Autism Commission

Housing Sub-Committee meeting Minutes

December 13, 2017, 10:30pm–12:30pm

500 Harrison Avenue

Members present: Dan Burke (Chair), Carolyn Kain, Nan Leonard, Cathy Boyle, Dianne Lescinskas, Janet George, Victor Hernandez, and Lea Hill

Members accessing the meeting remotely: Leo Sarkissian, Michelle Brait, Ayana Gonzalez, Joseph Vallely and Chris Supple

Dan Burke, the Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed the members to the meeting of this Sub-Committee. Mr. Burke stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Sub-Committee members present would need to vote to approve the remote participation of some members because of their geographic location, whenever any members were utilizing video and/or tele-conferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously. Minutes from last meeting in October were reviewed and there were a few edits: page 1 – change 8 different housing models to 12; page 2 under 3rd bullet – change she to we; page 2, under *three points were made* –Cathy Boyle explained the points and they will be adjusted in the minutes. The edits will be made and the minutes were approved with the changes – Ms. Gonzalez abstained from the vote.

**Review of Sub-Committee Mini-Group Information**

At the previous sub-committee meeting it was proposed and agreed that rather than prioritize the recommendations, they should be broken out by state agency designation and start “Working Groups” (mini groups) and include a representative from the appropriate state agency on each group. The mini groups met to discuss the Think Tank Recommendations and report back to this sub-committee. It was noted that either Ms. Kain or Ms. Lescinskas would participate in each of the working groups.

1. Group 1 – MassHealth – This mini-group consisted of Leo Sarkissian, Karen Mariscal and Chris Supple. The met on November 3rd and talked through the Think Tank Recommendations as it relates to MassHealth.
* They reprioritized and moved up AFC (Adult Foster Care) – this was not on the list but Karen, Chris and Leo thought it would have a great impact on folks with ASD and would like to add regulations relative to “mental conditions”. The actual criteria for AFC has limitations for those with mental conditions. For example, if you require 24/7 assistance but because you don’t need help in two areas of activity of living an individual will not qualify for the higher level of funding. They get screened out due to no physical assistance. There are similar challenges with PCA.
* PCA Program – they would focus on cueing and supervision as acceptable criteria not just physical assistance-they believe this is a very high reach but consistent with Medicaid state plan option K\* (federal).
* Technology – they will report back with more specifics at next meeting.
* Leverage of MassHealth LTSS and DDS services-combining state plan services via Medicaid with some modest DDS supports can be an effective strategy.

Mr. Sarkissian will send out a memo to this sub-committee that was sent out by the ARC that focuses on eligibility criteria for the Adult Foster/Family Care Program. This will be discussed at our next meeting in February. Over the next few weeks, he will gather more information on what his mini-group would like for this sub-committee to endorse.

