

# DS State Program Standing Committee (SPSC)

October 15, 2020

## Microsoft Teams Meeting

### Attendees

**Committee Members:** David Ballou, Susan Yuan, Rachel Colby, Ed Place, Max Barrows, Joy Redington, Lyn Ujlaky, Barb Prine, Anne Bakeman, Connie Woodberry

**Guests:** Lee Reilly, Tonya Mason, Judy Cookson, Michel Kersten, Hannah Ides, Barbara Lee, Dawn Danner, Kara Artus, Elise Haydon, Lynne Cleveland Vitzthum, Jess Moore, Julie Cunningham, Samantha Thomas, Cheryl Thrall, Lily Johnston

State Employees: Lisa Parro, Monica Hutt, Selina Hickman, Kristen Murphy, June Bascom, Susan Aranoff

### Roll Call and Review of Agenda

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

### COVID-19 Survey – June Bascom

DAIL is interested in knowing how people's access to activities, the community, family and services has changed as a result of COVID-19. DAIL is planning to conduct a short survey about people's experiences during the time; this is the person's perception, what they felt.

A draft of the COVID-19 Survey tool was distributed to give people an opportunity to review it and make comments. This draft was reviewed during the SPSC meeting and June was provided input from the meeting attendees. Additional feedback about the survey can be given until the end of next week.

The survey will be done using Survey Monkey, an online survey; the link to the survey will be sent out by the agencies to distribute. There will be information provided which will explain how to do the survey, and the DD Council and GMSA has volunteered to assist individuals in filling out the survey. Friends, family, and home providers may also fill out the survey for an individual.

The goal is to have the final draft and approval of the survey by the end of October and sent to the agencies for distribution the first week of November. The survey will be open until mid-

December, but could potentially be open until the end of December. DAIL would like as many people as possible to respond to the survey.

A suggestion was made for DAIL to also do a survey for direct care providers and support workers to obtain their experience during this time.

### **Review and Approve Minutes**

The meeting minutes for the August 20, 2020 and for the September 17, 2020 meetings were reviewed. The meeting minutes were approved as written.

### **Member Check-In**

DS SPSC members did a quick check-in on how things are going.

### **DAIL Budget - Commissioner Hutt**

A 'Skinny budget' was done for July, August, and September. A new, "re-stated" budget for the rest of the 2021 fiscal year, until the end of June, has just been done.

For all the programs in DAIL, we used funds that were not spent (due to under-utilization) to get to the 5% reduction required for the re-stated FY 21 budget. The reduction are funds not being used in the DAIL programs; the funding that individuals receive for services were not reduced; funding to providers was not reduced. There are one-time, federal, Corona Virus Relief funding that have been used to help sustain some programs.

There are no changes to the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) budgets. Federal funds that are unspent in these programs nationwide are re-allocated out for one year to VR's that use the funding. Vermont VR received a re-allotment this year and they have some creative ideas of things they may be able to do with DDSD Supported Employment. As noted above, the reduction of DDSD funds were funds that were not being used to support anyone, and are therefore, not affecting anyone's services. DAIL asked for an additional funding of 2.9 million for Choices for Care program because the need is greater than it was anticipated and individuals were presenting with a higher level of need. The Legislature supported the additional funding. The Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) budget did not end up being a 5% reduction because of the funds that were received for the Choices for Care program.

It is expected that the budget instructions for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) will be received from the Governor's office tomorrow, and the planning for the next budget will begin. The planning will start with the FY 2021 budget, which will be a challenge as the FY21 budget relied on federal funding.

There is a government hiring freeze. Hiring for vacant positions can still be done; however, the Department has to make a good argument about hiring someone, and it must be approved. Previously the Agency, Governor's office, and the Legislature had to review the information for the request and all of them had to give approval for hiring; however, requests no longer have to get the Legislature's approval. There is not a reduction in government positions, but there are savings due to reduced staff travel, fee for space, and other funding to departments which are able to be reduced by 5% and those savings were utilized.

The work in DAIL has been very challenging communicating over the phone, internet, and e-mail and not interacting with co-workers on a daily basis. DAIL has tried really hard to reach out to DAIL staff during this time with multiple DAIL staff meetings, virtual employee appreciation with talent show and breakout rooms, etc. DAIL has heard the providers and employers are having a lot of anxiety and are worried about their staff morale as well.

DAIL realized they did not always know how it was going for people in the community, what was going well or what needed to be fixed, and that is why DAIL is interested in doing the survey. People have been figuring out how to communicate with each other in different ways, and things such as the Zoom calls DDS has been hosting where anyone in the State can call in has created a new openness and connected with more people; however, this is not a substitute but something to add to our toolkit for later. DAIL is hoping the survey will provide more information.

The Federal election and state elections can always bring up changes as all the commissioners and deputy commissioners are appointed by the Governor. The division directors are not appointed, so having the DAIL leadership team remain as is, is a big gift.

### System of Care Plan (SOCP)

[https://ddsd.vermont.gov/sites/ddsd/files/documents/Vermont\\_DS\\_State\\_System\\_of\\_Care\\_Plan.pdf](https://ddsd.vermont.gov/sites/ddsd/files/documents/Vermont_DS_State_System_of_Care_Plan.pdf)

Previously the State System of Care Plan (SOCP) was discussed with the DS SPSC and at that time a two year extension for the plan seemed like a long period of time; however, it appears DAIL may now be in this situation as they do not have the capacity to be able to charge ahead. DAIL is considering requesting another year extension but will determine if it is needed when it is closer to the end of the current extension period. With the updates to the SOCP, there are also rule making changes that need to take place.

