



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Ned Lamont
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner

Elisa F. Velardo
Deputy Commissioner

**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Engagement Committee
April 19th Meeting Minutes**

Location: Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance:; Cres Secchiaroli Co-Chair, Yana Razumnaya; Peter Mason; Marina Derman; Shannon McCormick; Dawn DeMatteo; Gunnar Abrahamsson; Claudine Testani; Wayne Seidel; McDowell (Maura Fitzgerald and Rebecca Brockway); Deloitte (Betsy Bella, Julia Oak, Pam Hatcher), Lauren Gray, Wayne Seidel, Marina Derman

Absent: Sherri Knightly, Kevin Bronson, Princess Russell-Raynor, Co-Chair

Call to Order:

Co-Chair, calls the meeting to order at 11:05 am

Discussion Topics:

- 1) Approval of the 4/5/2023 meeting minutes. A motion was made by Wayne Siedel to approve the minutes and seconded by Peter Mason. Meeting minutes were unanimously approved.
- 2) **Peter Mason (ARPA Update)**
 - a. DDS has run into an issue with Rewarding Work employment network website for individuals who self-hire their own staff. It was resolved and the new website should be up and running by the end of the month.
 - b. DDS is working on the final stages of a larger request for proposal (RFP) for those that self-hire, DDS is speaking with the Department of Social Services DSS to establish a joint operation. The RFP should be going out later in the summer of 2023. DDS is looking to add a backup emergency staffing component to the RFP.

3) Maura Fitzgerald & Rebecca Brockway (McDowell Communications)

- a. Updated the group on the plan to roll out communications and materials in a structured manner to allow for distribution to DDS Staff and Private Providers first, and then individuals and families. This will allow those who need to answer questions and understand the materials time to prep and review ahead of individuals and families receiving the materials and information.
- b. McDowell is working on a flyer that has a message from the Commissioner along with brief descriptions of the 7 main supports of the Supporting Transformation to Empower People (STEP) system, along with information and details on the May STEP Into Innovation Forums happening in the month of May. This flyer is on track to go out end of April. McDowell is also working on a June and September newsletter.
- c. McDowell is working with DDS Staff to put together a series of one-pagers outlining the 7 main supports that are a part of STEP:
 - ❖ Community Companion Homes CCH)
 - ❖ Remote Supports
 - ❖ Self-Direction
 - ❖ Supportive Housing
 - ❖ Individualized-Home Supports (IHS)
 - ❖ Assistive Technology
 - ❖ Employment Services
- d. McDowell is also working on a STEP “one-pager” that gives a brief description of what STEP is.
- e. McDowell is also working to produce 7 videos on the topics listed above to help illustrate to individuals and families how these supports work. There will also be an intro and outro to this video series. The videos and one-pagers for the 7 supports will roll out in June.

4) Deloitte (Betsy Bella, Julia Oak, Pam Hatcher)

- a. Deloitte updated the group on the draft version of the DDS STEP Plan. The plan outlines the different actions and items that DDS has decided to move forward to help support STEP and support this process. There are going to be information sessions for private providers and DDS staff. These sessions are going to provide these stakeholders with opportunities, information and potential impacts of STEP.
- b. There are separate training pieces to these sessions which will delve into more specifics on strategic planning, template creation, and ways to take advantage of the opportunities presented by STEP. These trainings pieces will also target DDS Staff to illustrate how to review a strategic plan, and how their work may change as STEP begins to become a more routine part of DDS services.
- c. Deloitte is developing guidance materials to include a Case Manager FAQ which builds on the individuals and families FAQ sheet. Deloitte is also in the process of creating a one-pager for private providers on creative approaches, examples, and ideas on how they can use STEP to push forward innovation.

- d. Deloitte provided an update on educational materials for DDS Staff, specifically Case Management and Resource Management. DDS Staff on the call provided feedback and edits for Deloitte to incorporate into the document to make it more user friendly.

5) Patricia Cymbala (Assistive Technology Updates and Overview).

- a) Assistive Technology (AT) refers to any item or piece of equipment that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life, including at school, at work, at home and in the community.
- b) Assistive technology ranges on a continuum from low tech to high tech devices or equipment. Low-tech devices are usually less expensive, don't require a lot of training and have less features. High-tech devices tend to be more expensive, may require more in-depth training but will also likely have multiple features and are more adaptable for multiple purposes.
- c) Assistive technology can help people at any age in all aspects of their lives: at home, at work, and in the community. The use of technology can help young children to maintain typical development, it can be used to help promote inclusion in the regular education environment, and it can assist adults in being successfully employed in real jobs. AT can help enhance communication and can help increase independence and assist individuals to live more self-determined lives. Resources are available through Medicaid, private insurance, and other sources to pay for assistive technology.
- d) For many aging adults, AT makes the difference between being able to live independently and having to get long-term nursing or home health care. For others, AT is critical to the ability to perform simple activities of daily living, such as bathing and going to the bathroom.
- e) Older adults must carefully evaluate their needs before deciding to purchase AT. Using AT may change the mix of services that an aging adult requires or may affect the way that those services are provided. For this reason, the process of needs assessment and planning is important.