



**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary – November 8, 2021**

Larry Bram, Co-Chair • Karen Morgret, Co-Chair

Attendees: Betty Bahadori; Larry Bram; Crystel Britto; Odile Brunetto; Onesta Duke; Simone Geness; Meghan Hall; Marie Parker Harvey; Lisa Hazell; Susan Ingram; Julia Jensen; Beth Lash; Shawn Lattanzio; Tom Liniak; Lisa Lorraine; Jenn Lynn; Laurie Lyons; Fanta Mansaray; Kim Mayo; Seth Morgan; Karen Morgret; Sara O'Neil; Philip Perlman; Ukela Proctor; Beth Shuman; Susan Smith; Jeneva Stone; Raychon Stroman

Staff: Betsy Luecking; Carly Clem

Approval of the October 2021 Meeting Summary Minutes

A motion was made to approve the October 2021 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the October 2021 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ddac.

Data Collection Discussion and Outcomes - Planning for Needs of those on Waiting Lists – Larry Bram

After last month's meeting Larry, Karen, Betsy and several others met and developed a series of data spreadsheets.

- Information being requested includes waitlists, transitioning youth (TY), employees.
- Purpose is to show where additional staff and resources are needed.
- The spreadsheets were sent to seven Coordination of Community Services (CCS) agencies.
- Received responses from five of the seven agencies.
- Data will continue to be collected via this method and will be more useful over time as trends are noted.
- Not all information requested was included by each agency.
 - Ask for information on employees, open positions and received little to no information.
 - Some agencies included information as far back as July.
- As of October 2021 – five agencies are serving 3,400 individuals.
 - Does not include data from Resource Connections or Beatrice Loving Heart.
 - 25 people are in crisis resolution, 30 are in crisis prevention, 779 are in current request.
 - 2,285 individuals receive traditional services and 226 are in self-directed services
 - Montgomery County Health & Human Services (HHS) has over 300 people on their waitlist.
 - Montgomery County HHS can only serve 500 people.
 - TY21/FY22s
 - 81 in service
 - 6 in self-directed
 - 67 seeking services
 - The number of those seeking services may be higher due to individuals who have extended their time in the Autism Waiver prior to transitioning to DDA services and may not be as far along in the process.
 - 6 declined services
 - 18 pending waivers as of October 21.
 - MMARS serves almost half of the individuals in Montgomery County.
 - Total Care serves 800 individuals.
- Jenn Lynn asked if data could be tracked for six months to see if the numbers improve.
 - Important to use the data to address issues, make changes and advocate for additional reimbursements or funding.

Question: Are CCS providers given any goals or timelines for these numbers? Are there strategies about how to facilitate inclusion of these individuals before their deadline ends?

- Collect data in order to track what is happening.
- Need to have a conversation about what this Committee should be focusing on.
- Funding from Build Back Better and budget reconciliation won't come in for at least a year.
- What can be done now to help these numbers?

Susan Ingram suggested asking CCS agencies to develop an implementation plan for how they will get TYs placed in traditional services or in self-directed services.

- Suggested at a previous meeting that TYs have a self-directed plan for the time being if they cannot find a provider.
- FY22 TYs only have until July 1, 2022 or they miss the deadline.
- Some providers have concerns about staff shortages and capacity to serve.

Onesta Duke, Regional Director, Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Maryland Department of Health (MDH), Southern Maryland Regional Office (SMRO), said individuals should express an interest in self-directed services, not necessarily because they have no other options.

- Self-directed is a whole process that is different from the traditional model and requires a lot of work.
- There has been an increase in individuals interested in self-directed services due to CCS agencies explaining the benefit of that service delivery model and how it gives an individual more choice and control with hiring their staff and having budget authority.
- DDA continues to encourage participation in self-directed services.
- Understand that there are staffing constraints and individuals in the traditional model may not be able to access services currently.