1. Group 2 – DESE – included in this mini group are Lea Hill, Carolyn Kain, Cathy Boyle, Chris Supple and Judith Ursitti. They met on November 6th and discussed the Think Tank Recommendations as they relate to DESE – Russel Johnston from the Department of Education was included in this meeting.
* How can we assist with getting more information to the student/family – especially with assisting students with Section 8 application? Questions were raised whether or not teachers could assist with the application.
* The Transition Brochure will help address some concerns and DESE has endorsed the new brochure. In January, Russel Johnston invited Carolyn and Dianne to present at 5 regional meetings with Sped Directors on how to access additional resources. Cathy Boyle asked if we could include postcards from Autism Housing Pathways – they walk individuals through the Section 8 application process. She will mail the cards to Ms. Kain.
* Vermont SUCCEED program was discussed – 1st year individuals earn their independent living certificate; 2nd year individuals transition to an apartment and Safety Connections (covers both years in program). It is a call center and it supports individuals in the evening - a case worker will be sent to the apartment if needed. 50% of individuals that attend the SUCCEED program can live more independently after completion. Safety Connection is run through the Howard Center and Kevin Hutt is the main contact. It was discussed asking Kevin Hutt to conference in to one of our meetings so this sub-committee could learn more about Safety Connection.
* MA has programs that help with transition on campus but it doesn’t have the Safety Connection component. (Threshold at Lesley). We should explore other programs.
* Assessments and data was discussed – data could forecast what is needed down the road in terms of supportive housing and ADL’s. Looking to catch individuals who may not be captured under 688 but may appear 10 years later looking for services. If we knew they were coming eventually you could plan for them. Discussions included doing an assessment on ADL’s one year prior to leaving school district; doctors to do the assessment as part of a physical; give a script to the person doing the assessment – “if you were physically not able to help the individual with an ADL would it happen – would they do it”; would DDS even use the assessment if it was done by DESE; could the new ACO rollout address this?
1. Group 3 – DMH – included in this mini-group is Lea Hill, Carolyn Kain, Joe Vallely, Leo Sarkissian, and Cathy Boyle. They met on November 6th and discussed that Think Tank Recommendations (#13) as they relate to DMH.
* Discussion around DMH doing a survey monkey to gather information on who is in the shelters and their needs – it was asked if DMH could assist with getting the survey to individuals and assist with them filling out the survey – DMH does not have this capacity and cannot expand their PATH program.
* Ms. Kain had previously met with shelter workers from the PATH Program on training needs to help identify ASD.
* Use the survey as a pilot in one shelter – possibly Pine Street Inn – this will give us a starting point.
* Mass Health and the Shelter Alliance could be supportive of the survey – Joe Finn chairs the Shelter Alliance - Health Care for the Homeless sees a large population that may not go into the shelters and is staffed by doctors – Bridge Over Troubled Water is another good source.
* Question – what is the ask of these organizations? What data are we collecting from this survey and what are we doing with the data?
* We should first talk to folks from Bridge Over Troubled Water/Pine Street Inn and ask them what experience they have with individuals with ASD and what do they know about individuals with ASD – start with a conversation and then develop a survey.
* Data will help us get a handle on the numbers in shelters or on the street and then we could start to look at what type of services they are willing to accept. Also, this could help us determine the type of training that is needed for shelter workers.
* Co-morbid disabilities in this group are substantial – DMH would have a lot of good information on how to get them off the street.
* The Rental Assistance Program run by DMH was discussed – could it be expanded to offer more rental assistance to those with ASD. It was said that it could act as a model but not likely that DMH could expand in its current state. DMH does have success with their set asides and that is through an agreement with MassHousing and it is jointly funded by DHCD and DMH. Could DDS looks at a similar voucher program as DMH? This could be a discussion with the legislature for the advocates on the committee.
1. **Group 4 – ILC** – included in this mini group is Nan Leonard, Judith Ursitti and Janet George.
* This group will reach out to someone from MRC (Kasper is retiring in January)
* There will be changes with federal funding and reallocations that could affect the ILC’s.
1. **Group 5 – DHCD** – included in this mini group is Dan Burke, Cathy Boyle, Ayana Gonzalez, Chris Supple and David Eng. The discussion considered recommendations #6 and #7 as well as the overall question of how does the Housing needs and planning for housing those on the autism spectrum fit into the overall planning of DHCD.
* Ms. Kain met with MassHousing and they have agreed to schedule a time within their training schedule for our sub-committee to conduct training for agencies that work with MassHousing. It would be up to 6 hour training and will take place in the Spring of 2018. Ms. Kain is looking for members of this sub-committee to help organize the training – Cathy Boyle and Lea Hill would like to participate.
* The number of ways that DHCD supports people with disabilities was discussed – 1. Capital funds, 2. Section 8 vouchers, 3. SCF funds.
* Ms. Gonzalez discussed developing design guidelines specific to the ASD population – we are not sure what it will look like just yet but could be standalone units, congregate or both using SCF.
* Developing universal design features would be the first step and that would involve inviting an architect to the conversation – it is an expensive proposition so we need to crystalize our thought process prior to a meeting.
* The Institute for Human Centered Design was mentioned as a potential partner for the design – they have been more focused on the physical barriers but that may have changed over the years – Cathy and Nan will meet to discuss this further.
* SRO units could be an option and we should discuss this further.
* DMH uses SCF for community housing and DDS primary housing is group homes – this will be discussed further at the DDS mini group meeting.
1. Group 6 – DDS – they have not had their mini group meeting to date and have scheduled it for January 22nd at 10:00am. It will be a conference call and the number will be sent out prior to the meeting.

**MassHousing Update**

Ms. Kain updated the sub-committee regarding her meeting with MassHousing and their willingness to add an ASD specific training in the Spring of 2018. More details will follow in February.

**Review Housing Committee section of draft Annual Report**

Ms. Kain informed this sub-committee that she would like to finalize the TAC report and Ms. Ursitti asked if the word “conservatively”, be removed from the report. Ms. Kain asked for a motion to make the changes she handed out and read that were recommended by Lisa Sloane to the language to address this issue, and it was approved unanimously.

Ms. Boyle asked about the Autism Commission draft Annual Report, recommendation #11 (a). She would like to add language that would say it *could create an incentive for local communities to create units* – she was asked to email Ms. Kain with the exact language she is proposing.

The next meeting of this sub-committee is scheduled for February 14th at 10:30am. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.