

State Program Standing Committee (SPSC)

September 19, 2024

Meeting held virtually by ZOOMGov

Attendees

Committee Members: Barbara Lee, Bethany Drum, David Ballou, Max Barrows, Annie Jackson, Barb Prine, Chad Cleverly, Cheryl Thrall, Ed Place, Collins Twing, Karen Price

State Employees: Jennifer Garabedian, Carolyn Bowen, Jessica Bernard, Hilary Conant, Julie Abrahamson, Tina Fede, Steve Fish, Joy Barrett, Melanie Feddersen, Jeff Nunemaker, Dave Ramos, Emma Rose McCadden and Judy Spittle

Guests: Tracy D, Jess Blais, Lauren Barron, Ben Gallagher, Jennifer Perkins, George McWilliam, Michael Kasper, Katrina D., Shannon Lowcock, Kristen Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Hannah Schwartz, Ellen Malone, Colette Wilson, Diane Drake, Jenn T., Nancy Kisonak, Jen Hayes, Samantha Thomas

Roll Call and Review of Agenda and minutes –

Bethany motioned to approve the August minutes with the below changes and Chad seconded it.

Correction – Payment Reform, page 4, last bullet is missing after the “first year”.

Correction - UCS Update: Status is provisional - should read with no intent to de-designate

Payment Reform

Started from the “What Are We Talking about” slide

Jessica gave a summary of what has been previously discussed

Changes to payment reform are coming in July 2025 for people who get services through Developmental Services Home and Community Based Services. The changes are about how much we pay for services and how we pay agencies for services.

New Case Manager need to ask the SISA context questions. For most people the budget will meet their needs.

Jessica reviewed the current rates and the proposed rates for:

- Community Support
- Community Support – Facility Based
- Staff living

- Respite Hourly – Agency delivered
- Respite Daily – Agency delivered
- Employment Assessment
- Employer & Job Development
- Job Training
- Ongoing support to maintain employment

Agency have other things they need to pay for that is part of what we pay them beyond wages to staff. These costs are also part of the rates. The agency can decide if they want to pay a wage to staff that is more than the proposed rates on the chart.

Also reviewed the proposed rates for:

- Group living (3–4-person home)
- Group living (5–6-person home)
- Supervised Living

Barb L – what does the daily rate go to? The daily rate goes to each individual.

The cost of the group home is spread over more people, so it is not less money

Shared living stipend – yearly - agencies contract with the shared living staff. Not set rates.

Agencies will be paid the rate and then pay the annual stipend to providers from that rate.

The State is recommending that Agencies pay at least 65% of the payments of the SLP rate.

Barb P – global question – its going to be an increase we are asking for, has to be approve by the legislature. Any additional funding does have to be approved. We will have our estimates to forward for a legislative request. If there is a request for additional funds. We will know in January what the governor priorities will be.

Kirsten – why aren't we making these wages mandatory that the agency pay the suggested wage we are proposing. This is not within the scope of how these contracts are set up. We have heard from agencies they typically pay \$20 an hour.

The 65% is a suggestion – there is nothing mandated pertaining to this percentage.

Agencies have to pay at least 65% - should it be “have to” or “recommended”. Right now, it's recommended.

The annual SLP rate is when someone lives with you.

The SLP is a Tax-free stipend – not subject to 40 hours or overtime.

Here is a link to our service definitions for reference:

[DDSD Service Definitions.pdf \(vermont.gov\)](#)

Barb P – 100% fee for service – then they get the Medicaid

Not a 100% fee for service

Agencies will have a 3% reconciliation corridor. If they come within 3% of their service utilization goal, they will not have to pay back the funds. Agencies will also have a flexibility factor of 5% that they will be able to retain that is not attached to service delivery.

Next meeting - can we start with the SLP slide – more questions

COI

Roles and responsibilities

To review – why are we making this change in how services are provided.

