Self-Direction Advisory Board

September 7, 2022

Board Members Attending

Nancy Alterio

Margaret Abrams

Liz Fahey

Ann Fracht

Karla Murphy

Michael Weiner

Barbara Pandolfi

Cindy Thomas

Julie Westwater

Julie Flaherty

Kimberly Truong

Rich Santucci

Robin Foley

Jeff Keilson

Leo Sarkissian

DDS Staff

Jen Benoit

Ed Wilson

Amy Nazaire

Teryl Smith

Gail Gillespie

Tim Cahill

Chris Thompson

Elizabeth Morse

Chris Klaskin

Laney Bruner-Canhoto

Jaclyn Grant

Julia Wojeciechowski

Guests

Val Bradley

John Agosta

Theresa Driscoll

Eileen Berger

Ed Underwood

Patty Macphee

Lidia Sheehey

Deb Flaschen

Joyce Labelle

Carey Power

Nan Leonard

Pam Booth

Jenna Shea

Sarah Peterson

Bridget Crowley

Matt Bruening

Diane Huggon

Materials

Rewarding Work/ TILL, Inc. Power Point

Self-Direction Managers Power Point on the Tool Box

Nancy Alterio called the meeting to order. Liz Sandblom read the roll call.

Nancy asked for motions to accept the 03.02.22 minutes.

First Motion: Rich Santucci

Second Motion: Robin Foley

No Discussion

Motion passed unanimously

Commissioner Ryder’s Report

Governor Baker signed off on our FY’23 budget, and DDS has received a 7% increase. Capacity at our day and employment programs has increased by 27% and they are currently at 82% capacity. The staffing shortage continues to be a major obstacle in people returning to these programs. Community transportation utilization has also increased by 25%. Due to our new technology forward initiative our supportive technology has increased by 250%. Massachusetts is the 3rd state in the country to implement remote supports to promote independence and community integration.

Questions/ Comments

Leo Sarkissian: Is the 82% based on billing or physical/in person attendance?

Elizabeth Morse said yes, it was based on billing.

Updates- Liz Sandblom

Liz Sandblom reported a 1.6% growth in self-direction enrollments this quarter totaling 1,927 participants in PDP and AWC programs. There was significant growth within the PDP program for day supports totaling 742 people enrolled in this service. Enrollments for home supports increased from 306 participants to 310 participants.

Liz Sandblom introduced new advisory board members: Michael Weiner (father of person who gets services from DDS), Cindy Thomas (ICI staff and family member of person who gets services from DDS), Julia Wojciechowski (Regional Self-Direction Manager for Central West), and Jaclyn Grant (Statewide Coordinator of Self-Directed Services).

Questions/ Comments

Liz Fahey: What is the percentage of self-directed services looking at all services DDS provides?

Liz Sandblom said it makes up 7% of DDS services.

MASS Report

Anne Fracht reported there were no updates.

Regional Updates

Ed Wilson: The regional managers are working with the training department to get self-direction trainings online and accessible via MassAchieve. They will be adding 2 modules to their soup to nuts trainings which will cover tips and tricks on how to discuss self-direction with families and how to troubleshoot issues with provider packets and payments. Managers have been holding orientation sessions twice/month and they have been received well.

Jen Benoit: We were able to distribute bonuses to providers who provided support during a certain time that we identified. PPL sent out communication to providers and Commissioner Ryder also sent out a thank you letter to providers. A second round of bonuses will be sent out in October. We are working with PPL to provide updates and documentation on Marion Edwards Associates and the services they provide to individuals in PDP. PPL has hired a new person to support and manage our contract. We have worked with PPL to develop new reports including weekly utilization and credentialling reports. We also have a new code for assistive technology (AT) evaluation and training to compliment the code we already had for AT devices.

Questions/Comments

Michael Weiner: How many people with ASD only are participating in PDP in comparison to those with ID?

Liz Sandblom said she would get the numbers and send them out to the group. Post meeting follow up: As of the end of August, of the 1,927 people self-directing services, 368 are eligible as ASD only.

Rich Santucci: How much were the bonuses?

Jen Benoit said they were $500 and taxes were withheld

Jeffrey Keilson: Were these bonuses in lieu of salary increases or in addition to?

Jen Benoit said that the bonuses were paid using ARPA money and no money was taken out of the individual’s budget.

Liz Sandblom said that any increase would need to be decided on by individual’s or their families based on their current allocations.

Robin Foley: What is the name of the person PPL hired to manage the contract? What is their role? How will she improve customer service?

Ed Wilson said her name is Connie and she is an analyst and has helped with the new reports we are getting from PPL. Regional managers are ale to access her to escalate customer service issues.

Robin Foley: Is PPL represented on this advisory board?

Liz Sandblom: No, but it may be a good idea for them to join these meetings.

Nancy Alterio: You can invite someone to join the board, so they are on the same page.

HSRI Update- Val Bradley

Val strongly suggests that PPL attends the December meeting. At the last meeting HSRI summarized the findings from 3 year qualitative and quantitative eval from a few years ago. The evaluation was done with a purpose of transparency and consistency within self-direction and will continue for a few years. A work plan has been established with DDS.

A qualitative evaluation of the program is happening again to assess progress made. HSRI was able to talk with a number of stakeholders throughout the state including families, participants, AWC providers, and DDS staff. Interviews have been concluded and a draft report has been prepared. DDS is currently reviewing the report. The evaluation is analyzing the connection between people's assessed needs and the amount of their budget allocation. HSRI and DDS will develop a proposed budget allocation process. A supports level framework based on specific functional needs is being developed and will reflect the support needs. Where there are outliers, the process will allow for flexibility for people with extraordinary or unique support needs. Support budget minimums and maximums will be proposed for each support level. Rolling this out will require an internal communication and implantation plan.

