

Community First Choice (CFC) Committee

Wednesday, February 1, 2023

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Meeting Summary

Members Present: Tom Fiorentino; Dawn Lambert, DSS; Mary Ann Langston; Maggie Ewald; Melissa Morton; Mary Caruso; Cathy Ludlum; Michelle Jordan

Members Excused: KaryL Lee Hall, Anna Doraghazi, Brenda Steinglass

Members Absent:

Members of the Public: Jose-Michael Gonzalez, DSS

1. The meeting was called to order by Tom, Chair at 11:05am.
2. No prior meeting minutes to approve.

Tom shared that for 2023 we will focus on developing a cadence for CFC Committee meetings in where Jose-Michael, DSS is working with Tom in providing support in the creation of the agenda, setting the meeting dates, and developing meeting minutes. Jose-Michael shared that annual CFC Committee meeting dates, agenda and minutes will be available on the Secretary of State and DSS Websites. Jose-Michael shared that the agenda will be a living document where items listed will continue to remain and can be taken off or new items added, per committee communication to Tom. Tom requested that in order to keep to the one-hour meeting, to please put comments in chat during the meeting or follow up with Tom and Jose-Michael after the meeting.

3. FI Contract Update
 - Tom asked for a current update on FI contract
 - Jose-Michael shared any updates to FI progress are differed to Dawn for update as she is involved in the ongoing meetings regarding this matter.
 - Tom asked what is the expectation for the new FI contract
 - Jose-Michael shared that potentially new FI will perform a similar and/or enhanced function than the previous FI, while agencies currently work out to determine the various processes for addressing plans as well as challenges and successes, and reminded that there is no current update on FI contract.
 - Cathy asked will there be a new Sandata?
 - Jose-Michael shared that the details and processes are being worked out and further answers can be communicated at a later meeting, but there is no current update on FI contract.

Mary Ann communicated experiencing difficulty in accessing the meeting visual and audio. Mary Ann attempted multiple log in attempts. Cathy attempted to assist in supporting Mary Ann communication unsuccessfully. Jose-Michael provided DSS line information but the number and passcode was too long. Jose-Michael then provided DSS phone line and placed Mary Ann on speaker.

4. DSS Fair Hearings and complaint resolution

- Tom stated that oftentimes members experience not being in agreement with their budget nor plan of care and asked what can a person do?
 - Jose-Michael shared that DSS has both an informal and formal hearings process, that it is the intent for all concerns and issues related to non-approvals of members of their budget or concerns with results of a person's universal assessment and budgets are and can be taken by the member to DSS staff for review. Tom asked Jose-Michael to explain what the informal resolution process would look like. Jose-Michael explained that universal care managers through access agencies are tasked with conducting the universal assessment, the process for determine a member's level of care and need. The universal care manager presents the finding of their assessment to the member, and the member is asked to approve and sign the plan of care. When there is a difference in opinion occurs, the access agency and/or member themselves have reached out to DSS staff for further assistance and review. DSS nursing and staff will review and support either parties with being available for a meeting with all parties to discuss the concern, request additional documents, when necessary, can take the concerns up to Unit Director or Division Medical staff for ongoing review and feedback. After this process, if there continues to be a concern or the communication breaks down then DSS staff will involve Unit Director for additional communication and support. However, when a member decides to no longer engage in the process, they have the right to ask for a resolution determination on their case and a notice of action is issued to the member with the department's response. Then, members may be able to access their formal administrative hearing rights. Mary suggested bringing in a third neutral party that could provide informal collaboration as a step before proceeding to administrative hearing, to address the continuing impasse, so a third party can come in to assist. Dawn suggested that Mary is describing perhaps developing a two-step process, with third party involvement to continue to resolve prior to the administrative hearing option. Maggie asked does DSS keep track whether there are certain issues that are systemic and not just individual? There is some research regarding the challenges that people with disabilities have dealing with the Medicaid system, the way they are treated and not. Beyond hearings, issues in the plan of care can stem from ongoing issues of people in need of support and services, along with the needs of their caregivers that continue because they are experiencing difficulties in finding people to meet the level of staffing depending on the way their care plan is set up. Dawn responded that Maggie has a good point, Health Disparities are well documented and that she recently shared articles on raising the visibility of individuals with disability with that discussion. We need to do better systemically.
 - Tom stated we will postpone the discussion on the formal hearing process items due to timeliness
 - a. Protocol
 - b. Steps
 - c. Timeline

