Self-Direction Advisory Board

12.01.21

Committee Members Attending

Nancy Alterio

Jane Ryder

Leo Sarkissian

Anne Fracht

Barbara Pandolfi

Julie Flaherty

Jeff Keilson

Kimberly Truong

Liz Sandblom

Leslie Kinney

Margaret Abrams

Robin Foley

Rich Santucci

Julie Westwater

Bridget Conway

DDS Staff Attending

Elizabeth Morse

Jen Benoit

Amy Nazaire

Ed Wilson

Pam Hickey

Gail Gillespie

Tim Cahill

Terry O’Hare

Laney Bruner-Canhoto

Teryl Smith

Anthony Keane

Guest: Val Bradley

Materials presented at the meeting:

Growth chart of self-direction enrollments

Power point presentation on follow-up to HSRI’s final evaluation report

Nancy Alterio called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and conducted a roll call.

Open Seats- Liz Sandblom

Liz Sandblom reported that Val Bradley and Carol Bird have resigned from the board. Carol’s daughter, Leah, was also on the board. Liz will reach out to Leah.

Tom Sannicandro (representing tax payers) and John Nadworney (representing financial management services) have not attended in a while. Liz will check in with them to see if they want to continue with the board.

There is also another open seat for a self-advocate.

Minutes of 09.01.21 Meeting- Nancy Alterio

Nancy Alterio asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the 09.01.21 meeting.

First motion to accept: Robin Foley

Second motion: Margaret Abrams

No discussion

No objections

Meeting minutes of 09.01.21 passed unanimously as presented.

Updates – Jane Ryder

Commissioner Jane Ryder talked about the main issue confronting the field- workforce shortage. All agencies are feeling the effects. Many individuals cannot return to their day programs due to staffing and transportation issues.

The vaccine mandate for all state employees is winding down.

DDS staff are working with EHS on obtaining ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds to assist with the workforce across the state. DDS staff are trying to support families in any way they can. Self-direction is taking on a larger role in the pandemic.

Questions/ Comments

Robin Foley expressed her gratitude to Jane for the opportunity for Lindsey to direct her services.

MASS (Mass Advocates Standing Strong) Report- Anne Fracht and Bridget Conway

Anne Fracht and MASS have been giving testimony of supportive decision making and have testified against the use of shock by the Judge Rotenberg Center.

A leadership conference is scheduled for 12.04.21. The annual conference is scheduled for 02.19.21

Bridget Conway talked about MASS’s DPH project around advocacy for health.

Bridget Conway intends to “restart” self-direction throughout the state. She plans to have a group of individuals from the Northeast talk about their self-direction experiences with the Central West MASS group.

Questions/ Comments:

Nancy Alterio thanked Anne, Bridget and MASS for spreading the word on self-direction and for their partnership with DPPC on developing an application for self-care.

Anne Fracht suggested that self-advocates should get together to help and teach each other skills.

Current Enrollments- Liz Sandblom

Liz Sandblom presented statistics on enrollment (see chart). The enrollment rate in the last three months has increased by 14%, from 1470 enrolments in PDP and Agency with Choice to 1687.

Liz Sandblom and the self-direction managers continue to meet with Public Partnerships, LLC on systems and on improvements to technology. There have been some delays in processing provider staff due to across the board delays in fingerprinting.

Update on Request for Response / Self-Direction Budget Allocation Process- Terry O’Hare

Terry O’Hare recapped the additional September meeting on budget allocation and thanked the committee for their candid feedback. As a result of the committee’s feedback, Agency with Choice was added to the RFR.

The contract was awarded to Human Services Resource Institute. HSRI has done work in many states and in Canada and has completed evaluations on self-directed supports in Massachusetts. The contract will focus on a budget allocation process and on promoting consistency and simplification of the systems in self-direction.

The board will receive regular updates from HSRI. Terry talked about using our existing systems as much as possible.

There are five major tasks:

1. Work with DDS leadership to create a work plan.
2. Assess current systems with PDP and AWC.
3. Analyze the correlations between the current assessments and budget allocations.
4. Develop a proposed process
5. Examine the service system in self-direction across adult and children’s services.

There is a tremendous amount of work to do. There will be regular deliverables across the contract’s three-year duration.

Questions/ Comments:

Amy Nazaire asked whether the children’s systems include DESE or the Autism Waiver. Terry responded it will include both. Liz Sandblom explained that DESE services support children with the highest need.

Julie Flaherty referred to HSRI’s evaluation and their finding that data was limited. She asked what HSRI would do in the area of data analytics. Terry responded that the first steps are reviewing the data that is available and identifying what is missing. Then HSRI will make recommendations around data.

Julie Flaherty commented that it will be important to collect background information on individuals coming to the program and how that changes over time.

