

DSS Autism Spectrum Disorder Advisory Council (ASDAC)
Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2022
(Virtual Meeting)

Members Present: Jennifer Abbatemarco, Representative Catherine Abercrombie, Stephen Byers, Judy Dowd, Amy Dumont, Marcia Eckerd, Ann Gionet, Andrew Komarow, Jim Loomis, Kathy Marchione, Julie McKenna, Jimnahs Miller, Donyale Pina, Lynn Ricci, Lois Rosenwald, Carole Ryan-Hanlon, Doriana Vicedomini, Julie Wolf

Members Absent: Melissa Gagne, Koleen Kerski, Bryan Klimkiewicz, Krista Ostaszewski, Yana Razumnaya, Kari Sassu

Others: Bill Halsey, Shelly Maynes

Call to Order: 10:00am

Welcome and Roll Call

Approval of 7/20/2022 Meeting Minutes

Public Comments

- Lynn Lavasseur welcomed herself
- Alice Forrester from Clifford Bears

Waiver Update:

- 170 Individuals currently on the waiver
- 1996 individuals on the waitlist
- Waiver renewal will take effect on 1/1/2023 (renewal added to the end of these minutes)
- Public Hearing is today at 1:00pm
- New Case Manager, Jeanette Cruz, coming over from DDS, is starting on October 7, 2023
- Additional 150 slots were approved
- First 50 slots were filled and working on the next 150
- More interviews will be taking place for additional Case Manager positions

- Nutrition Service has been added to the Waiver to help our participants make health choices
- Social Skills Group, Life Skills Coaching and Clinical Behavioral Supports definitions have changed to add virtual as an option as it has been found that these services offered virtually have been successful for this population
- Modified definition of Life Skills Coaching removing requirement of a bachelor's degree. We have found there are many staff that have great experience working with individuals with ASD but do not have the degree. This opens our pool of providers as we are so limited
- DSS has a contract with CCSN (Center for Children with Special Needs) where Dr. Palmieri and Nichole Collins provide quarterly trainings which has been made mandatory for all staff working with individuals on the waiver
- Concerns from providers regarding the required trainings due to costs

Center of Excellence Update:

- Still working with Contract Department
- Amy Dumont will report out at the next meeting
- \$500,000 appropriated each year General Funds money
- Money rolled over from the old Tobacco and Trust Fund \$650,000

Other Business:

- Medicaid Director, Gui Woolston recently hired staff to assist with data collection. Amy Dumont suggested inviting Gui to next ASDAC Meeting to discuss data collection
- Will request Krista to provide update at next ASDAC

Housing Sub-Committee:

- No new meetings have been held
- Jimnahs Miller does not have any new updates. She attended Housing meeting and has been profiling other Housing models across the country
- Sub-Committee meeting should be held to help navigate
- Lynn Ricci mentioned Cluster Housing. She will gather information when meeting is held.
- Amy James attends the Inter-agency Housing Committee. Possibility if funding allows to have 24-hour wrap-around services based on DDS model

Nomination Sub-Committee:

- Sub-Committee met and agreed upon an excellent candidate though was unable to accept position on the Council
- Sub-Committee will review other candidates. There have not been any additional candidates to date.
- Lisa to send out emails to candidates

To Do:

- Review Members' Attendance
- Center for Excellence Update
- Sent out email regarding Waiver Update
- Send out email requesting joining Housing Sub-Committee
- Send out email to potential new Council Member
- Begin thinking about new Co-Chair for Council as Representative Abercrombie will be retiring
- Send ideas for agenda items to Lisa Bonetti

Adjournment: 11:59am

Next Meeting: November 16, 2022

Autism Waiver Renewal

Current clients served under the waiver: 170

Current wait list: 1996

Average annual cost per client: \$19,406 is average yearly cost

1. Addition of Nutrition as a new service. Nutrition is defined as the clinical assessment and development of special diets, positioning techniques for eating; recommendations for adaptive equipment for eating and counseling for dietary needs related to medical diagnosis for participants and training for paid support staff to ensure compliance with the participant's dietary needs. These services are not covered in the Medicaid State Plan. This service is limited to 25 hours of service per year and will require prior authorization from the case manager.
2. The waiver was also expanded legislatively to add fifty (50) slots beginning July 1, 2021, with current census of 170. An additional one hundred and fifty (150) slots were added beginning July 1, 2022. An amendment was not necessary for the first 50 slots due to the number of waiver participants already authorized under the waiver. Staffing is currently being put in place to accommodate the additional 150 consumers.
3. The service definitions of social skills groups, life skills coaching, and clinical behavioral support services are amended to permit these services to be provided by alternate means beyond face-to-face, including virtually. The alternate means of service delivery is currently permitted for life skills coaching services on a temporary basis pursuant to an Appendix K Emergency Preparedness and Response Amendment, however such authority will expire six months after the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency.
4. Life skills coaching was modified to remove the need for a bachelor's degree and only requires a high school diploma or equivalent as well as experience working with those on the Autism spectrum. This requirement for a bachelor's degree is removed for both individual and agency providers. This will expand the pool of providers who can deliver this service.
5. The requirement for life skills coaches to complete competency tests for Autism Program Orientation Training Level I and II have been removed, however, a contract exists with

the Center for Children with Special Needs. This provider training is offered quarterly and is mandatory for all staff working with individuals on the Autism waiver.