

DS State Program Standing Committee (SPSC)

June 17, 2021

Teams Meeting

Attendees

SPSC Members: Dave Ballou, Max Barrows, Ed Place, Dawn Danner, Cheryl Thrall, Barb Prine, Connie Woodberry

Guests: Pam McCarthy, Lynne Cleveland Vitzthum, Elise Haydon, Lee Reilly, Jess Moore

State Employees: Megan Tierney-Ward, Jessica Bernard, Selina Hickman, Kirsten Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Jennie Masterson, Clare McFadden

Roll Call & Review of Agenda

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

DDSD Director Recruitment

The Developmental Disabilities Services Division (DDSD) Director position has been posted for recruitment. It will be posted for 10-14 days and is available for anyone to view on the Vermont Human Resources website. Anyone interested can apply online. Human Resources will review the applicants, rule out anyone that does not meet the requirements, and pass the qualified applicants onto the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL).

There will be two rounds of interviews and DAIL would like 2 members of the SPSC to participate in the first round of interviews, as well as 1 provider and DDSD staff. The second round of interviews will include staff from the DAIL Commissioner's office and DDSD leadership. The amount of time that will be needed, and the timeline, will depend on the number of applicants to be interviewed. How the interviews will take place has not yet been discussed (ex: remote, in-person, or a combination).

DAIL is working with Selina intensively until she leaves and is working on coverage of the work until someone new is hired.

Ed and Dave volunteered to participate in the interviews. Dawn made a motion for Ed and Dave to be the SPSC volunteers for interviewing the DDS Director candidates. Barb seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Review of Meeting Minutes & SPSC Member Check-in

The SPSC meeting minutes from the May 20, 2021, meeting were reviewed. Barb made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as written; Dave seconded the motion and the motion to accept the meeting minutes was passed.

Updates: GMSA, VT Care Partners, DD Council

DD Council

The DD Council is enjoying working with Green Mountain Self Advocates (GMSA) and Vermont Family Network (VFN) in hosting the first “Summer School” for graduates of the Vermont Leadership Series. The focus this summer is on building relationships with decision-makers in our state.

Over the summer, the DD Council will be incorporating public comments into their Five-Year State Plan for 2022-26, which needs to be submitted to the Federal government in mid-August. They will be voting on the goals and objectives for the plan next week.

The DD Council and community partners have received a one-year technical assistance grant that focuses guardianship issues. The project includes training 4 young self-advocates as “Youth Ambassadors,” who will talk with peers about guardianship alternatives, including supported decision making.

Vermont Care Partners (VCP)

With the pandemic rules lifted, the agencies are gearing up to return services back to normal. The agencies have done great work remotely, but it is not the same as being out in the community; It is nice to move back to serving individuals as the plans indicate. A directive from the State that as of August 1st the payment and billing of services will be back in place.

The agencies are struggling with staffing; they lost a fair amount of staff during the pandemic and need to regroup and restructure.

Green Mountain Self Advocates (GMSA)

GMSA is partnering with the DD Council and VFN in the leadership series summer school, June 1st, July 27th, and August 17th.

GMSA is presenting a summer series on person centered planning. It is a three-session series: educating people about what person centered planning means, how to do this for services, and

how to support others with person centered planning. The first session, what it is, was just completed.

Self-Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center (SARTAC) meetings have moved to once a week. Still Meeting with the different GMSA groups around the state.

Yesterday afternoon, Max did a presentation on cultural competence to DS Directors across the country through the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services (NASDDDS.)

DS Director - Cheryl

The agencies are making the transition on the guidance they have just received. They will keep some of the online things going to help make things work for everyone. Lincoln Street will be bringing staff back using a hybrid model.

Supported Employment Update

Jennie Masterson presented updated data collected by the Supported Employment Coordinators at the provider agencies in May 2021. The data shows the employment status of people in employment services during COVID from March to December 2020 and January to April 2021.

- 677 people were employed on 4/31/21 – 67 more people returned to work since the last survey.
- 259 people are receiving job development services from their supported employment program. This includes new high school graduates.
- 182 people are on furlough waiting to be called back to their job. 78 less than on furlough since last survey. Some are receiving Unemployment Insurance benefits.
- 55 people lost their jobs between January and April 2021. 122 people lost jobs since March 2020.
- 24 people chose to leave Supported Employment services and to not work.

Meeting attendees commented about situations which would reflect in this data: Some people have retired, some people needed support in understanding employers protocol but then only need check-ins, some people have gotten used to a new lifestyle and have not returned to work, and some people have declined employment supports.

Barb wanted everyone to be aware that the rules of unemployment have changed. If an individual is not actively seeking work, they will not get unemployment benefits. A special form provided to the Department of Labor (DOL) or looking for 3 jobs a week is necessary in order to get unemployment. For additional information, call Barb or Jennie.