The evaluation will also address how to harmonize the DESE and self-direction program to make them more in line with each other and provide smoother transitions.

Themes:

* Need for more support for minority and low-income families who don’t have support network Complexities and delays when onboarding staff
* Aging caregivers-who will take over when they pass away?
* Importance of focusing on natural supports and well as paid supports,
* Better transition from DESE to PDP and AWC,
* Importance of learning communities among support brokers and other people supporting individuals in self-direction.

At the next meeting HSRI will provide an update on the support budget work and review study recommendations. DDS will provide a response to the report and field questions from SDAB. Please see Power point for additional information on today’s presentation.

Questions/ Comments

Kimberly Truong: Can we add an agenda item to discuss minority and low-income families? Can we work to make SDAB more divers?

Val Bradley: Additional supports and outreach need to be addressed to tackle this issue along with being more culturally sensitive to the needs of diverse individuals.

Liz Sandblom: Yes, we can add it to the agenda for our next meeting.

Self-Direction Moving Forward-Gail Gillespie:

We are requesting more assistance from SDAB and looking to create a subcommittee to help move things along faster. We are looking for 5-6 people to be part of the committee who are willing to read and review materials, troubleshoot challenges, and gather/review stakeholder feedback on policies in SD. DDS will create an agenda, DDS staff will offer verbal presentations and present challenges and barriers to implementation. The meetings would be held monthly and would be 1-1.5 hours. Notes and feedback would be summarized at SDAB meetings. Depending on the topics, we are looking to bring in experts to discuss/address certain issues. Some topics the committee would assist with include:

* With the addition of support brokers, we are looking at how can they promote self-direction more effectively and promote consistency in messaging. There is a small group working to create a family toolbox.
* Identifying the necessary steps to grow self-direction, include advocates, increase diversity in self-direction, increase awareness and support for families who are not able to provide that support or don't have a support network.
* Work to better define and develop personal agent services to address diversity and aging caregivers. Th committee would also discuss HSRI assessment and next steps.

We would like to get it up and running in the next 2 weeks or so.

Questions/ Comments

Anne Fracht: We need to talk about individuals when we are talking about self-determination and then bring in parents if they need support. It should be the individuals’ vision for services and not their parents or family. Can you do this?

Jen Benoit: Thank you Anne. I usually go through the support brokers to introduce myself since they work with, them and they know their indivdiuals better and what their preferred communication style is.

Ed Wilson: We have more work to do with that.

Amy Nazaire: Coming from a family support background I have had some interesting conversations about this.

Liz Sandblom: Thank you Anne for your comment. We really appreciate it. The operations team is going through a strategic planning process and one of the biggest things we are looking to change is the language we use. We do want to hear from more participants who are self-directing. We are looking to get connected with individuals to work on public speaking skills and sharing their stories.

Leo Sarkissian: Thank you to the presenters and your attempts to address the challenges in SD. MA21 has been meeting and is hosted at the Arc. In 2008, a booklet was published on self-direction. It was updated in 2012. Leo will share. It became more support oriented and created a guide for people to negotiate financial support with DDS. MA21 wants to support people in SD and policy changes. The 2 biggest issues we see are infrastructure and transparency around allocations. We’re hoping that there would be some interim changes before HSRI recommendations are assessed and implemented. Suggest that CBDS rate based on CDAT be used to decide allocations in the interim. Let's make sure we tackle what we can. The agenda typically incudes updates, but it would allow us to work on thigs together. We need an allocation process sooner rather than later. Leo will send out position paper that was sent to DDS in January to the group. Family bias and cultural differences needs to be addressed.

Barbara Pandolfi: Anne do you want to add anything?

Anne: No, I'm good.

Emphasis has always been on enhancing the voice of people with disabilities. Real Lives law really established independence for people with disabilities. Now we are trying to operationalize things to make this a reality for people we serve. MA21 provided paper with 15 issues that require immediate attention. MA21 would welcome participation in subcommittee to help things move forward. Would like to continue work with SDAB and DDS to move these issues forward. The paper and action items will be publicized so all stakeholders can be informed.

Liz Fahey: There are 5 SDAB members that are also in MA 21. I like the idea of the subcommittee but think it may be helpful to include people who are not part of SDAB.

Leo: Regional and Area Directors are triaging people requesting services. MA21 would like quicker response from DDS.

Val: In terms of cultural sensitivity, self-direction has the potential to be the most culturally diverse & sensitive program because it is asking people to make decisions based on their experiences.

Public comments

Cindy O'Connor: can AWC staff get bonuses? Is there something we can do to address retention?

Liz Sandblom: I will go back to fiscal team to see what happened when the increases were implemented. Since it is a traditional contract, they were not included in these bonuses.

 Post meeting follow up: AWC providers did not receive additional funding specific to AWC programs for bonus or staff incentive programs.

Diane Huggon: Can we post a list of SDAB members on the webpage and their affiliations? When on Zoom it would be helpful if people could add their position with their name.

Liz Sandblom: We can look into posting the member son the website.

 Post meeting follow up: DDS will provide a full list of names of Advisory Board members to the website after getting consent from members.

Meeting was coming to an end and there were additional questions that could not be addressed. All additional questions can be emailed to Liz Sandblom.

Nancy asked for motions to adjourn.

First motion: Rich Santucci

Second motion: Anne Fracht

Nancy thanked the committee and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting: December 7, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

Jaclyn Grant