

State Program Standing Committee (SPSC)

March 21, 2024

Meeting held virtually by ZOOMGov

**Attendees**

**Committee Members:** Barbara Lee, Bethany Drum, Max Barrows, Ed Place, Cheryl Thrall, Karen Price, Annie Jackson, Barb Prine, Chad Cleverly, Susan Yuan, David Ballou and Jennifer Stratton

**State Employees:** Jennifer Garabedian, June Bascom, Jeff Nunemaker, Hilary Conant, Carolyn Bowen, Julie Abrahamson, Jessica Bernard, Chris O'Neill, Sara Skomitz, Jeff Nunemaker, Jessica Bernard, Sara Skomitz, Steve Fish, Tina Fede, Lisa Hewes and Judy Spittle

**Guests** Kirsten Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Gloria Quinn, Austin Hornyak, MacKenzie Geary, Judith Jackson, Goerge McWilliam, Ellen Malone, Michael Kasper, Jenn T, Jess Moore, Chuck M, Colette Wilson, Jen Hayes, Marie Lallier, Ashleigh Goldberg, Karen Hussey, Hannah Schwartz, Jim Caffry, Elizabeth Campbell, Tonya Mason, Katrina D, Kara Artus, Elise Haydon, Alison Harte, Jaime Walker, Deborah Reed

**Roll Call and Review of Agenda and minutes –**

February minutes were approved by Chad Cleverly and 2<sup>nd</sup> by Susan Yuan

Shout out to June Bascom in retiring as of tomorrow. Jennifer thanked her for all the work she had done in her career.

**Designation Rule Update**

Rules that talk about what a Designated Agency is and how they are re-designated.

Partnership with DMH and Central office to update the language which has not been updated for about 20 years. IT is out of date. Bringing it up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Met with most of all the DA and SSA's and VCP advocacy organizations as well as public input sessions to come up with the final draft. The final draft will be put out for public comment. Hopefully to get it registered with the Secretary's office next month.

Will SPSC get another chance to look at draft? Jennifer suggested if that is what the committee wants to do, they could do that with written comment.

Judy sent a memo that announced DMH partnership regarding extending the designation schedule. See memo below from DMH/Megan Tierney Ward. This does not change other quality work that is being done. The monthly quality review process will be done on site.

[\DMH DAIL DS Memo - Designation Process Extension FINAL 3.14.24.pdf](#)

We will continue to talk about any updates/trends.

Ed Place thanked June for helping him run the meeting when he was a chairperson.

Update – DAIL Commissioner announcement will be made any day. Will invite new commissioner to one of our meetings. May or June depending on the schedule.

Update following the meeting: The Governor has named Dr. Jill Bowen as the DAIL Commissioner. Dr. Bowen will start in her job on April 22, 2023. We will invite her to join a State Program Standing Committee in the late Spring/early Summer to meet the Committee members.

Paying Parents Policy Update

<https://humanservices.vermont.gov/sites/ahsnew/files/documents/24-018-P-GCR-DAIL-Legally-Responsible-Relatives-with-attachment.pdf>

1115 Global Commitment Waiver renewal gave option to create a way to pay parents to providing care to their adult children. It did require us to develop a permanent policy and have the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) review it. CMS has taken a look and asked questions. The Division has given them answers and incorporated the input that we received through our sessions in Fall/Winter of 2023. CMS has approved our proposed policy. A Global Commitment Registry announcement has been posted. This gives 30 days for feedback. Next, the Division will consider the input and incorporate the comments as appropriate. Then, the proposed policy will be posted with the Secretary of State's Office. There will be a 6-week public comment period. Then it will become an administrative rule.

Comments can be emailed to :[AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov](mailto:AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov) SPSC committee meetings can also e-mail Jennifer with any feedback.

GMSA thoughts – who and how they are doing the job correctly. Relationships with parents are different than relationships with direct support workers. Parents are not going to be around forever so what happens to the care then.

DD Council – mixed thoughts as well. Ombuds program – standing this up

From Carolyn B. in the comments: Kirsten, Jen and I are working on the independent ombudsman project with Vermont Legal Aid! We are working hard to make it permanent.

### **Legislative Updates**

The State is at “Crossover” which is the point in the Legislative session when bills that start in one part of legislature move to the other part – Senate to House and vice versa. 2<sup>nd</sup> year of this session – any bill that have not been voted out of a committee (off the wall) it will have to start over with the next year session

The Budget Adjustment Act has been passed. This is a request for additional funding that allows the State government additional funding for the current fiscal year.