Susan noted she attended an ARC listening session prior to the pandemic that indicated many individuals in self-directed services went into that service delivery model because they could not find a traditional service that matched their needs.

- Losing out on services altogether seems a more serious consequence than not finding a provider.

Onesta said in the Southern Maryland Regional Office (SMRO) staff are working with coordinators to get individuals enrolled in the waiver as well as identify providers.

- Some providers are accepting TYs.

Raychon Stroman, Associate Executive Director, Resource Connections, views these issues from two different perspectives – one is acquiring the services and having them rendered versus securing the slot and the funding.

- Sometimes the individual doesn't necessarily need to identify a provider by the time they enroll in the waiver.
- Important to get them enrolled in the waiver - once they are enrolled then they can identify a provider.
- Still an issue with providers and capacity.

Onesta said there is currently a larger number of FY22 TYs that are pending waiver enrollment.

- Goal and focus are to get those individuals in the waiver and then look for a provider.
- Working with coordinators to achieve that goal.
- The standard rule is once enrolled in the waiver individuals need to identify services within six months.
- There are times when it goes beyond the six month timeline.
- Individuals cannot be on two waivers at the same time.
- DDA will be printing additional guidance regarding TYs that are in the Autism Waiver.

Larry said situations most likely won't change until more funding is made available and providers can hire more staff.

- He suggested CCS agencies meet to discuss a plan of action given the high numbers.

Susan said CCS agencies have indicated previously that some families were struggling to make decisions and submit paperwork, especially since much is being done remotely.

- Not everyone has the technology available to scan or fax documentation.

- Susan suggested a mentoring approach to provide assistance to families in helping to gather the necessary paperwork and go about the process.
- Lisa Lorraine who is working with Jubilee on their Breaking Barriers project is assisting individuals. Breaking Barriers program is funded by a grant to assist traditionally underserved individuals in Montgomery County.
- There is a demographic disparity for Hispanic and Asian families accessing DDA services.
- Lisa is currently working with one TY22 family and is available to assist other families, especially those families that speak Spanish or other languages.
- Referrals can be sent to Lisa at Llorraine@jubileemd.org.

Susan suggested this Committee reach out to MCPS transition teachers.

- Concerns as teachers are short staffed and managing more issues.
- Transition teachers are very involved in helping students fill out applications for services and assisting with paperwork to apply to different providers.
- Community Support Services has not been receiving referrals from transition teachers or CCS agencies.
- Mostly receiving word-of-mouth referrals from those already in the children's program.
- Suggested providers present before InterACC/DD, a coalition of Montgomery County providers serving individuals with developmental disabilities.
- InterACC/DD could address issues that providers are experiencing.
- There is no single way to reach all CCS agencies at once.

Marie Parker, Transition Services Unit, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), agreed with Susan's idea to talk to CCS agencies about their plan for next steps and determine which agencies can take on new individuals.

- Due to the pandemic, MCPS has been setting up virtual tours with providers which is different from transition fairs held in the past.
- Marie is interested in developing a database or an application where CCS agencies are connected with providers and can receive realtime accurate information on what openings or services these providers have available.
- Prior to the pandemic, TYs were on the waiver for 200 days.
- Pushing individuals into waiver services is a good idea, but the other issue is people are waiting for services.
- Need to have a conversation about this issue and start looking at ways to address it.
- Even as services have returned to in-person, MCPS has been coordinating virtual agency visits.
- High school transition support teachers have been working to provide families with connections on multiple levels – getting the information out there, facilitating visits, helping families file applications and gather documentation, following up and providing support.
- Even with those individuals that have been accepted by providers, some have not received start dates yet due to the pandemic and because of staffing issues.
- It is Simone's understanding that providers are giving priority to returning clients and then are able to take on new clients once new staff are hired.
- Since the pandemic started, Margie Parrott, Instructional Specialist, Transition Services Unit, has been meeting monthly with CCS coordinators in order to closely monitor upcoming TYs.
- MCPS continues to provide some support as needed (documentation, paperwork, assisting the family) once students leave the school system, but it is up to the CCS, DDA and providers to complete the process.
 - Example: Three students were on the fence and had not applied by the time they graduated – transition teachers assisted with submitting the paperwork.
- Continue to meet with Kim Mayo, HHS, and work with Onesta to determine how timelines can be reduced for individuals receiving services.
- Transition Support Teachers (TSTs) have also been sharing more information regarding self-directed services as another option for families to consider.
- Over 15 MCPS TST's have signed up to be Social Security Administration alternate processors to assist families in getting those applications processed.
- Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has been working on a The Maryland Transition Linkage Tool (MTLT) - a secure online data-sharing tool developed to make sure students with disabilities are connected to all available resources and agencies, as appropriate.