- Federal rule to reduce conflict of interest in how services are provided
- Requirement since 2014
- Vermont has been working with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) on a plan to meet this requirement
- Must come into compliance by end of April 2026
- Applies to all of Vermont's HCBS (Adult Mental Health, Brain Injury, Children's Mental Health Choices for Care and DDS)

This means that Federal Law says eligibility evaluations, needs Assessment and Person-Centered plans need to be performed by an independent organization other than the provider that delivers the services to an individual.

In Vermont, the DA/SSA cannot provide:

- Intake
- Eligibility
- Referral/options counseling
- Needs assessment
- Person-Centered planning and service delivery

We have already moved to Supports Index Scale-Adult version (SIS-A). This is an independently administered assessment which means the people who help you fill this out are not part of an agency that you can get services from. DAIL has chosen to use a contractor for this which helps us meet Conflict of Interest rules.

Changes we still need to make.

- Information/referral
- Intake
- Eligibility
- Options counseling

One suggestion is to have DDS do this work or use a contractor

Jennifer discussed the Process to Apply for services which shows DDS, Contractors, Case Managers and DA/SSA all part of the process.

Barb P. adding too many new people to this process. yes, we have heard this from others

DDS would need more staff. We're looking to minimize adding more people to this process

What will the Case Manager do?

- Develop a comprehensive person's story
- Make sure crisis/short-term needs are met
- Assist to fill out applications for other services/benefits
- Works with the person and the assessor to schedule needs assessments.re-assessments
- Helps the person lead the person-centered planning meeting
- Documents the goals, outcomes, services and supports decided in the meeting into the plan
- Explain the budget and resources available
- Help decide on services/supports to include in the plan
- Help decide who will deliver the services
- Help make sure the services are meeting their needs and their goals

Max stated that the Case Manager needs to be aware of everyone's cultural background. Everyone is unique. Respect the personal aspect. This is really important information. Part of the expectation of case managers should be to build relationships and treat all people with trauma sensitivity.

Currently these things are done by the Service Coordinator at the DA/SSA. Based on Federal rules, this cannot continue. Service Coordinators do a lot of other things in addition to the things the Case Manager will be expected to do in the future.

What will the DA/SSA in the future.

- Tell the case manager and the person if they can provide the service (s)
- Deliver services (unless it is a self-directed service)
- DA/SSA will work with the Case Manager to find a provider if they cannot deliver the service

- Work with the person to be sure their needs are being met and services are working
- Will report on the services provided and make sure they are staying within the budget for the service

Funding – if agencies are doing less how is the funding going to work.

Will edit the wording on the “What will the DA/SSA do in the future slide

COI

Conflict of Interest timelines has changed from May 2026 to December 2025.

All DDSD participants receive case management from the new Case Management Entities starting October 1, 2025. This date will be for everyone.

Reasons for timeline changes

- Having one date will help with confusion
- Allows for communication clear for everyone, especially for participants and families
- Provides incoming and outgoing case management entities more clarity and stability
- Makes sure that HCMBS FMAP funds are available to support the transition process as these resources must be used by December 2025
- Meeting CMS deadlines for corrective action

Using FMAP are centered around training the CM and not the families and individuals

Timelines slide

The Request for Proposals (RFP) for Case Management will be finalized and posted very soon. 9/27. The Bidders conference is scheduled for 10/7 at 1 pm. This is an opportunity to ask questions etc. This is open to anyone.

Preview of upcoming topics

Renewal cycle for SOCP. Spending time in November meeting about this.

Updating our regulations because of changes to COI and payment reform. Bringing to committee next month as well.

Sending out input sessions on SOCP

Consider developing materials that present old and updated information as a “split screen” to help people understand the changes.

Judy will send out PPT to others

Hilary Conant informed people of the DDSD Plain language workgroup – always looking for new staff, family members join the workgroup. Reach out to Hilary if interested.

Hilary.Conant@vermont.gov