

Advisory Council to the Division of Autism Services

Notes November 9, 2011

Approved at 2/15/2012 meeting

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Nancy Bagatell, Judy Dowd, Chera Gerstein, Ann Gionet, Jay Kearns, Jacqueline Kelleher, David Daniel Klipper, Sara Lourie, James Loomis, Kathy Marchione, Yana Razumnaya, Sara Reed, Nikki Richer, Lois Rosenwald, Jonathan Ross, Barbara Salop, Tricia Winter

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Catherine Abercrombie, Ruth Eren, Stan Soby, Larry Wood

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS:** Commissioner Macy, Siobhan Morgan, Lori Conchado

**GUESTS:** Marty Legault, Barbara Geller, Dawn Lambert

**No Public Comment**

**Judy Dowd introduced Alison Fisher who has been assigned as DDS' Budget Analyst.**

**Approval of May Minutes** – Trisha Winter moved to accept; Jonathan Ross seconded. Minutes were approved

**Status update on refill for Autism Positions:** The position for a Director is expected to be posted shortly. Lori will provide the Job Description to Co-chairs when it becomes available. The Executive Committee will choose a couple of representatives including a consumer to participate in the interview process Yana Razumnaya expressed interest in being a part of this process. Positions for case managers have been posted.

**Update on Waivers:** Commissioner Macy reported that very little new information is available. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have requested a meeting with DSS to clarify questions. DDS is working with DSS to provide information.

**Autism Feasibility Study** – Under the direction of the Department of Social Services, Value Options, the contractor for the Behavioral Health Partnership is coordinating the feasibility study. DDS, DSS, DCF, SDE, OPM and DMHAS are participating. Currently, Value Options is gathering data on Medicaid funded services provided to individuals on the spectrum – who, what services, in what venue and how long? Once this data has been compiled, the other state agencies will provide the same information about the services they have funded or provided. With that information, we will have a comprehensive look at what services are being funded or provided by the State of Connecticut. After that (hopefully the end of the calendar year), the Hospital for Special Care and representatives from their planning council will be contacted to join the workgroup. The plan is to compare the information gathered by two workgroups which will allow back and forth discussion to identify gaps and develop recommendations to address them.

## Barbara Geller's Discussion About Housing

- There are many homeless people who are on the spectrum. Her position is that a person cannot be well and participate meaningfully in society without housing. We discussed the recent storm and how disruptive it was for some people to lose power for less than two weeks. This disruption is the permanent condition for homeless persons. In the long term, it is not cost effective **not** to deal with housing. There are not that many options for housing, however.
- **Partnership for Strong Communities:** A non-profit organization funded by the Melville Foundation, whose main focus is to provide supportive housing and create more affordable housing statewide. <http://pschousing.org/> There is very little affordable housing. HUD dictates allowable rent rates for the entire country, so the rates that might be adequate elsewhere are not adequate here.
- **Section 8 Housing:** This is the best federal housing option established to provide safe and affordable housing for eligible low-income individuals. Individuals typically pay 30% of their income towards rent regardless of their actual amount of income while the remainder is subsidized by federal money. Our state housing authority is the Department of Social Services (DSS). There is another federal program for mental illness, addiction and HIV (Shelter Plus Care).separate from Section 8.
- **Continuum of Care:** Is a non- profit organization operating licensed group homes, supported living programs and intensive 24-hour supported living programs throughout the state. They work together with state agency representatives and would be a good resource. As a service provider, they receive state funding and we should be aware of them. They are local and there are many of them. DMHAS works with a state-wide Continuum of Care program.
- **Rental Assistance Programs (RAP'S):** RAP's are state funded Section 8 Housing funded by the state through the general fund. To get a new certificate issued it is usually necessary to provide the funds for it. These are difficult to obtain. A request for a modest number of RAPs should be part of any housing initiative for our population.
- **Supportive Housing:** Is a combination of housing through a RAP certificate or some other funding mechanism coupled with services intended as a cost-effective way to help people live more stable, productive lives. This type of housing provides case management. These are not 24/7 programs; the case managers connect people with services. It is not a dedicated building; it is simply housing that has been rented. It can be clustered but does not have to be. The case managers travel as needed to visit their clients. Generally, the funding is \$9,500/person, which may be declining. People have been stable. The case managers have not had great success at getting their clients employment opportunities. They have

had to retrain some case managers to let them know that everyone can work. We want an empowerment model rather than a paternalistic model. Parents can be difficult at times.