DS Payment Reform Update

New Assessment Process

The Public Consult Group (PCG), the State contractor, is completing assessments for the training session with assessors until the end of June. These assessments will not be used, they are just for training purposes. DAIL appreciates all the people who have volunteered or have helped get volunteers for these assessments. Please let Clare know if you have any feedback for PCG about this.

Starting in July, PCG will start conducting assessments on a sample of people receiving services to collect data for the future payment model. DAIL just provided PCG a sample of about 750 people who will be included in this group. PCG will start to reach out to the agencies and case managers to schedule the assessments. It is anticipated that these assessments will continue through the end of March 2022. These assessments will not be used for budget assignments; the budget process for these individuals will remain as it is currently.

If a person's needs do not change, the assessment that is completed in the sample group could eventually be used to determine the person's budget; however, this would not happen until at least 2023. If the person's needs change, a new assessment would be done at a later date. Meeting attendees felt that this information needs to be made clear to the people in the sample group.

Since the Governor has lifted the COVID restrictions, DAIL has been talking with PCG about completing the assessments in person vs. virtual. There continues to be some issues with COVID, such as who is vaccinated/not vaccinated, and comfort levels, etc. so PCG will propose a protocol to use during the transition period.

The assessment is a pre-requisite of receiving Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). The sample assessments that are being conducted is an information gathering process that will be used to determine the new payment model. If a person does not want to participate in the assessment, they may decline, and the assessment will be conducted with the other two people that know about the person. However, the person's involvement should be highly encouraged.

PCG is expecting that the individuals selected to attend the assessment will know the person very well. Having multiple people at the assessment who know the person well will provide different perspectives and provide the most accurate information. There are some sensitive topics in the assessment, and people may be excused during a topic if they are uncomfortable. Meeting members felt it was important that this was made clear.

There may be exceptional circumstances where the team sincerely feels that a doing the assessment may be destabilizing or threatening for a person and PCG may need to move onto the next person. Clare will address this scenario with PCG and how the assessment may be done taking this into consideration.

The agencies will be sent a list of who from their agency will be participating in the assessment sample. This is a stratified list based upon living arrangements. If the agency knows a person will have issues, and the assessment absolutely cannot be done, they can give DAIL feedback and ask for another person to be chosen that fits the same category. However, eventually every person will need to have an assessment completed.

PCG is creating a booklet that describes the assessment and the role that will be sent to people ahead of time. They are also developing a video which they will make available to everyone as well. A frequently asked question document will be created from the questions case managers had at a training on Friday, and the webinar will be posted on the website for those that could not attend. A place to ask questions or submit complaints will be added to the website soon.

Encounter Data

The agencies are working to set up their systems to report encounter data. DAIL is updating the service definitions that are in the State System of Care Plan (SOCP) due to the encounter data reporting in the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS), which uses standard service codes and definitions. Updating the definitions and codes will align DDS codes with the national standard codes. Some of the codes just need updating, some of the items provided did not have a code, so a code and service category was added. The revised categories have not yet been posted but will be soon.

Payment Model Workgroup

The Payment Model Workgroup has been on hold. There have been some internal meetings to do some prep work for the restart of the workgroup. The Workgroup may be reengaged in July, when they will start to get into the nitty-gritty of the payment model.

Other

Clare will be retiring in December and is working on the transition for someone to take over this work.

DDSD Director Updates

Last month, after DDSD heard concerns about discrimination and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and distancing inequities for people with disabilities, DDSD invited Vermont Department of Health (VDH) staff to attend a questions and answer session with the agency directors. The information provided during this session was used to create a Q&A document, which was shared broadly this week. The information and guidelines were provided by VDH and are aligned with the Governor's reopening plan, including the requirements for some continued use of masks by sectors such as Healthcare. DDSD has not received any specific complaints of discrimination, however, we remain ready to respond to concerns and to clarify expectations for providers as needed.

DAIL is planning for a fuller return to our pre-covid payment model as of 8/1/2021. Currently DAIL is reviewing that plan against expectations for the 10% Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) bump, to be sure that any change is aligned with requirements of that funding. Any change will be posted online for public notice, on the Global Commitment Register: [Global Commitment Register | Agency of Human Services \(vermont.gov\)](https://www.vermont.gov/global-commitment-register).

The FMAP bump proposal was submitted by AHS on 6/14 to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS.) DAIL has been told that it will be posted for feedback in the Global Commitment Register: [Global Commitment Register | Agency of Human Services \(vermont.gov\)](https://www.vermont.gov/global-commitment-register) This will be the first of multiple rounds of feedback.

DAIL is working with the Vermont Crisis Intervention Network (VCIN) to add a third statewide short-term crisis bed based on sustained need for this level of support. The third bed will assist VCIN to meet the existing need.

The intensive transition supports (ITS) is in the contract negotiation stage and DAIL will be able to announce the contractor once the contract is signed.

Selina's last day is today. She is leaving State government to work for a small, private agency which will enable her to have a better work, homelife balance. She loves the work, mission, and people in the DS system.