

DS State Program Standing Committee (SPSC)

May 20, 2021

Teams Meeting

Attendees

SPSC Members: David Ballou, Barb Prine, Connie Woodberry, Cheryl Thrall, Karen Price, Susan Yuan, Dawn Danner, Lyn Ujlaky, Ed Place

Guests: Elise Hayden, Samantha Thomas, Julie Cunningham, Julie Martin, Dylan Devlin, Terry Holden, Jess Moore, Natalie Bruster, Rob Szpilla, Wendy Summarsell, Anne Shumacher, Chuck Medick, Jen Hayes, Jon Riley, Gloria Quinn, Jennifer Merrill, Jess Moore, Heather Cloud, Jessica Steele, Jessica Robinson, Keri LaVanway, Brittany Trujillo, Barb Ramsey, Kara Artus, and a couple guests via phone.

State Employees: June Bascom, Lisa Parro, Selina Hickman, Kirsten Murphy, Clare McFadden

Roll Call, Review of Agenda & SPSC Member Check-in

Lyn Ujlaky volunteered to chair the meeting in the absence of the SPSC Co-Chairs.

A roll call was completed. The SPSC meeting minutes from the April 15, 2021 meeting were reviewed. Barb made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as written; Connie seconded the motion and the motion to accept the meeting minutes was passed.

Barb worked with Jennie Masterson, DDS, to hold a supported employment training for VR workers and supported employment case workers. There were about 120 attendees. If someone would like to partner with her, Barb would be happy to assist in a training for families or self-advocates.

Kirsten Murphy, DD Council, submitted a report from the 4/27 townhall with the DD Council to Selina Hickman and Monica White. The cover letter clearly states that this is not to replace public comments and discussions on home and community based (HCBS) funding. Kirsten will share the report with the SPSC after the meeting. *(On 4/27, a Town Hall was held to address the increase funding to State Medicaid Programs by 10% for one year that President Biden recently signed into law to address the impact of Covid-19, American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). From this law Vermont will receive about \$48 million. The money must be used to improve Home and*

Community-Based Services (HCBS); however, Vermont cannot use this money to pay for services that are already in place.)

Updates: GMSA, VT Care Partners, DD Council

DD Council

Next week the DD Council will be sending out a summary about their platform issues in the legislature. Four out of five of their platform issues moved during the legislative session.

- H.210 (Act 33) An act relating to addressing disparities and promoting equity in the health care system – Was signed into law by the Governor.
- H.243 An act relating to the Working Group on Services for Adults with Autism – Testimony was given but the bill did not move in the Legislature, but the Agency of Human Services (AHS) was sent a letter requesting them to create a process to address the questions associated with the bill. This letter is not binding, but it does put some pressure on AHS.
- S.16 (Act 35) An act relating to the creation of the Task Force on Equitable and Inclusive School Environments – Was signed into law by the Governor.

The DD Council received federal funding for work on vaccination issues. They are working with the VT Family Network to figure out how to support children and youth, 12 years and up, with disabilities. This work will start next week.

DDSD Director Updates

Last week DAIL received guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) about the federal funding for the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA). The State is expected to submit a plan for this funding by June 12th. The State has responded to CMS about the difficulty in engaging in meaningful public process with such a short turnaround time.

The federal funds cross over multiple departments, which is an additional level of complexity for the alignment of the funds. Tomorrow the AHS Commissioners will take the first step by meeting to work out the logistics of a plan. It is expected that by next week DAIL will be able to share at least a basic plan and it is expected that input opportunities will be made available; however, it is unknown how this may be structured. (Individuals are welcome to send DAIL input at any time.)

Some input was provided during the meeting: There is a crisis point around shared living providers (SLPs) and Service Coordinator hiring; urgency for children in institutions out of state and advocacy for them, and transportation.

Addendum: Susan's tech devices to interact in the meeting failed so she sent this update directly to DDSD. Peer Navigation is something we have considered as part of the Choice Option for CMS, she has been working with Vermont Family Network (VFN), VFF and Center on Disability and

Community Inclusion (CDCI) on reconstituting that program, with whatever funding may be available. Please consider putting some funding toward reestablishing Peer Navigators--both for parents with ID, but more broadly as a general regional support for families with members with DD.

The bill H.243, An act relating to the Working Group on Services for Adults with Autism, did not get through the legislature this session; however, members of the legislature sent a letter to the DAIL Commissioner and DDS Director hoping they will take actions that are described in the draft bill. DAIL is reviewing the request to determine the best action to take and will need to consult with the Secretary's Office.