Forensic facility – continues to move forward – 3<sup>rd</sup> reading on senate floor today and will likely move to the House. Kirsten Murphy anticipates the forensic facility bill will face some strong pushback when it crosses to the House side.

Budget Bill for Fiscal Year 2025 moving forward and being voted out of Senate Appropriations. Including in the Budget Bill is a rate increase for the Provider network (3%) to cover a previous year increase that funded through one-time dollars. This increase is to ensure that there are not cuts to the agencies.

House General Affairs and Housing: VT Housing Improvement program – Jennifer and Julie testified. Susan Aranoff was responsible for moving this program through.

Barb Prine asked Barbara Lee to re-send the SPSC's letter on the forensic facility to the House. This will help make sure that the House of Representatives is aware of the SPSC's opinion of the proposed facility and bill.

### **Act 186 Grantees**

Hannah Schwartz provided an overview and update of the Riverflow Community Inc. Riverflow aims to become a program in the Camp Hill community in the future, but it requires time and effort. Meanwhile, Riverflow is committed to adopting the intentional communal community model. We will follow in the footsteps of Heartbeet and its staffing model. This means they will recruit their own staff and call the house managers as householders. They will also seek short-term coworkers who may turn into long-term coworkers in the future.

Riverflow is collaborating with the University of Vermont and other colleges in New England to create internship opportunities and work with students majoring in social work, speech and language pathology, and education. This will provide them with exposure to the model and additional support. Master-level programs have also shown interest in joining the Riverflow Community.

Riverflow aims to be a vibrant and welcoming environment that includes a small-scale agricultural program and music theater initiatives. They are excited to focus on the individuals who will be joining the community, understanding their interests, and building the community around them. The privilege of starting from scratch means that Riverflow can create a unique environment tailored to the needs and interests of its members.

Riverflow is committed to meeting the needs of its community and extending its support to the connected communities as well. The term "service" here refers to one of the most important aspects of community life where everyone helps each other. The lines between who is helping who are blurred and meaningful relationships are built over time through proximity, traditions,

and rituals. Riverflow is dedicated to providing personalized services that aim to help each individual achieve their goals and make their life more meaningful. The services will be tailored to each person's interests and will include fun and meaningful work and responsibilities. The most valuable service that Riverflow will provide is a sense of belonging for everyone involved. According to Hannah Schwartz intentional communities like this, it is important to remember that we are all community members together, and the community is built through shared interests and co-creation.

Riverflow has recently acquired a 30-acre property in Monkton, Vermont which includes an 8-bedroom house that has been uninhabited for six years and requires extensive renovations. Riverflow is working diligently to meet the extensive policy requirements for the TCR regulations and is taking steps to bring the house up to deliverable standards. After conducting thorough research, they have hired an environmental engineer to determine the site's potential for septic capacity, as they plan to build additional houses. Additionally, a general manager has been hired to coordinate housing inspections and ensure compliance with TCR regulations. Riverflow's lead designated agency partner, Howard Center, has been given a tour of the site, and relationships have been established with the Champlain Housing Trust, Vermont Community Foundation, Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation, Vermont Housing Conservation Board, Vermont Low Income Trust for Electricity, V Line, and other local entities that could potentially support Riverflow's mission. Riverflow has introduced the counseling services of Addison County to Riverflow and is working to bring out Washington County to see the site. Riverflow continues to work with representatives from DAIL's Licensing and Protection Division.

Over the past six months, Hannah has been overseeing the progress of board development, training, donor education, cultivation, and fundraising guidance for the founding team and the board. She has been working closely with Jim Caffry as they filed for 501C3 and are currently waiting for the federal government to get back to them. Building cohesion in a team takes time, especially through the ups and downs and pressures. With real needs at the end of this, they have built a strategic plan that covers one to three years and are looking to build it out to a five-year vision. The logo and website design took a lot of time, but the website is now up and running. Please visit [Riverflow Community](http://www.riverflowcommunity.org) to check it out. Hannah has also been working with the financial management team to flesh out a comprehensive operational budget for Riverflow's first house, as well as an annual budget that looks at one to three years.

[www.riverflowcommunity.org](http://www.riverflowcommunity.org)

### **Champlain Housing Trust – Alison Harte**

Alison Harte, the project manager for Champlain Housing Trust, is leading a collaborative effort with Howard Center as the designated agency and Champlain Valley Services as the specialized service agency. This project also involves a partnership with Duncan Wisniewski Architecture and the DDHI parents, who are playing a crucial and leading role in this endeavor.

