliday, Kara Artus, Judy Cookson, Elise Hayden, Greg Mairs, Cheryl Thrall,

State Employees: Selina Hickman, Chris O'Neill, Ellen Booth, Lisa Parro, June Bascom, Joy Barrett, Susan Aranoff

Review Agenda and Meeting Minutes

A roll call was completed. The DS State Program Standing Committee (SPSC) meeting minutes from the February 20, 2020 meeting, the March 19, 2020 meeting, and the April 16, 2020 meeting were reviewed. Ann made a motion to approve these minutes as written, Bethany seconded the motion and the motion was passed.

SPSC Committee Check-in

Since the Learning network on Summer Street is currently closed, every two weeks, Judy Cookson has been delivering sunshine bags to people. The items in the sunshine bags are paid with one-time funding.

Next Wednesday at 1:00, VT Legal Aid and the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) are providing another training on unemployment and the impacts on benefits for people with disabilities. Lisa will forward the flyer to the SPSC.

COVID-19 Update – Selina Hickman

The State of Emergency has been extended to June 15th but Vermonters are able to start to go out, while still maintaining caution. Individuals who are not at a higher risk can start gathering with groups of up to 10 people who are also staying safe; some individuals may be starting to return to work, while staying safe. Individuals still need to wear a mask when they leave home and keep their hands washed and out of their face, this is very important and has not changed. Some individuals are beginning to plan things; however, life is not back to normal yet. Please take care of yourself and others, and don't take risks that will infect yourself or others until the danger of COVID is over. Staying home remains important, especially if you or your household member(s) are at a higher risk.

The Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD), in combination with Green Mountain Self Advocates (GMSA), VT Family Network (VFN), and the DD Council, are helping individuals to determine if they should be returning to work and ensuring they have good information to make this decision.

GMSA has been creating plain language documents on the COVID information. They just created a great plain language document for the required training by the VT Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSHA) for people returning to work.

Plain language document: <http://www.gmsavt.org/covid-19-plain-language-for-workers/>
VOSHA Training: <https://labor.vermont.gov/vermont-occupational-safety-and-health-administration-vosha>

The expectations for businesses who are re-opening is on the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) website. The information on this site is a good resource for anyone who is planning to return to work so they may see what the expectations are for their workplace. <https://accd.vermont.gov/>

The State of Vermont, Agency of Human Services (AHS), does not have any plans in place yet for employees to return to the workplace or for face-to-face visits to resume. There are occasionally instances where this may be required; but otherwise things have not changed. There is no date set yet as to when a change may occur.

There are some COVID testing sites popping-up around the State where individuals without symptoms can be tested. The testing is becoming more and more available. The location of these sites are on the VT Department of Health website. Please keep in mind, the testing is for that moment in time. <https://humanresources.vermont.gov/popups>

A couple weeks ago, DDSD had a town hall meeting for individuals with developmental disabilities. It was nice to hear directly from individuals about their concerns, questions about benefits, going back to work, and concerns about how hard it is to distance from other people and the community. Nothing has been scheduled yet; however, DDSD will try to hold another town hall meeting in a couple of weeks.

Re-Designation of Counseling Service of Addison County (CSAC)

The DDS Quality Management Team gave an overview of the Agency Designation Report Counseling Service of Addison County (CSAC), DDS Specific Draft to State Program Standing Committee.

The CSAC met all the requirements of the Administrative Rules except for 4.2 Governance, and 4.9 Consumer Support, Treatment and Records.

Administrative Rules 4.2 – Governance. Additions to the bylaws will be voted on at the June CSAC Board meeting. This is explained further in page 10 of the DDS Specific Draft to State Program Standing Committee dated May 21, 2020.

Administrative Rule 4.9 – Consumer Support, Treatment, and Records

The Individual Support Agreement (ISA) is acceptable; there is a big improvement since last the designation review. The agency needs to do some additional work on the timeliness and quality of the ISA in order to be compliant with all the standards and guidelines. There were issues discovered with the timeliness and completeness of Housing Safety and Accessibility Inspections for a number of new shared living home. Some of this may be due to the transition to a new database for housing inspections, with changes in the process, and gaps in agency resources to timely schedule the housing inspections, as needed. The agency has responded well to the feedback they have been given, and they have reached out requesting technical assistance.