- There is an interagency committee – it has many agencies included to talk about supportive housing. As service providers, they can't advocate legislators, but the Partnership for Strong Communities can and do lobby.
- There is an RFP out for new units of supportive housing. They are not talking about group homes or 24/7 care. The client needs to be a good tenant but can do what s/he wants otherwise. The client can say 'No' to services, but the case manager needs to keep pushing. It is rehabilitation vs. a custodial model.
- DMHAS has a housing unit. The unit focuses on finding safe, affordable, permanent housing for DMHAS clients. The unit also manages some RAP certificates for participants in the FUSE program. Judy Dowd said that the more and more agencies are using a modified supportive housing model to manage their clients in the community.
- **Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA):** Provides low interest loans to individuals who need assistance and are interested in home ownership. There are three required components CHFA gets money, the Treasurer gets money to pay the bonds, DMHAS provides funded services and DSS gets the other money. All the pieces need to be included or it won't work. This model is being used for people released from jail and a pilot is being done for addicts who are homeless.
- She recommends that we work with the pilot. We would need to get RAPs for those who needed them. Their cost to the state is relatively reasonable at about \$9,000 each.
- To participate in one of these programs you need two months cash up front to rent an apartment, and you need to address where these funds will come from. You might have to get funds from different sources, who may have different requirements. You need to address renter's insurance and furniture. New Haven Home Recovery has a warehouse of furniture. Yana talked about the importance of being self-sufficient and having your own place. We discussed the different needs of different persons with ASD.

### **Things to consider:**

- The Council should focus on advocating in the Legislature for housing requesting funding, which costs approximately \$9,000 per person.
- **Acquired Brain Injury Waivers (ABI):** DSS and DMHAS both have individuals enrolled in these waivers. They initially are cared for in CVH or the Hospital of Special Care and then moved into the community settings. Housing options (RAPS) were not initially considered for this waiver; they were developed into the system utilizing money obtained through the General Fund.
- Barbara has two staff members who can make themselves available to assist Council Members in developing goals and objectives focusing on housing initiatives. If we

formed a sub-committee they might be available to be members of it. We might want to work with local housing authorities, in which case we should consider focusing on larger cities i.e., Waterbury, Meriden, who have federally funded options available. New Haven in particular seems to have more flexibility than some other housing agencies. There are more than 100 of them in CT.

- It is also important to remember that there can be advantages and disadvantages to mixing elderly and disabled people. There are more disabled people than elderly people on the waiting lists. Elderly people pay more than the disabled because they pay a higher percentage of their income. If a building is all disabled, this can be a problem financially.
- In terms of the Medicaid waiver, it provides services but no RAP certificates. All residents receive SSI. The difference between SSI and the budget is funded by the State. It is important to work within HUD guidelines, but Barbara thinks we are fine in this regard.
- She also spoke about 211 funding from HUD. This program was changed because of the Melville family. We should find non-profits who have done this, as you need to partner with experience to receive money. Patti Walker, from Continuum of Care in New Haven deals with mostly mental illness, but she is knowledgeable and we should talk with her.
- Patti Walker bought a house for 4 people to live in. There were no RAP certificates, but she did use SSI. Winthrop Street in New Haven deal with people who need 24/7 care.
- Private non-profits typically cost \$30-40K/year. This includes food and services as well as a room in a house. This can be good for parents with money.
- Barbara's philosophy is to start with the least restrictive environment and increase services if they fail. Often we start with the most restrictive environment and participants need to earn their way out. She thinks the latter may not be the most helpful model.
- She mentioned that some towns allow Section 8 funds to be used for home ownership.
- She is willing to serve on a committee or task force.
- We discussed writing a guest editorial using the storm as an metaphor for the experience of homelessness. We formed a group to work on this.
- We discussed whether we want to put together a group that works on the Housing issue. We decided that the Executive Committee will come up with a concept of what such a group should do.

### **Future Meetings:**

- Judy will invite Mark Shok, who heads up eligibility determination for DSS to be a guest speaker for an upcoming meeting. Sara Lourie will provide an overview of the Voluntary

Services Program for the next meeting, and we also want to consider inviting individuals i.e., from BRS, Walgreens and Ability Beyond Disability to discuss employment options.

- David Daniel will propose dates for 2012 and send to all members for availability.

**Other:**

- Individuals volunteered to work on developing an Op-Ed addressing homelessness. This initiative comes at a good time as the state is still recovering from the recent storm in which many were without power and homes for many days.
- Lois will contact Senator McKinney to invite him to join the Council
- **Nominations and Membership Committee:** Nancy Bagatell and Jay Kearns volunteered to join the Committee. The Committee will work on terms for members to be discussed at the next meeting. Members who are there as a state employee shouldn't have a term if they are appointed by statute. They will also develop language to add to our Bylaws addressing member's terms being extended beyond term until positions are refilled. David Daniel will remain on as a Co-chair until a replacement is named. The Board, through a motion duly made and seconded, voted in the members listed on the sheet handed out (as corrected – see attached spreadsheet) until such time as the Nominations and Membership Committee brought forth a slate of candidates and officers for the Board to vote upon.