



State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Minutes of the January 25, 2023 Meeting

Location: Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Princess Russell-Raynor, Co-Chair; Kevin Bronson, Peter Mason; Marina Derman; Yana Razumnaya; Shannon McCormick; Dawn DeMatteo; Sherri Knightly, McDowell (Maura Fitzgerald and Rebecca Brockway); Claudine Testani; Wayne Seidel.

Absent: Joseph Carvalho, Co-Chair; Sally Bonito;

Introductions

Co-Chair, calls the meeting to order at 11:01 am

Topics for discussion:

- a) ARPA Updates and Overview (Peter Mason)
 - Peter opened by providing an overview of where the ARPA initiative stands:
 - ARPA
 - Working on phase one of Transformation “Moving On.”
 - 25 providers have responded stating their interest in phase one. 11 of those providers are going to submit a transition plan.
 - Working closely with providers interested in submitting plans. Will gather feedback on the process to inform how best to move forward with phase two.
 - Deloitte working through state analysis- reviewed Arkansas, Maine, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. DDS CT is at the top in states doing creative things in the country. ARPA Initiative Team reviewing; plans to publish towards the end of next week.
 - Individual/Families surveys submitted. Shared with case managers for FYI. Will review feedback to inform future efforts.
 - Stakeholders Virtual Info sessions held - reviewed overall feedback, identified themes around workforce crisis/staffing, transportation, communication, case management training, identifying what menu of options are.
 - Case Managers (CMs) feedback –
 - Intraagency coordination concerns- BRS (Bureau of Rehab Services) –
 - Reconsideration for criteria/definition of employability. Historically BRS took a much stricter interpretation. DDS working with BRS to expand horizon on who is employable.
 - It would be helpful to have access to BRS records for planning/assessment/exploration purposes.
 - Difficulty accessing multitude of communications/updated materials on DDS website.
 - Restarting regional case manager meetings; creating opportunities for and fostering peer mentorship/learning.
 - Leveraging Self-Advocates to help with transitions.

- Building relationships with employers. Registry of employers who are more reliable and willing to hire individuals with disabilities.
 - Working on creating (7) videos for support models to help stakeholders with insight on how those models work for people, to inspire creative possibilities using assistive technologies, including testimonials from stakeholders. Identified production company to start this project.
 - Rewarding Work- contracted 12/1; redesigning website eff 3/1
 - Posted additional assistive technology grants for individuals/providers (residential). Looking at adding opportunities for day services grants.
 - Looking at finishing up grant request for supportive housing sites (not project based- from the ground up; takes 2 + years). Looking at working through existing apartment complex owners to set up supportive housing sites.
 - Rent Subsidy – enhance program to increase rates (affordability issue for individuals who need start up funds).
- Peter Mason opened up the floor for questions following his updates above.
 - Yana Razumnaya – discussed transportation access issue ongoing.
 - Peter Mason – working on expanding to utilize Uber/Lyft for those outside of normal/public transportation areas. Looking at software program to input all routes providers drive now to leverage opportunities for others.
 - Yana Razumnaya – Commissioner discussed transportation is at the top of the agenda – safety/cost considerations for Uber/Lyft. Transportation oriented development is needed.
 - Co-Chair – Transportation is a huge priority for the department.
 - Dawn DeMatteo – CM need more training, not all CM are well versed. CM are first line contact for individuals/families to help interpret initiatives.
 - Peter Mason – Surveys are in place to gauge how informed CMs are now vs. next year, we are hoping to have a much more informed stakeholder group.
 - Dawn DeMatteo – communicated with Princess about poor experience per parents who attended Deloitte stakeholder session – described lack of communication.
 - Dawn DeMatteo – inquired about 11 providers who submitted plans.
 - Peter Mason – discussed identifying providers once plans are approved.
 - Kevin Bronson- inquired what are we trying to communicate to DDS staff right now, what are we missing?
 - Marina Derman- not all CMs are inconsistent in dedication. ARPA website is challenging to read, lots of acronyms, not engaging for families. Discussed past Department of Human Services initiative that she described was successful called “Employment is for everyone!” Used employers as ambassadors.
 - Wayne Seidel – member feedback is invaluable. Agree with Kevin/Princess that CM feedback has been positive overall. Discussed collaborative input, smaller discussions needed about ARPA, regional updates/champions would be helpful to info share.
 - Peter Mason – regional updates/champions, smaller conversations are a great idea, to help CM be better informed and keep conversations going. CM job is very difficult and lots of information/updated information coming frequently.
 - Co-Chair – this team communication is invaluable and necessary to further the work of ARPA. Please keep feedback coming, email co-chairs with any questions, concerns, observations and follow up.
- b) Co-Chair- thanked Peter Mason for covering item (b) on the agenda - communications planning – very thorough update Peter!
- c) Co-Chair – opened the floor to Trevor Rogers for Day Incentives presentation-
 - Trevor Rogers – introduction and presentation; will send presentation slides to co-chair.
 - Opened the floor for questions- no questions.
- d) Co-Chair – opened the floor to McDowell Communications Consultant on the agenda; invited McDowell to share updates related to ARPA communication.

- Maura Fitzgerald of McDowell –
 - Individual/Families survey – received over 1,000 surveys back from research firm; survey deadline 1/31/23. Happy with response so far.
 - Developing DDS Staff survey online, QR code access.
 - Email from Deputy Commissioner will go out to staff today ahead of staff survey which will inform on purpose of survey, link to come in Commissioner’s next Friday message to staff.
 - 7 Videos – in development; amplify individual success stories. CM can share with individuals/families and providers who need a visual.
 - Newsletter- for all stakeholders, providing updates every other month; first issue will be top lines informing stakeholders on what committees have been working on.
 - More frequent staff communication.
 - Working on revamping DDS ARPA website.
 - Master communications calendar.
- Co-Chair- opened the floor for questions.
 - Co-Chair – expanded on points Maura made leveraging videos/testimonials, frequent communications. Wayne Seidel and Co-Chair in communication on how best to support CMs with more intimate/frequent communication. Looking at building up our individuals/families emails through signup and during annual IP planning meetings.
 - Wayne Seidel- working on strategies to ensure emails are updated so communications get to stakeholders. Internal communications need to go out to staff prior to notifications going to external stakeholders.
 - Marina Derman- discussed technology considerations around going beyond email into text messaging for those who prefer it.
 - Kevin Bronson- technology considerations are on the table. We understand not everyone reads emails. The timeframe/cost necessary to overhaul our existing database system may not be feasible. Innovation for internal systems are on the table, but we are focused on how to communicate now using what we have at our disposal.
 - Maura Fitzgerald- this is a larger and broader state issue that needs to be looked at, and is not something that can be done on a small scale.
 - Dawn DeMatteo- annual IP forms require updated contact information from individual/families. This issue happened to me where I updated my contact info at the IP but I did not receive DDS communication because my address was not updated in the system.
 - Co-Chair – CM do complete these updates typically at the IP point. Information changes at other points. It is important to continuously confirm contact info.
- e) Future Agenda Items
 - Guest Presentation on Residential Incentives
 - Invite Deloitte/McDowell to present on transformational/communication updates - next steps for better understanding; what we can expect to communicate to staff around phase two.
 - Update on strategies and coordination around regional staff updates. Committee to focus on how best to structure messaging to help staff understand what ARPA is all about and get them up to speed on all updates, and prepared when referring to actual plans.

Announcement of Next Meeting

Wednesday, February 8, 11:00 am

Adjournment

Kevin Bronson made a motion to adjourn, Co-Chair seconded; meeting adjourned at 12:03 pm.