It appears that the letter does not take into account all of the testimony that was provided so there are some concerns about whether the work being requested would represent the interests of all Vermonters. AHS and the Governor's Office will need to figure out how to proceed.

Kirsten stated that the VT Family Network and the DD Council are to be included as part of the workgroup; however, the letter did not identify other workgroup members.

DDS received an e-mail from Max on behalf of Green Mountain Self Advocates stating that there are requirements of personal protective equipment (PPE) for service delivery for people with disabilities, which is discriminatory. It was requested that DAIL provide clarification guidance to ensure service delivery is clear with the agencies and not discriminatory, and there is not a higher level of restrictions to activities and services for people with disabilities. DAIL Commissioner has reached out to Vermont Department of Health (VDH) and the division is hoping to provide clarified guidance soon.

Support Intensity Scale (SIS) – Jon Riley, Brittany Trujillo, Barb Ramsey, Clare McFadden

The DS Payment Reform project began in 1/2018, it was paused during the pandemic then resumed in the fall of 2020. The project is creating a way to pay for HCBS DS services in a way that is transparent and effective, enhance accountability, create rates that will enable services to be sustained, and to enhance the system in a way that is fair and equitable so that resources and funds are distributed in the same way throughout the state. The Encounter Data part of the project is a report of what services are received.

Currently Vermont uses a 'home grown' assessment tool that is not standardized around the State, and that is being done by multiple people at the agencies. Using a standard assessment tool, the Support Intensity Scale - Adult (SIS A), will help improve consistency around the state so that people with similar needs will have similar supports and services. Having contracted, dedicated, people providing the assessments will also help with consistency.

The Public Consultant Group (PCG), State contractor, presented information on the SIS-A and their role as assessors for Vermont. They will be conducting the SIS-A assessments for all

Vermonters receiving Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) through Developmental Services. Currently, they are training staff to become certified assessors and are working with a group of approximately 30 volunteers who are willing to help with the training process. Training will take place in May and June. The new assessment process will begin on or about July 1st; but the roll out of this process will not change a person's plan or budget at this time. Providers will follow the same process they do now until a new payment model is established. The information from the SIS-A will help design the new payment model, however, about 500 to 700 assessments need to be completed before the data can be used.

PCG is trying to engage the community as much as possible and will have multiple meetings with different stakeholder groups to get as much feedback as possible. The presentation today is focused on the SIS. The Public Consultant Group plans to have another presentation webinar in May or June that will include more details about the DS Payment Reform project. There will be a townhall on 5/25 for people and families who engage in services. Questions can also be asked by clicking this link: [Public Consulting Group \(PCG\) Question Form \(office.com\)](#)

The staff conducting the SIS will be a professional with at least a bachelor's degree, minimum of 1 year of work with ID/DS, and a recognized assessor who has successfully completed the thorough SIS training. Staff are hired for specific regions of the State. The opportunity to meet the assessors was expressed by the meeting attendees. PCG will speak with the assessors and once cleared with them, will schedule a meet and greet.

PCG will get basic information about a person and contact information and respondents for them. A team will be assigned to primarily schedule the assessments. A confirmation e-mail with the assessment date and time, and instructions for Microsoft teams, as well as other documentation to help with assessment will be sent. Around June, there will be a video about the process posted online which will be available for anyone participating in the assessment. PCG has an example of a plain language document that Vermont submitted, and they are reviewing the assessment information. They will be glad to share it, once it has been reviewed. There is a 24/7 toll free number, 1-833-930-3543, available with message capability to reach PCG staff.

Individuals who know the person (known as the Respondents) should know the person for at least 3 months, and include family, guardians, teachers, supervisors, support workers; anyone that can discuss the day-to-day needs of the person.

Currently the assessment will be completed virtually through MicroSoft Teams at this time. Whether it is completed virtually or in person, the assessor will talk about the process and purpose, go over tools for the process, let the person know what is being assessed and conduct the assessment. It takes an average of 2 hours to complete the assessment but could be less or more. The information will be entered into an online database with a copy of the report given which will help create personal plans.

The assessment result is not appealable; however, if there is a disagreement with how an assessment was conducted, there will certainly be an opportunity to request a new assessment and there will be a process to appeal the resources if they don't meet the plan.

The threshold for the need of a new assessment has not yet been established. The fluctuation in the budget will allow funds to move around to adjust the needs, therefore it is likely that the only time there will be a need for a new assessment is when there is a significant change in resources. The details for this are still being worked out.

Wrap-Up

Yellow House is a smaller organization that was established about 2 years ago in Addison County. They support people throughout the state and work with designated agencies. They are more than happy to meet with anyone. <https://yellowhousecommunity.com>