Greg Mairs, CSAC DS Director, humbly acknowledges the areas that need work and staff have undergone training on the housing inspections and are on their way to being accurate and up-to-date. There has been an staff turnover, work duty adjustments, and are working with Ellen Booth, DDS Quality Reviewer, to help ensure compliance across the program with ISA goals.

A mentoring process has been set up for new staff that are hired, which is a big change. It takes a long time for the onboarding of new service coordinators and orienting the person-centered services and planning; a senior service coordinator helps walk the new staff through the policies and practices. It is a whole set of skills that need to be develop, and this is working well.

GMSA reported that CSAC does an excellent job supporting individuals to attend the Voices and Choices conference, making sure people have rides, and there is a strong contingency that attend; and they support GMSA.

After the webinar has ended, the DS SPSC members will be e-mailed or mailed a copy of the voting sheet for re-designation. Post meeting note: The results of the votes received by the DS SPSC were 5 Re-Designate Minor; 1 Re-Designate; 1 De-Designate. The DAIL Commissioner will be notified that the DS SPSC is recommending re-designation areas needing improvement.

DDSD Budget

The legislature is planning to approve a 23%, 3-month budget, through September (first quarter of the fiscal year); slightly less than a full quarter budget. The directions for DDSD is to keep the same budget as is currently approved at the end of this current fiscal year; basically, hold steady and wait for the August revenue forecast to determine spending for the rest of the year. The DAIL business office has confirmed that DAIL can maintain the current level of spending for the designated agencies for the next 3 months. There has been a lot of questions about what relief may be coming from the Federal government, and what will we have for the next year of revenue sources. It is unknown at this time what the context the Governor's comments about an 8% cut across the board means for the DDSD budget.

DS Director update

Conflict of Interest (COI) in Case Management

In the February SPSC meeting minutes, it mentions AHS sending a proposed written plan about conflict free case management to the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to review. The direction in which AHS wants to head, and the submission of the proposal has not changed, it just has not happened and is taking longer due to COVID. The hope is to look at the project again in June.

Payment Reform

DDSD is 100% committed to the implementation of DS Payment Reform; however, this has had to be paused during COVID, as all energy is being focused on COVID, supporting individuals to be healthy and safe. Once there is more staff time available, the work will continue on payment reform.

Updates from GMSA, DS Director, VT Care Partners, DD Council, DS Directors

Green Mountain Self Advocates (GMSA)

GMSA has been very busy since the COVID outbreak. They have created a COVID-19 Toolkit with 8 different booklets – one of these booklets is translated into 11 languages, soon to be 12. There is a new 50-page booklet about Vermont Occupational Health and Department of Health, plain language with glossary. (Link to Toolkit: <http://www.gmsavt.org/3665-2/>)

GMSA is having weekly calls with self-advocates in the state, and nationally, to voice questions and concerns about COVID-19, and are taking input about the needs that need to be addressed during this time of uncertainty.

Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council)

The DD Council, in partnership with Vermont Family Network (VFN), presented information about Vermont ABLE savings accounts, where unemployment or stimulus check can be protected. It is an hour-long training and is posted on the VFN You tube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vpy-yDhF1ws>

The DD Council joined some advocacy groups, calling on the Governor and Secretary about a mail-in voting option. They feel a mail-in option is very important, especially for high risk individuals and COVID. They hope to hear an announcement for the August elections, but most importantly for the November elections.

A newspaper insert, Hello Neighbor, has been circulated. It addresses how people with disabilities are contributing to their communities. An electronic copy is posted on the DD Council website as e-book.

https://ddc.vermont.gov/sites/ddc/files/documents/mediaandoutreach/Hello%20Neighbor_2020%20publication.pdf

Vermont Care Partners (VCP)

The agencies are working with DAIL and have settled into a new way to provide services during COVID. They will also work with DAIL with the resumption of services, following CDC and VDH protocol, and more documents from DAIL about how to do this are expected.

SPSC

There is a national petition at www.change.org about having the ability to have someone with an individual when they are hospitalized so that this does not have to be fought in every state. There are already 50,000 people who have signed the petition.

11:01 meeting adjourned.