Self-Direction Advisory Board

06.09.21

Board Members Attending: Nancy Alterio, Jane Ryder, Liz Sandblom, Rich Santucci, Jeff Keilson,

Val Bradley, Anne Fracht, Barbara Pandolfi, Julie Flaherty, Kimberley Truong, Leo Sarkissian, Robin Foley, Julie Westwater

Board Members not in Attendance: John Nadworny, Karla Murphy, Jeffrey Paquette, Tom Sannicandro, Margaret Abrams, Carol Bird, Lesley Kinney, Lindsey Foley

DDS Staff Attending: Anne Marie Stanton, Bev McGovern, Pam Hickey, Ed Wilson, Gail Gillespie, Elizabeth Morse, Victor Hernandez, Tim Cahill, Teryl Smith, Laney Bruner-Canhoto

Guest: Karen DeGregory

Materials: Power Point/ Karen DeGregory

Nancy Alterio and Liz Sandblom opened the meeting with a roll call.

Minutes from 03.10.21 were reviewed.

The following amendments will be made: 1) Add list of materials to minutes 2) Change wording “minority” to “minoritized.”

Moved to approve: Victor Hernandez

Second: Julie Westwater

No discussion, Minutes as amended passed unanimously

**Commissioner Jane Ryder- Updates**

The FY 22 budget is still in negotiation but looks good.

DDS is working with EHS around re-opening and around lifting restrictions. The state is also looking at work differently. The “new normal” will be a hybrid of remote work and in-person work. Over the last year and a half staff have worked remotely successfully so will continue to do so at least part time. The new work design will create both challenges and opportunities.

The field is experiencing a workforce crisis now affecting our ability to hire staff. Agencies are offering bonuses and incentives to recruit workers. DDS is working with trade organizations around public relations campaigns.

Questions/ Comments

Kimberley Truong: Are people not interested because of the pay rates versus benefits?

Jane Ryder replied that rates were increased this year; and funding was directed to direct care salaries. Agencies are also looking at benefit packages and ways of attracting staff to a long-term career. Everyone is focused on the staff crisis on many levels.

Jeff Keilson commented that problem is a combination of salary and benefits. Jobs such as Walmart positions pay more than direct care. The job has become more challenging and focuses more on paperwork and less on direct work with individuals. The demographics of the state are changing; and that factor will affect staff recruitment. The older population in the state is increasing; the job pool (typically younger individuals) will continue to shrink.

Val Bradley: Have you thought about FMAP? It might be difficult to commit funding for long term staff pay increases; as the funding is short term. Can those funds be used for infrastructure or training?

Jane Ryder said that there is funding from the American Rescue Plan Act that will come to the state to enhance the Home and Community Based Waiver system. The state released a Request for Information recently and received feedback from many entities. Tim Cahill represents DDS on the EHS committee discussing ARPA. The workforce is one of the categories targeted for an influx of one-time funds.

Tim Cahill mentioned that there were many creative responses to the RFI. Workforce was a high priority. The first stage of releasing funds will to toward direct care staff. The state has three years to spend the funds.

Leo Sarkissian added that funding in the amount of 100 million has been identified for the direct care workforce. Of the funding received, 90% must be used for direct care salaries.

Kimberley Truong thinks it is important to create pathways to health care professions.

Nancy Alterio thanked Jane Ryder for her work.

**Anne Fracht- Report on MASS**

Anne reported that things at MASS are moving along. The organization is working on supported decision making and will continue to interview individuals. An in-person retreat is being planned.

Nancy Alterio thanked Anne for her recent partnership in a technology initiative.

**Liz Sandblom- Self-Direction Updates**

The growth rate of enrollments in PDP from 12.31.20- until 03.31.21, there was a 1.9% growth rate and total enrollments of 1,646.

An internal staff group representing DDS at different levels will meet bi-monthly and focus on training, documents/ manuals, and external resources. There are many tasks related to these categories. The group is in the process of identifying the areas they will tackle.

 A work plan is being developed for a process to develop service allocations. If anyone is interested in talking more about this, please email Liz at Elizabeth.sandblom@mass.gov. At the next meeting (09.01.21), an additional hour will be added at the end for discussion on this topic.