- MTLT will help to track students' referrals to adult service agencies, eligibility determination, provision of services, and attainment of goals.
- MTLT will eventually be implemented across the state.
- With MTLT, students and families get linked to the appropriate services at the right points in time.
- MTLT will facilitate continuous information sharing to minimize confusion, duplication of effort, and missed opportunities.
- MSDE is on track for it to happen and are currently in negotiations.

Susan said once an individual exits the school system in June, the school system is done assisting them. Yet the transition to actual adult placement occurs anywhere from July on through the following June.

- The year that the individual is out of school is the critical year placement.
- Prior to the pandemic, there were strict timelines, deadlines and instructions to help facilitate placement earlier in the process.
- Provider tours were typically completed between July and September and first choice selections were out to providers by October with second choice selections out to providers by December.
- Concerned that the adult system timeline continues to shift and more will need to be done once they leave school.
 - Simone clarified that the TY timeline is still very tight – that has not changed.
 - The goal is to accomplish as much as possible to ensure the students are at least in the waiver and awaiting a start date for services prior to leaving the school system.
 - TSTs are constantly checking in with CCS agencies and Margie meets with those agencies monthly.
 - Even if TSTs begin a year and a half to two years in advance, the process can still be very overwhelming for families.
 - Provide information and encourage families to attend presentations even if they previously attended them.
 - Even with all the information provided, there will always be a reason why something didn't happen.
 - TSTs work with TYs in the spring to have provider visits occur during the summer.
 - Assistance during the summer is provided by Simone and Margie only – the other staff are ten-month employees.
 - Nicole Sheppard, TY Coordinator, SMRO DDA, presented during a Transition Planning Parent Workshop on Adult Services
 - Working to get families to understand the waivers and the timeline.
 - In 2020, in addition to the annual TY fair MCPS started an overall exit meeting for all TYs.
 - Nicole, CCS agency TY coordinators / supervisors, and parents were invited.

Susan said from a provider perspective – if providers need to increase capacity and develop new services for certain populations then providers need to think ahead of time.

- Receiving choice letters in October enables providers to have multiple months to determine how to develop and design services.
- It is difficult for providers to manage this when one person at a time is applying.
- There was a benefit to receiving choice letters in batches.
- If providers are receiving first choice letters in April or May it's too late to plan and hire staff.
- Certain cost reports are also due in December.
- Need to have serious conversations within the provider community about capacity and how to expand where possible.
- Ask each CCS company to develop a plan rather than look at individual cases.
- As a provider representing providers, Susan said they are not receiving the information the way they used to that helped them make better decisions.
 - For example, DDA and the County knew a large number of people in the TY system that had medical needs were going to need a provider.
 - DDA and the County approached Kennedy Krieger Institute about developing a program or service model that would meet the needs of these individuals.
- Larry suggested reaching out to a few providers to determine what the barriers are and adding it to the spreadsheet.

Simone noted it is hard to stick to the timeline when families cannot meet it.

