Self-Direction Advisory Board

March 13, 2024

Board Members Attending

Nancy Alterio

Robin Foley

Lindsey Foley

Julie Westwater

Rich Santucci

Keshrie Naidoo

Liz Fahey

Barbara Pandolfi

Ann Fracht

Mike Weiner

Julie Flaherty

Michelle Goody

Cindy Thomas

Leo Sarkissian

DDS Staff

Jane Ryder

Terry O’Hare

Amy Nazaire

John Lee

Ed Wilson

Elizabeth Morse

Laney Bruner-Canhoto

Meghan Allen

Julia Wojciechowski

Tim Cahill

Jaclyn Grant

Victor Hernandez

Teryl Smith

Guests

Susan McCormick

Matt Bruening

Jennifer Bertrand

Deborah Flaschen

Ed Underwood

Lynn

Donna Kushi

Diane Huggon

Stacey Villani

Materials

DDS SIS-A Implementation (Power Point)

Nancy Alterio called the meeting to order.

Nancy asked for motions to accept the meeting minutes, they were given and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Ryder’s Report

Governor Healy released her budget in January, and it goes to the House and Senate for debate with a hope that we’ll have a budget finalized on July 1. The Commissioner just testified Monday at HWM.

4.5% increase $126M increase over FY24 at $2.9B

Highlights:

* $39M Chapter 257 annualization
* $49M annualization of T-22 class
* $18M in new T-22 services. Largest T-22 class as of July 1. An increase in the diagnosis of Autism only. $29M available for changing need.

Challenges DDS is facing:

* The number of individuals needing our services continues to grow.
* The intensity of service needs has increased.
* individuals DDS supports are living longer. Their needs change as they age.
* The workforce shortage continues. Our rates as of July 1 will allow for a minimum direct care salary of $20 per hour.

We continue to promote human services as a career with opportunities for career advancement. We will continue to make sure we have options for individuals that are not as staff dependent as services have been in the past. Self-direction is a major part of being creative to make sure our services are meeting the needs of the people we support.

Questions/Comments

Q: Is the $49M for T22 annualized and initial?

A. The $18M is for the current T-22 class. The $49M ensures that whatever services are established can be supported on an annualized/full year ongoing basis.

Q. Is this annualization a regular thing or something new?

A. We are doing a better job of building in annualization.

Q. Can you share the breakdown of ID and ASD?

A. FY25 1023 ID and 431 with ASD.

Q. How did the budget hearing go?

A. It went well. A large 2-day hearing that included MassHealth, DPH and the Secretary. Healthcare areas took the majority of time and questions from the committee. One question was about the sustainability of the group home model. Another question was the $20 per hour. The Commissioner explained the rate assumes $20 per hour but the provider has flexibility to determine exactly what to pay.

Regional Updates- Amy Nazaire

* Continue with twice monthly information sessions on self-direction.
* Happy to have John Lee as the new Metro SD manager.
* The PDP Participant Toolbox is now on our website under “Getting Started in PDP”
* Working with PPL for Adobe Sign application.
* Victor has been meeting with transition coordinators across the state regarding the new Higher Education bill.

Questions/Comments

Leo Sarkissian: It is great that we are moving to Adobe Sign.

Independent Facilitator Discussion- Robin Foley

Robin Foley gave an update on discussions regarding the Independent Facilitator role. Robin introduced the subcommittee and explained they have been meeting monthly to discuss the Independent Facilitator.

* Robin read the Real Lives Law definition of Independent Facilitator.
* The independent facilitator can assist the individual new to self-direction with many important duties that the individual needs to do including hiring staff.
* Today’s discussion is about how we move this role forward.
* Right now, there is a role called Personal Agent that about 10 participants use.
* Think of Independent Facilitator as a new conversation and leave the Personal Agent as a future conversation as to whether that stays or goes.
* Independent Facilitators need to be well trained and local so they can help individuals get fully involved and maximize resources within their local community.
* The training will be designed. There are so many family members already doing this role. Any names of people who may be interested should be sent to Robin or Jaclyn Grant.
* This sounds easy but there is some work to build a cadre of trained, available independent facilitators.
* Robin wants to hear your feedback and questions and ideas.