Expressing interest: Leo Sarkissian, Robin Foley

Leo Sarkissian talked about a group through Arc Mass that has been meeting on self-direction. He recommended that Liz talk with them ahead of the next meeting. (Liz will follow up with Leo.)

Val Bradley offered to help Liz get in touch with resources that may help.

**Regional Updates**

Pam Hickey There have been many changes in the area offices over the past year. The “Soup to Nuts” training was broken down into the following shorter “microlearning” modules:

1. Introduction to PDP Roles and Responsibilities
2. How to translate the vision into a service plan and budget that meet needs
3. Employer of Record Registration and role
4. PPL Portal Overview
5. Provider Registration- demonstration
6. Orientation and Resources

Staff have appreciated shorter specific training modules. Service Coordinators are getting more involved in supporting individuals to self-direct. Pam recently talked with a Service Coordinator who has fifteen individuals on her caseload who self-direct; the Service Coordinator couldn’t understand why **all** Service Coordinators weren’t interested.

Ed Wilson In the Southeast, a “DDS 101” training was held for individuals and families in transition to adult services. There were many topical modules including self-direction. It was impressive that 25% of the audience was school personnel.

There will soon be a couple of video clips posted on the website of families supporting individuals in PDP and in AWC.

An AWC roundtable meeting started and will meet quarterly on topics of interest.

Nancy Alterio: Will the transition forum occur regularly?

Ed Wilson replied that it will be a regular event.

Bev McGovern The Northeast held a conference that featured three individuals telling their stories about self-direction. It was well-received. Bev also announced that she will be leaving her self-direction position and will soon be working as Assistant Area Director in the Lowell Area.

The Board congratulated Bev and wished her well.

Jen Benoit The Metro Region is holding regional meetings for families and individuals virtually. This modality is attracting many more participants with different experiences.

**Karen DeGregory- Presentation** (See Power Point)

Karen is the mother of Christopher who is 29 years old. Karen has been assisting Chris in the PDP program to plan a good life. He was in a group home before he turned 22 and experienced many behavioral challenges. Because the group home setting was not working for Chris, his family took him home.

As Chris was prioritized for residential supports after he turned 22, he receives intensive services- day and residential supports. He won a housing lottery and lives in a home with staff funded though PDP, with his PCAs and using his family as a back-up. He attends the Charles River Center for his day services; although his schedule changed during the pandemic.

Chris’ services now meet his needs in the following ways:

<His likes and dislikes drive his services.

<Chris has control over his life.

<The use of technology has promoted his independence.

<His days are consistent and predictable decreasing his anxiety

<Chris and his staff use a house notebook that includes decision trees.

<There is good quality control of his services by regularly tracking data through a laptop or workbooks.

Karen has hired high quality staff with little turnover. She spends 6-8 hours a week managing Chris’ services and assumes responsibility for paperwork with PPL. It takes a lot of her time and is stressful for her. She commented that one challenge of the PDP is that funding isn’t available for regular pay increases like it is in traditional programs that receive regular rate increases.

During the pandemic, Chris’ day program (Charles River Center) closed. His gym also closed. As most of his activities were no longer available, Chris took up off road mountain biking and cooking. He lost 20 pounds and loves the challenges of biking. He has started back at his day program part time and continues his biking.

Questions/ Comments

Nancy Alterio thought that Karen’s presentation was fantastic and inspirational.

Leo Sarkissian: How do you manage to do this in six hours?

Karen DeGregory replied that she has been doing this for eight years.

Robin Foley thought the design and thought going into Chris’ services are amazing and believes more families should know their story and opportunity.

Rich Santucci commented that Chris was engaged in his life.

Karen commented that there is no magic, that she felt Chris’ family needed to take charge.

Val Bradley thought that the board should think about families mentoring other families.

Karen DeGregory commented that the cost of staff is important.

Leo Sarkissian: What happens when you can’t do it?

Karen DeGregory is hopeful agencies will take on some of the tasks at some point.

Nancy Alterio asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: 09.01.21

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Gillespie