A concern was voiced about the out of date special initiatives of the SOCP. Selina will bring this back to the DDS team who has the historical experience with the SOCP. Further discussion about this can be on the agenda for the next SPSC meeting.

## DS Payment Reform

DS Payment Reform has been on pause for the last 6 months, but two areas are starting to move forward again – encounter data and the needs assessment.

### Encounter Data Workgroup

Encounter data is how the agencies report what services have been delivered to individuals. Last January guidance was provided to the agencies, but all of the work for this was not completed when work was paused. The work for encounter data has started moving forward again and codes identifying services are being worked on, the guidance to the agencies is being updated, there is a plan to do a training and technical assistance. The target date for all agencies to report encounter data into the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) is 1/1/21.

### Needs Assessment

Last month the SPSC was notified that the Request for Proposal (RFP) for an organization to conduct the needs assessment using the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) had been posted on September 16<sup>th</sup>. DAIL received quite a few questions from bidders, and the answers to the questions were posted on the bid site today. DAIL also received a letter from VT Care Partners (VCP) about their concerns in moving forward in posting the bid and putting a contract in place at this time as well as some questions that were similar to bidders' questions. Some of the questions from VCP were asked and answered in the bidder's question and answer document, some were not and DAIL responded to these questions in a separate document. Both the letter from VCP and DAIL's answers to VCP's questions are posted on the DAIL website under DS Payment Reform. <https://ddsd.vermont.gov/project-initiatives/dds-payment-reform>

The base information from 6 months of encounter data and 500 – 700 assessments will help provide information to create a new payment model. How the needs assessment information will be used to create the individual budgets is yet to be determined, the system is not ready to use this information yet. Equity and Public Safety policies remain in place at this time. Everything will be reviewed by the Needs Assessment Workgroup, and input from the SPSC before decisions will be made.

There were 8 or 9 entities at the bidder's conference. The deadline for proposals for the RFP is 10/29, and then the State will review the proposals and a contract will likely be in place by February. The State obtained input from the Needs Assessment Workgroup for things to include in the RFP. The contract process (reviewing the proposals and deciding on a vendor) is a State responsibility.

This does not mean the assessments will start in February as there will need to be time to hire and train staff, and there is uncertainty with COVID, etc. Any assessments that are completed next spring would be for training purposes by the contractor; however, this information would not be used for payment reform. It is expected that it will be at least July 2021 before the data from assessments will be able to be used.

Bidders link: <http://www.vermontbusinessregistry.com/>

DDSD Website: <https://ddsd.vermont.gov/project-initiatives/dds-payment-reform>

There are a lot of things that still need to be done, such as drafting supplemental questions for the Supports Intensity Scale and developing a process of how the contractor will intersect with providers for referrals and information sharing. The Workgroup will reconvene to work on these questions, which will be brought to the SPSC for review, and will reach out to the providers for input. Information will need to be provided to people receiving Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) about the change and their participation in the needs assessment. The Workgroup will get input about how the information should be sent out to people.

## **DDSD Updates**

### **Conflict of Interest in Case Management**

DAIL is writing a new agreement to renew their technical assistance for conflict of interest in case management with the Federal government in order for the assistance meetings to resume. There wasn't a meeting held in October, so an update about the contract work will be given at the next SPSC meeting.

DAIL is organizing another townhall listening session and will share the information when the date is confirmed.

## **Updates**

### **Green Mountain Self Advocates (GMSA) – Max**

GMSA continue to have virtual meetings throughout the state with GMSA members, as well as national meetings with self-advocates.

GMSA is also continuing to hand out Personal Protective Equipment (PPE.)

GMSA made a new video about voting. They want to make sure that people understand the voting process and how to decide who to choose.

GMSA is going to do the Voices and Choices conference virtually. It will take place the first week in December.

GMSA is doing the Leadership Series graduation next Wednesday. Secretary Smith will take part in presentations to the graduates.

A new COVID booklet created by GMSA will be coming out. It's in plain language on the rules for people when they are working. It has a decision tree around going out in public. GMSA worked with the CDC as they reviewed this booklet and gave feedback to make sure that the information was accurate.

**DD Council – Kirsten**

The DD Council is distributing PPE with GMSA. GMSA has made little packs of PPE and made these as an event, talking with peers. It doubles as getting the PPE and sending the message that folks are watching out for them. The Council likes these events and has submitted an application into Vermont Department of Health (VDH) to build a couple more hundred packs. The Council is working with VT Family Network (VFN) to get the supplies to kids with disabilities, by working with special education directors.

The Leadership Series graduation will meet virtual next Wednesday at 3:00. There will be ways for each graduate to talk about themselves, desires, leadership, and there will be a short video about leadership series itself. They are waiting to hear back from Secretary Smith about whether he will be able to speak at the graduation.

**DS Directors/VT Care Partners - Julie Cunningham**

The stress level at the agencies is stretched pretty thin. Last Thursday, when trying to meet as team for morale boosting there were 2 youth with crisis. Home providers are feeling the limitations of COVID, there are a lot of people in crisis and needing housing and it is hard to find home providers in this climate. Case managers are running thin. This update is given as VCP wants the SPSC to know what is happening in the field and it seems it will be a heavy lift for the agencies to make the changes for DS Payment Reform while dealing with crisis and the day-to-day things.