Comments/Questions

* Mike Weiner: sees this role as not only an important support system at the beginning of self-direction but also later when parents can no longer do what they are doing. As far as the training goes, the sub-committee discussed not being too specific about who could be an independent facilitator. Looking for DDS to help develop a training framework of what the training needs to include but then contract out the training to an independent vendor. Also, important to make clear that the independent facilitator and support broker are two different roles.
* Julie Westwater: asked if it makes sense to try and tap into higher ed social work programs for these independent facilitator staff.
* Another suggestion was that these academic programs could support the individual and if one independent facilitator can no longer support the individual another student may be able to.
* Nancy suggested William James College may be a good resource to consider/explore for this.
* Leo Sarkissian: Thanked the volunteers who worked on this. Why we don’t have a draft that says what the job is to review today? Let’s get this role going because we need it badly. We want the independent facilitator to be truly independent. Before the next meeting could we have a draft job description to review as a Board?
* Robin loves the sense of urgency but shares that Liz and Jaclyn have also shared that urgency.
* Leo said it is up to the Department to sanction this and push for a job description.
* Today independent facilitators are not paid.
* Ann Fracht shared that she needs someone as an independent facilitator who is experienced and well trained. Once she is able to hire someone then the time that she’ll need support from the independent facilitator will lessen. Ann goes to him for assistance and advice with different topics. The independent facilitator she uses at different times and for different things. Not just one thing. Could be MassHealth, housing, DDS issues. Anne wants someone who is going to stay and not have high turnover.
* Liz Fahey: It is important to have someone who is independent to work with a family and understand the operations of it. Having a representative for the individual’s/family’s voice is important. Liz thinks it will be important at the beginning of self-direction but also a resource lifelong as needed.
* Mike Weiner asked Leo if he could get an independent facilitator now, would the Department support it. Ed Wilson explained that people are becoming personal agents today. The SD manager asks for a job description and what the budget would be. It comes through the area office and the SD manager coordinates it with the region. Jaclyn clarified that the personal agent is referenced in the Participant Toolbox.
* Mike asked if Ed could share the personal agent job description with the subcommittee and Ed said he would. Mike explained this could be a starting off point for the independent facilitator questions and training.
* Jaclyn explained the personal agent is less formal than the independent facilitator role as some family members are doing it and there is no cap.
* Ed explained the personal agent is a stand-alone role in the person’s support budget.
* Keshrie Naidoo asked if there are specific skills you are looking for.
* Robin said the more cadre of independent facilitators available allows for better choice and more diverse options from a cultural perspective.
* Liz Fahey asked if it is a rule that the independent facilitator can’t be a professional advocate.
* Jaclyn Grant shared that it will be important for DDS to train our service coordinators/area office staff on what the independent facilitator role is.
* Ed Wilson explained the personal agent is an informal role and he envisions the independent facilitator being more structured/formal.
* Mike Weiner asked if the independent facilitator will replace the personal agent? Some respondents said they thought the role is very similar. Mike asked Ed Wilson if we’d be better off with one role. Ed shared that personally he thought we’d be better off with one role and not both.
* Ann Fracht shared the importance of the independent facilitator truly being independent so she can share her likes and dislikes or concerns and can share in confidence.

The Path Forward, Implementation of the SIS-A Assessment-Tim Cahill & Jaclyn Grant

* Tim Cahill shared the new team that DDS is building to support SIS-A assessments.
* Jaclyn Grant shared 115 completed assessments as of yesterday and 36 more done by the beginning of April. Jaclyn shared that we are offering in person and virtual assessments.
* Jaclyn Grant shared satisfaction survey results from those who completed the assessments. Overall, the feedback has been very positive from individuals and families.
* Common themes: the assessor was great at explaining the questions clearly, the assessor was kind and professional, and the assessment is long, but it creates good conversation amongst the individual’s support team.
* There are two sections of the assessment, Work Activities and Lifelong Learning that have been challenging for some individuals and their families to answer.
* The assessments are being completed faster than when we first began last fall and are taking 2-2.5 hours on average.
* The voluntary aspect has been challenging.

Questions/Comments

* Barbara Pandolfi has spoken with 2 families who have done it and is asking if there is any advantage to getting the materials ahead of time. Jaclyn explained they can share a sample summary report, ahead of time which could help. She will look at adding that prior to the meeting as a general practice.
* Julie Flaherty: How are we going to measure consistency and other measures for this pilot? Jaclyn explained our goal is to complete the 500 assessments to gather information. We will then work with HSRI to develop support needs levels based on the data we collect. Jaclyn provided examples of what these may look like.
* Teryl Smith added that HSRI will work with DDS on the implementation of the SIS and the data used for budget allocation.

Public Comment

Q. Ed Underwood asked if there was an update on the regs.

A. Commissioner Ryder shared that the regulations are with the Executive Office of Administration and Finance.

Q. Debra Flaschen shared she thought this was a very productive exchange of dialogue and a very good meeting.

Someone on the call asked if the future meetings could be on Zoom as it was hard to hear. Nancy and Commissioner Ryder said we would consider it or other ways to make it easier for those calling in to hear well.

Nancy asked for a motion to adjourn and a first and second motion were given and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Cahill