Terry O’Hare commented that we will need to discuss the areas to focus on.

Robin Foley stated that she appreciated the challenge. She is interested in our current assessment process and how we will collect data. She is glad we are working on a family friendly guide and is willing to work on it.

Leslie Kinney asked who was using the programs- individual who have used the DESE program in the past, turning 22 individuals? Liz Sandblom will get that information for the next meeting.

Bridget Conway commented that self-advocates should be involved in this process and that she is willing to help with that. Liz Sandblom said that self-advocates will be involved in the process.

Barbara Pandolfi asked if the program would continue to be evaluated. Terry O’Hare answered that the current work is specific to budget development. Liz Sandblom said that there are currently no broader plans to evaluation the programs.

Val Bradley commented that nationally individuals on the spectrum are attracted to self-direction; as conventional services are often not a match. She said that minority families are less likely to opt for self-direction.

Val Bradley said that this project will be a continuation of the evaluation process. There will be a challenge to collect data; but there is a will to move this project forward.

Leo Sarkissian commented that DDS will need to deal with the cost of the project. Other states have used the Support Intensity Scale. However, implementation of that assessment process is expensive.

Follow up from HSRI Final Report- Self-Direction Managers, Presented by Jen Benoit

(Please see the power point slides. These are highlights.)

Recommendation 1: DDS should explore the inclusion of “independent facilitator” as a waiver service.

Th self-direction team is reviewing how they can utilize this service. It is not currently a waiver service but has been used to support individuals in directing their own services.

Recommendation 2: DDS should expand access to the “Rewarding Work” platform.

TILL has updated the Rewarding Work website and shared its features with area and regional offices. Families may access the website for free.

Recommendation 3: Convene focus groups of service coordinators and program participants to address the complexity of self-direction.

The self-direction managers meet regularly with Public Partnership to resolve portal issues. They also offer area and regional meetings to offer technical support.

Recommendation 4: DDS should explore the possibility of developing supports budgets for individuals who are self-directing.

Terry O’Hare covered that topic earlier.

Recommendation 5: DDS should develop strategies and supports to engage economically and culturally diverse participants in self-direction.

Self-direction managers and area staff are pivoting to do more outreach. They are providing webinars, information sessions to family support centers, autism support centers and particularly those centers that reach out to diverse communities.

Self-direction managers are working with school systems and family groups.

More social media is being used including translations in seven languages.

Liz Sandblom asked board members to get in touch with her if they could recommend family/ cultural groups for outreach.

Recommendation 6: DDS, with co-sponsors, should convene a statewide conference to showcase experiences with self-direction.

There has been an increase in the use of social media.

Questions/ Comments:

Leo Sarkissian asked about the number of groups. Pam Hickey stated that virtual presentations could be done on a statewide basis and connect with more people. Ed Wilson commented that he had over 200 attendees at one forum including teachers and school administrators. The managers get many follow-up calls after the sessions.

Pam Hickey talked about area office staff training. Ed Wilson said that the comprehensive “Soup to Nuts” training was offered as a more in-depth training.

Recommendations- Leo Sarkissian

Leo Sarkissian is working with families through the Arc of Mass and a coalition (MA21, Mass Alliance for 21st Century Policy) which worked on the passage of the 2014 law that is encouraging self-direction. The group developed a financial tool for families. He felt that today’s meeting was substantial and addressed some of his issues.

The Alliance is recommending moving at a faster pace at increasing DDS staff competency and budget transparency. Leo is recommending sub groups to address the gap areas and utilizing board meetings to update the larger group.

He believes that DDS is attacking the gap areas but doesn’t have the man power. The service system is funded and prioritized for residential supports.

Leo Sarkissian recommended a short-term interim budget allocation process an allowance for individuals and their families to have employment and budgetary authority. He expressed concern that individuals who are not empowered don’t have access to self-direction. Personal agent services could be a mechanism for those individuals who don’t have active family members to assist them in self direction.

Questions/ Comments:

Jeff Keilson commented that we need to work in incremental steps to support growth. The workforce crisis has created significant challenges. It is important to listen to individuals and increase engagement with self-direction.

Barbara Pandolfi thought the meeting was collaborative. She recommended input from a variety of people.

Jane Ryder thanked Leo for his comments. She believes the program has evolved with the four self-direction managers and is happy there is a structure in the agency that supports self-direction.

Nancy Alterio thought there was great discussion; and there is still more to do.

Jane Ryder thanked Val Bradley for her participation on the board.

There was no public comment.

Nancy asked for a motion to adjourn.

First motion: Robin Foley

Second motion: Leslie Kinney

No objections

Unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Meetings for 2022

March 3, 2022

June 6, 2022

September 7, 2022

December 7, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Gillespie