CHT is currently evaluating a property they own in Burlington to determine its suitability for a project. They are in the initial phase of assessing whether the property which is owned by CHT

is the right fit for the project. Alison reached out to self-advocates at CCS who reviewed the plans and provided feedback. Alison provided the feedback to Duncan Wisnieski, and they incorporated the feedback and made it immediately into their plan. This collaborative effort has been met with excitement and optimism, with Alison expressing her enthusiasm about the positive impact of this collaboration. The DDHI parents are also providing their input on the plans. Alison gave a shoutout to The Kelsey [Inclusive Design Standards - The Kelsey](#) for their amazing design and architectural resources.

Alison stated that the CHT project will house 8-12 people with IDD. They want to serve people with various needs, including those with higher support needs. To accommodate them, they are looking at building a two-bedroom apartment that can house an individual along with a living staff person. They also plan to have studios, one-bedroom apartments, a community, and outdoor space.

The CHT team met with Howard Center to discuss services and staffing. However, they are facing some challenges since they don't have a clear idea of who will be living in the building. To address this, they plan to create tenant profiles to understand the needs of potential residents. They are also working with LADD Consulting to design technology features for the building and create an assessment tool to evaluate residents' technology needs. Their goal is to ensure that the building's technology supports the independence of its residents.

## Upper Valley Services

Gloria and Deborah provided an overview and update of the Upper Valley Services project.

At the last meeting of Upper Valley Services, Deborah shared that they have two physical properties. One is a home in Randolph Center, and Downstreet leads the second initiative. Downstreet has submitted an RFP for all the pre-development work and construction drawings. This will allow them to fully assess the feasibility and build a budget around the renovations required to create space in this home for two individuals with different levels of need. The specs require that the home be handicap accessible, with a handicap accessible bathroom and kitchen and access to the main floor. There will also be space for live-in support and the development of an accessory dwelling on this site for one to two other individuals. The pre-development work is underway, and a very engaged and dynamic architect has started that work. They are getting input from individual potential end-users to that site, and the engineering pre-development work is also underway. They have a pretty measured timeline of pulling all that information together in the next 90 days (three months). The team will then be able to provide information on a budget for renovation and identify any blind spots or things we may not have considered.

The Upper Valley Services Team is working on a documentary that will help educate and engage individuals on how to renovate a single-family home. The documentary aims to demonstrate how these homes can be used to meet our housing needs and how multi-unit apartment

projects can be designed to include a percentage of units for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The team is also investigating the perceived barriers associated with these projects and how to advise developers to overcome them. The team has already conducted interviews and gathered footage for the video. They plan to hold engagement sessions with individuals seeking housing and families seeking housing options for their adult children. The Waterbury project has requested funding and should know by mid-April if it will be secured.

The team is also planning to attend a presentation by Grand Care on smartphone technology to better educate themselves on how to provide housing options for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Deborah mentioned that many people are excited to attend the disability awareness day, particularly those interested in housing. She expressed gratitude towards Susan Aronoff and revealed that she was unaware that Susan was actively advocating for affordable housing vouchers. Deborah believes this event will help people understand their right to different living situations and encourage providers to work creatively with community partners to build more housing options.

Payment Reform – Jessica Bernard

The Standardized Assessment Workgroup has a Context document draft and will come to a SPSC meeting in April or May to share.

SIS-A Validation study – high medical category with 1's and 2's. The Committee asked us to have a conversation with Joy Barrett and she was going to reach out to others. Will come back to SPSC with more info.

Jessica discussed the timeline from March through October 2024. You can find more details in the document below.

[\Presentations\Payment Reform Timeline SPSC 2024.pdf](#)

Updates

GMSA

- Offering Peer training with 8 agencies. 16 peer trainers teaching about HCBS setting rules and person-centered planning
- 8-week training sexuality series NACDD and ElevateUs
- Plain language presentation with DD Council
- Voices and Choices conference April 23 and 24th
- Writing a Plain language document on the Eclipse

- GMSA is part of the link Center through NASDDDS. The focus is on people with IDD that have mental health issues. Through the link center, shared learning groups sessions are held.
- November a presentation on Crisis
- February a presentation on Trauma
- April presentation will be on Transition from crisis back to regular life

DD Council

Disability Awareness Day 3/29

VCP

Disability Awareness Day

Residency agreement draft – reviewed by network compliance tomorrow