

Long Term Care Planning Committee

March 14, 2023

Meeting Minutes

LTC Planning Committee Members in Attendance: Melissa Morton, Chair, Office of Policy & Management (OPM); Stephanie Bozak, Department of Children and Families (DCF); Jennifer Cavallaro, Department of Social Services (DSS); Margy Gerundo-Murkette, Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS); Kelley Kendall, Department of Developmental Services (DDS); Erin Leavitt-Smith, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS); Kim Hriceniak, Department of Public Health (DPH); Commissioner Amy Porter, ADS; Michael Santoro, Department of Housing (DOH); Laura Watson, DOH; Representative Mitch Bolinsky, Representative Jane Garibay.

Others Present: Heather Ferguson-Hull, OPM

Called to order by Melissa Morton at 10:01 AM

1. Welcome

Ms. Morton offered words of welcome.

2. Agency Updates

❖ Department of Aging and Disability Services

Margy Gerundo-Murkette from the ADS, State Unit on Aging (SUA) provided an update on the division's activities.

The full presentation can be found [here](#). Highlights include:

- An update that the State Plan on Aging has been extended through September 30, 2024.
- An overview of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) initiatives related to supporting respite services, nutrition services, Service Navigators at each Area Agency on Aging, and Public Health Workforce Grants.
- An overview of the [Bridging the Digital Divide](#) program that is designed to assist seniors with accessing technology to aid in decreasing isolation. Two full-time Digital Divide Coordinators (DCC) provide training, including how to use virtual platforms, social media, and accessibility features. From October 2022-present, DCCs have provided support to 98 individuals and 17 organizations that serve people with disabilities and/or people who are 60 or older.

Ms. Gerundo-Murkette also noted that the SUA is hiring new staff in the wake of retirements in the division, including a Senior Center Coordinator, a position made possible by legislation passed in the 2022 session. Commissioner Porter highlighted that the SUA has been significantly understaffed and she praised their great work and collaboration.

❖ Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Erin Leavitt-Smith shared a presentation entitled “Recovery in Action” which can be found [here](#).

Highlights include:

- An overview of the Nursing Home Diversion and Transition Program (NHDTTP). Among its goals are to divert individuals from hospital or institutional care when possible, and to ensure appropriate nursing home placements. They provide consultation during discharge planning at the hospital and to community providers. They collaborate with Money Follows the Person & the Mental Health Waiver. NHDTTP also collaborates with Residential Care Homes to develop training for staff, to assist residents in crisis and to assist with emergency placements.
- An overview of the Mental Health Waiver, which allows clients with Severe Mental Illness who are in a nursing home, or at risk of admission, to live independently in the community. The waiver is “recovery-oriented” and focuses on person-centered planning. An overview of eligibility criteria and the range of services was also shared.
- An overview of Senior Outreach & Engagement initiatives. Each of the five DMHAS regions has had a new full-time position added as of March 1, 2023, to engage at-risk older adults with behavioral health and substance abuse treatment needs, with the goal of helping them age in place.
- The following discussion ensued:
Rep. Bolinsky commented that there is a substantial array of services provided, but that awareness of them, even among legislators, is low. He expressed concern about cuts that may be made during the Appropriations process. Ms. Leavitt-Smith noted that the Mental Health Waiver is funded through Medicaid, and receives a 50% federal match. She also stated that the Money Follows the Person program receives enhanced federal matching funds. She shared that DMHAS will be hiring an additional staff person through the Mental Health Waiver. Rep. Bolinsky said that he would like the full legislature to be aware of the programs. Ms. Leavitt-Smith said that the annual legislative report is sent to the committees of cognizance, and that she would send Rep. Bolinsky a copy. Ms. Morton added that the Long-Term Services and Supports Three-Year Plan details how to move the state forward, and an overview of all the various LTSS programs can be found in the appendix. The appendices are updated annually, which include a listing of state programs, their funding sources and current spending. She said she would forward this information to Rep. Bolinsky, along with the minutes of today’s meeting. Rep. Bolinsky asked how many people went unserved due to budget constraints. Ms. Morton says that the appendices detail the number of residents served and the cost of those services, but information about waitlists is not included. She added that the state agencies can assist him in obtaining that information.

3. Member Updates and Announcements

None offered

4. Long-Term Care Advisory Council Comments

Michael Werner, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, shared that the Council had met in December and discussed legislative priorities and that the next meeting would be at 1:00 PM on March 28, 2023. He also noted that the Senior Center Working Group would be sending its final report soon.

5. Other Business

No additional items were raised.

6. 2023 Meetings

Tuesday, June 13 -- 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM – Via Microsoft Teams

Ms. Morton noted that meetings will continue to be held via Teams this year. The June meeting will include the annual legislative wrap-up, highlighting Long-Term Services and Supports-related legislation. She encouraged agency representatives to flag any bills that should be included for discussion at the June meeting.

Full meeting recording can be accessed here:

<https://youtu.be/29D1CgZ3i3o>

Meeting adjourned at 10:59 AM