

DDS-West Region
Advisory Council Minutes
(REVISED AND ACCEPTED BY A QUORUM
at the MEETING ON 10/30/14)
June 5, 2014

Members Present – Charles Bergamo, Cindy Stramandinoli, Corinne Tartaglia
DDS – Siobhan Morgan, Shannon O'Brien
Public Guest: Lara Shepard-Blue (SEIU1199)

Call to Order – In the absence of Chairperson Herbst, Shannon O'Brien called the meeting to order at 10:10 am.

Member Comments

- **Approval of Minutes** – *Due to attendance there was no quorum. Review of the Minutes was tabled.*

New Business

Shannon welcomed the newest Council members, Charles "Chuck" Bergamo and Corinne Tartaglia.

Waiver Presentation

Siobhan Morgan, Waiver Manager for DDS presented a very thorough presentation of the Medicaid Waiver and how it works.

She gave an overview of the division that she oversees. Her unit consists of:

1. Money Follows the Person (MFP)
2. Case Management
3. Two (2) Department of Social Services (DSS) staff; serve as liaisons for DDS case managers
4. Processing staff; these staff process waiver applications

Siobhan explained that DDS has a \$1 billion dollar budget with the expectation that waiver enrollment will generate approximately \$500 million that goes directly into the general fund.

There are over 10,000 people on DDS waivers. Since March 2012, over 11,000 inquiries came into the Waiver Unit. It was stated that the Department's goal is to keep as many people on the Medicaid waiver and to encourage those that are eligible (but have not yet signed up) to be on the waiver. This is beneficial to the Department because of the 50% match the federal government reimburses. The waiver generates \$0.50 of every dollar spent on waiver services. The Department bills Medicaid for case management services and is reimbursed.

There are 20,000 people served by DDS. 12,000 of those individuals are eligible for waiver while approximately 10,000 are enrolled in the waiver; 5,000 are Birth to Three. Most adults served by the Department are enrolled in the waiver.

Siobhan stated that there are income levels to being on Medicaid. The limit is \$1600 or lower; those on the Medicaid Waiver may earn up to \$2,163/month (3x the SSI rate). She shared that there are still ways to be on the waiver if income levels exceed the cap. There are statutes in place that mandate individuals to enroll in the waiver.

There are many benefits to being enrolled in the waiver.

Individuals under 18 years old are assessed under their family's income
Individuals over 18 years old are assessed on their own income

Examples were discussed on how an individual that is under 18 years old might be enrolled in the waiver due to having extensive medical needs.

Cindy Stramandinoli expressed that she is sure that there are people that she knows of that would find all of this information quite beneficial.

Siobhan shared that the waiver outlines the following:

- Who we can serve
- How much we can give

This is not an entitlement. Funding is based on the needs of an individual as well as the availability of resources.

A handout was distributed to the group. All handouts will be distributed to all Advisory Council members via email.

Room and Board funding was also explained. These dollars are funded through DSS. Rent subsidy was also discussed as a funding source for certain individuals with certain income levels.

It was explained that Medicare is available to individuals after receiving SSI for 2 years. Individuals can have both Medicare and Medicaid.

Siobhan told the group that she encourages everyone that asks about Medicare to never decline Medicare coverage. If an individual declines Medicare and decides to apply at a later date a penalty will be applied. She also said that she encourages individuals to apply for the Medicare Savings Program (MSP).

Individuals that do not have a case manager can contact the appropriate regional Helpline or their Case Manager for assistance.

She also stated that individuals should align all of their redetermination dates so that all programs can be renewed simultaneously as some individuals get confused and overlook renewing their paperwork.

The Katie Becket Waiver was briefly discussed. There is a 6-7 year waitlist for this particular waiver. Information on all of the waivers is available on the internet.

Siobhan stated that changes will be forthcoming that will be more family friendly. She agreed to come back and share the new information with the group at a later date.

The members that were present agreed that outreach needs to occur. This group recommended that a family forum be held where this information can be made available to other families.

There are 5 waivers under DDS:

- 3 are for consumers with developmental disabilities
- 2 are for consumers with autism

Citizen Input

Laura Sheppard-Blue is a member of “Our Families Can’t Wait”. This is a group that is promoting advocacy and their position of informing our state government of the needs of Connecticut citizens with developmental disabilities. She joined the meeting to share information with other families on this initiative. This group has a Facebook page and she invited the Council members to like the page so that they can stay informed. Recently, this group made several visits to the legislature to share information and make them aware of the unmet needs of families.

Statewide Advisory Council

Cindy Stramandinoli recently participated in the Statewide Advisory Council meeting that was being hosted from Hartford. The Statewide Council consists of the following members: Self Advocates, parents, a doctor, a lawyer, Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner.

Cindy was pleased to join the meeting via video conferencing. She highlighted that Robin Wood made a presentation on Grants and Best Practices.

Legislative Update

Ms. Stramandinoli shared that Connecticut is one of the very few states that has a statute that addresses abuse and neglect via a registry list. Individuals that violate consumers (i.e. neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse) are placed on a registry after an investigation that has been substantiated.

Recently, there was an article in the Hartford newspaper that highlighted a backlog on the current registry. This is being addressed by the Department.

Sharing of Information

The Council agreed that they will be collaborating on becoming a more active group. They would like to share more information with families and will strategize on methods to disseminate information. A discussion ensued about expanding membership as well as forming subgroups to tackle more focused tasks the group may come up with. It was agreed that the next topic on the agenda will be to focus on this. A family forum would be a great platform for this.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be determined for some time in July. Information will be sent out via email. There will be 6 meetings per year as required by statute.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11: 45 a.m.

Minutes Recorded by:

Eunice B. Rivera
Executive Secretary, DDS-WR