- Concerns about families unable to access services.
- The timeline is shared with families as early as the 5th grade.
- Meetings have been held in elementary schools to provide information especially to those individuals that are known to be going into services.
- TSTs work to get as many high school students to submit their applications to DDA prior to exiting the school system.
- High school TSTs track students and target supports to those who have not had their application submitted.
- Some of it falls on the family because they do not submit the paperwork or application in a timely manner.

Sara O'Neil, DDA QE Analyst II, MMARS, noted that the CCS role is an ever-changing role.

- CCSs continue to manage the ever-changing roles of TYs especially during the pandemic.
- There is a multi-disciplinary approach between MCPS, DDA and CCS agencies.
 - That approach it does vary differently from how that approach was pre-pandemic.
- There is not one agency that is responsible over another agency to increase the numbers – it continues to be and needs to remain a collaborative effort.
- MMARS has a staff person whose role is solely focused on TYs.

Lisa Hazell, Parent, asked curious about the CCS pay scale, educational qualifications, onboard COMAR/Waiver training, and professional development.

- She would like to know more about how to better train and support CCSs.

Larry noted that turnover and training is an issue.

- He asked how this Committee can help – is it through making recommendations to the Commission on People with Disabilities or advocacy and support provided as individuals or parents?
- He suggested keeping this issue on the agenda and continue to discuss solutions.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, said this Committee has no authority over CCS agencies. The County does not supplement CCS agencies.

- DDA funds CCS agencies and therefore would have authority to ask them to develop outline/strategy/guideline and be consistent.

Issue of TY21s and TY22s – and what happens when providers are hit with both groups seeking services.

In the past, MCPS internally would have projection numbers for TYs to determine how many were coming up in the pipeline.

- Could potentially determine what type of services those TYs would need but that would require parent involvement.

Raychon asked if MCPS or InterACC/DD helps to categorize barriers to placement.

- Is it families and the process, do families need additional support, finding a provider to meet the needs, waiver-related issues, etc?
- Just looking at the overall number doesn't provide quantitative data or determine how to support those individuals.
- Resource Connections takes a different approach in placing individuals when they know what the specific barrier is.

Simone said when MCPS would meet quarterly with SMRO they would receive updates as to the various factors why an individual may not be in services yet.

- That information is typically in the notes section.
- This Committee's TY workgroup did ask for an aggregate breakdown of information to drill down into the data.
 - This information is tracked internally by DDA and may not be readily available.

Onesta said DDA does have a statewide tracker to collect information regarding barriers.

- Data is collected to provide necessary guidance and to overall improve the whole TY process.
- Identified a variety of reasons why placement is not occurring.
 - Largest reason is the pandemic
 - Families are not completing information or are non-responsive.
- Additional guidance and information about TYs will be disseminated soon.
- Information regarding the timeline has been clarified and disseminated to CCSs.
- Discussions continue at the regional and headquarters level around how to improve the TY process.
- Agreed it is a collaborative effort.
- Data regarding barriers to receiving TY services can be gathered specific to Montgomery County and shared with this group.

Jeneva Stone, Parent, said she had an enormously difficult time during the TY process.

- MCPS' Learning For Independence (LFI) program matches up adult services based on functional category.
- That is not how the disability community is aligning itself in terms of advocacy.
- Providers should focus on what activities might be offered instead of looking at someone's functional capacity.
- Parents are generally confused about the process.
- Parents are supposed to decide what their child wants to do, but then run into various barriers and walls related to their child's perceived level of functioning.

Onesta asked how this Committee wants to receive data moving forward.

- Does she need to provide waiting list and TY data from SMRO if that same information is being gathered from the CCSs? (Betsy has been contacted and the preference from at least one CCS is that SMRO office share the data)

Next DDAC meeting to be held Monday, December 13 from 4pm to 5:30pm.

- Send agenda suggestions to Larry, Karen or Betsy.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

Next Meeting

Monday, December 13, 2021 from 4pm to 5:30pm – via Zoom

Instructions to attend will be included on the meeting agenda.