- d. Hearings
- e. Requirements

5. Adjustments to CFC programs that would increase support for clients
 - Tom stated we will post pone this item due to timeliness

6. DSS steps to educate other agencies and shareholders about CFC
 - Tom stated we will post pone this item due to timeliness

7. PCA workforce/staffing update
 - Tom stated we intend to have a place at every meeting to hear an update on PCA workforce and staffing in the community. Cathy and Mary Ann presented on update on PCA Workforce. Good news is that CT Job Connection Facebook page has 362 members, with a ratio of 60% employers and 40% PCAs. Lots of connections being made. There is both luck connecting with PCAs and others who have not. Grateful for the two marketing campaigns promoting the Facebook page, they saw growth for both employers and PCA joining. An E-blast is being developed to colleges and universities. There are still too many people that are struggling to find PCAs. Mary Ann shared her personal story- emphasizing timeliness, amounts of no-show interviews, and PCA who showed up to work and then disappeared. Mary Ann asked what else can we be doing to help individuals with disabilities can go on living instead of worrying how to get up in the morning? Applicant inability to follow-through remains an issue, unmotivated. How do we get them excited? These are not new problems, just on a different scale than before. Tom shared that this is something that is a crisis on the state level that effects so many, that potentially everybody should receive this issue and this issue should be with governor's office and agencies who have expertise, and he finds that they need to be included in the discussion. It does matter who leads the departments, it is a bigger problem than an agency, but it is a State of Connecticut problem as a whole. There are adds on TV soliciting for employees. This is something that needs coordination from Governor's office and participation from the agencies. Recommendation to have colleges and universities involved and to have discussions on review of curriculum and partners around the table. There needs to be a lot more coordination, sure it is going on, but members not seeing it, and they need to hear it from the higher up.

8. EVV/S&PC Resources update
 - Tom shared that Support and Planning Coach is a service that are available to provide support to members to self-direct. That he is aware from conversations that individually, members say they do not need it at time it is offered. Jose-Michael shared that as part of the universal care manager discussion regarding the outcome of the assessment, the optional service to have a support and planning coach, as well as meals on wheels, and potential environmental modifications are discussed with a member, and yes, many members do not choose this service support. Tom stated he finds it difficult to understand why a member would refuse. Jose-Michael shared that additionally the member is presented with this option whenever they call in

any concern or request for assistance with self-directing, and with EVV time entering issues, however some members will continue to refuse the support service. Cathy shared that from her experience it could be an issue in the way it is being proposed. The documents ask, but may be unclear to both parties (access agency and members) as to how this would even work. So members did not choose the service to not impact their essential services. If it was clearer as to how to find someone and how, and need to know what the training involves, rate of pay, not having this information will extend into their inability to also recruit. Cathy shared that a support and planning coach is a person with more knowledge and members have the option to take a personal care attendant and promote them into it, but a member does not have enough people or pool to choose from. If members did do that, then they still do not know what they can offer to the personal care attendant being recruited to offer it to them, so the member cannot tell the potential support and planning coach anything regarding training, wage, benefit, etc. Cathy stated it may be too complicated when it should not be that way. The current offer is a check box on the assessment paper document, but it requires more explanation. Members and access agency staff require an employer basic brochure on how to hire one individually and how to get access to an agency and provide to employers the information they need. Cathy recommends members and access agencies should be able to ask for and provide a brochure in plain language regarding a basic rule book, including what they can access regarding recruiting, process, and benefits for support and planning coaches.

9. The meeting was called to adjourn by Tom, Chair at 12:00pm.

Jose-Michael reminded that annual CFC Committee meeting dates, agenda and minutes will be available on the Secretary of State and DSS Websites.

Next meeting: **VIRTUAL April 5th, 2023 at 11:00am.**