



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Ned Lamont
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner

Elisa F. Velardo
Deputy Commissioner

DRAFT Minutes of April 18, 2023, ARPA Advisory Committee Meeting

Location: Meeting held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Peter Mason, Keith Lavalette, Cheryl Ellis, Shannon Jacovino, Barry Simon, Greg McMahon, Kathleen Stauffer, Kate Haaland, Brian Smith, Katie Banzhaf, Melissa Kremmel,
Deloitte attendance- Betsy Bella, Julia Oak
McDowell Attendance- Maura Fitzgerald, Rebecca Brockway

Absent: Tracey Walker, Win Evarts, Paige Librandi, Michael Beloff,

Keith Lavalette, Chair, called the meeting to order

Keith Lavalette read the Public Meeting Requirements

Minutes of the 4/4/2023 Advisory Committee meeting were approved on a motion by Simon/Jacovino.

Update from Committee co-chairs

Residential Transformational Committee- The residential committee met on 4/6. It was discovered that an issue with families receiving the newsletter and we are trying to find out what were the issues. Deloitte provided highlights of the provider transition plans that were submitted. Discussion around vacant housing and the issues around vacant housing and discussed the proposed changes to Appendix K. We have developed a FAQ from both the provider issues and the individuals and families, and Peter will be presenting a final draft to the residential committee prior to the other committees.

Day Transformational Committee- The Day Committee did not meet, and no report was presented.

Individual and Family Committee- This committee is reviewing the one pager's that will be used in conjunction with the videos. These will assist families with some simple guidance on what services are out there with the benefits and challenges.

DDS Engagement Committee- McDowell and Deloitte presented to keep the committee updated on their progress. Discussed the educational material that Deloitte will utilize in the educational forums. Discussion around the newsletter and to become more proactive and also how to communicate with our staff.

Deloitte Presentation: Betsy Bella thanked the committee for their feedback on the selected transformational activities. They have created a draft version that DDS is currently reviewing, with the main audience is providers and DDS but it will be public so anyone can view it. Deloitte is developing educational materials developed for three separate audiences. One is aimed at the providers, one for DDS case managers and resource management and one aimed at the regional leadership level. The materials provides some highlights and high level information about STEP and how it impacts each audience and what it means to them.

15 transition plans have been received so far. The phase two transition templates are coming out this week they are very similar to phase one but are streamlined and simplified. Deloitte is continuing with the group office hours and also will be providing additional guidance materials over the next several weeks. Deloitte is developing a case manager FAQ that provides some more detail to case managers as well as something they can use when they have conversations with individuals and families.

McDowell Communications Presentation- Maura Fitzgerald presented the communication report. The one pagers are in process right now and they will go along with the seven videos that have been created. Currently five videos have been shot, they are at the production company, and they are doing some cleanup and having a DDS staff person be the voice and produce both the intros and the outros to the videos. During the month of May Commissioner forums will be taking place and in June the videos will be complete. McDowell is now turning their focus on a next newsletter to individuals, families, staff, and providers. Working on gathering the content right now and having the web developer working on designing and building a STEP specific web page that will go on the DDS webpage.

STEP Initiatives- DDS is working on a marketing and public relations plan for how to roll out step and to get everyone to know what it is. DDS will highlight the ARPA initiatives in the Commissioners forums in May, the forums will look at the main drivers of step including IHS, Customized Employment, Assistive Technology, Remote supports, and Supportive Housing. The commissioner will attend. In June there will be an Assistive Technology conference and DDS is working with the DD council and ADS for a one-day conference. Setting up a tech camp at Camp Harkness so families will be able to go there and see how the AT equipment works and how to use it. The camp will be set up sometime in July. We should have our first approved transition plans very soon and by the end of the month we should have the redesigned website for the employment network up and running. DDS and DSS are in the final stages of an RFP to incorporate DSS supported individuals who self-hire their own staff. RFP should be going sometime in early summer. The notice of opportunity that is available for assistive technology is available, we currently have 56 applications from individuals and families and have received 7 to 10 requests from providers. An assistive technology RFP is out now that will establish agencies or businesses that will complete assistive technology assessments and then purchase and install the equipment. DDS has also received a number of proposals for the non-project based supportive housing grants.

Question was asked about the approval process for the transformational plans and DDS responded saying that it is working thru process issues. These include communication back and forth with providers that have submitted plans, developing a standard letter of approval. The approval letter needs to include how many people are transitioning, justifying outcomes, an estimated total amount of the incentives for the project. DDS wants to be clear on what each party is agreeing to.

Discussed the issues that were a concern of committee members. Members were particularly vocal about sustainability of STEP supports after the ARPA period ends, as well as, the continued effect staffing shortages. Providers voiced this concerns about the rates and future increase in light of the recently released appropriations budget that came out today providing a 1% and 0% over the next two years. Peter stated that he understood their frustration but reminded them that this is only a proposed budget and that changes to the budget are probable.

The committee decided to move the committee schedule to a one per month schedule. Keith will send out a revised schedule once a TEAM'S update is completed.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 16, 2023, at 1:30pm.

The meeting was adjourned