



**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities  
Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee  
Meeting Summary – June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

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

**Attendees:** Betty Bahadori; Larry Bram; Carly Clem; Rosemary DiPietro; Onesta Duke; Claire Funkhouser; Susan Goodman; Michael Greenberg; Susan Hartung; Sari Hornstein; Annette Jolles; Jonathan Katz; Shawn Lattanzio; Tom Liniak; Betsy Luecking; Jenn Lynn; Kim Mayo; Karen Morgret; Nilanjana Moulick; Sara O'Neill; Gloria Odongo; Marie Parker; Margie Parrott; Odile Saggi; Beth Shuman; Susan Smith; Ben Spagenberg; Jeneva Stone

**Update from DDA – Onesta Duke, Acting Director, DDA Southern Maryland Regional Office**

Onesta Duke is the new Acting Director for the DDA Southern Maryland Regional Office (SMRO). She has worked at SMRO previously as the Director of Special Populations providing oversight to forensics, Transitioning Youth (TY), and Self-Directed Services (SDS). She also provided oversight to the program team responsible for reviewing person-centered plans (PCP). Onesta has worked with the majority of DDA programs including eligibility and waivers and works closely with provider agencies on service funding plans (SFP).

Onesta reported that one of the major focuses of DDA right now is to provide supports to providers regarding reopening day programs. The last several webinars held by Deputy Secretary Bernie Simons have focused on reopening of services and DDA's intention to share considerations and a framework based on national best practices. DDA is currently coordinating with national level groups to develop a framework to be shared with participants, their families, and providers for their consideration in developing their plans. Then each provider can create their own individual reopening plan. The DDA is asking providers to take certain factors into consideration such as CDC recommendations and guidelines, state and local level orders, and health and safety protocols. SMRO is in the process of developing a framework specific to southern providers and will be convening a reopening workgroup specifically for them. Onesta is asking for any providers interested in participating to contact her.

SMRO staff are working diligently to wrap up the end of the fiscal year and prioritizing tasks related to TY, processing waiver enrollments, reviewing SFPs for incoming TYs, and coordinating with Coordination of Community Services (CCS) agencies.

**Montgomery County TYs**

TY19 for Fiscal Year 2020

- 149 TYs
  - 101 TYs approved to being services
  - 48 TYs pending placement
  - 4 TYs declined services
  - 1 TY denied waiver enrollment
  - 11 TYs enrolled in a waiver and still seeking a provider
  - 31 TYs not enrolled in a waiver and do not have an identified provider

TY20 for Fiscal Year 2021

- 165 TYs
  - 33 TYs have SFPs submitted to SMRO
  - 10 TYs approved to begin services starting July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020
  - 3 TYs declined TY services.

**Waiting List for Montgomery County – 1,236**

- 52 people are in crisis resolution
  - Individuals should be working with CCS to identify necessary services and Waiver Coordinators reviewing waiver enrollment packets
- 96 people are in crisis prevention
- 1,099 people are in current request

Betsy Luecking, Staff, asked if the waiting list for Montgomery County has increased significantly. Onesta is not sure of the numbers that were previously reported by SMRO staff. Margie Parrot, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), said every year the TY list grows. Betsy suggested reviewing why the numbers are increasing and what factors need to be adjusted. Onesta will review the numbers with her team. For those individuals designated as crisis resolution she will determine how many waiver enrollment packets have been received and if those individuals have identified providers. She noted that the current pandemic may factor into the numbers.

Betsy asked if individuals who may be in a real crisis and are a threat to themselves or others are referred to Adult Protective Services (APS). Onesta said often the individual is working with a CCS agency and that coordinator would refer to APS if it was deemed necessary. She added that DDA has been approving emergency respite services depending on the individual situation.

Betty Bahadori, Parent, commented that at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis her elderly adult neighbor called EMT as she fell and could not get up. Aging and Disability Services (ADS) staff could not visit her for a week and she passed away. Betty is very concerned for persons with developmental disabilities who cannot be self-advocates.

Susan Hartung, Parent, asked if providers are currently willing to take on new clients. Tom Liniak, Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA), said JSSA has had record numbers and increased the number of individuals in their employment services by 50% this fiscal year. Karen Morgret, Treatment & Learning Centers (TLC), reported TLC has a day program and they have continued to take on new clients, although they have not been able to take everyone. Onesta said SMRO Provider Relations maintains a list of individuals seeking services and will reach out to a select number of providers to try and place them. SMRO has been processing SFPs and residential placements. Some providers are accepting people into programs while others are not at this time.

**Coordination of Community Services (CCS) Updates:**

Rosemary DiPietro, Community Support Network (CSN), Montgomery County Health & Human Services (HHS), reported coordinators are performing weekly wellness checks. Many individuals are responsive. One of her latest efforts is to talk to providers about facilitating video conferencing. She would like the coordinators to have the ability to see the people they support. If a coordinator does not suggest video conferencing as an option, individuals or family members are welcome to ask their coordinator to set it up. Rosemary said remote telework has been yielding higher productivity as the coordinator has a better ability to document their work. One of the challenges over the past few years as CCS moved to fee-for-service was having the coordinator document the work they had performed, which may not have happened if the coordinator was busy with client visits. This resulted in loss of revenue.

CSN has submitted 7 out of 10 TYs to SMRO. Those individuals are questioning what services might look like if they are approved to start on July 1. CSN has one primary coordinator working with TYs and is reaching out to providers to discuss what kinds of services would be available. One TY will be aging out of the foster care system and will be in need of residential services as well as meaningful day services. Their SFP has not been received by the selected provider. Another TY needs meaningful day services and they are also waiting for their SFP to be admitted by their selected provider. CSN has received verbal commitment that those two individuals will be served. A third TY has submitted a SDS plan to SMRO and it is under review.

Dr. Michael Greenberg, Parent, asked about the turnaround time for SFP at SMRO. Rosemary said she has received approval for two of the seven SFPs that have been submitted. Onesta added that SMRO processes the plan based on whether the person is enrolled in the waiver. SMRO's TY Coordinator has processed the majority of plans that are enrolled in the waiver and Onesta has been signing off on those plans. She asked Rosemary for a list of the individuals and she will follow-up with her.

Sara O'Neill, MMARS, reported they have three crisis resolution cases since the pandemic started. The challenge is how providers are going to accept these individuals as they need residential services. Providers may use virtual Zoom meetings as they cannot interview them in the home. Sara agreed with Rosemary that it has been challenging to work through the pandemic, but MMARS is being creative to make sure their clients are served in the best way possible. MMARS has regular contact with DDA to ensure they continue to meet requirements and allow individuals to be served.

MMARS is currently serving 1,477 individuals in Montgomery County.

- 1,131 are in services
- 345 are on the waiting list
- 5 are in crisis resolution (3 of those occurred during the pandemic and all are seeking residential services).

MMARS TYs

- TY19s – 27 individuals
  - 4 do not have a waiver
  - 5 do not have a provider and working on finding one before June 30<sup>th</sup>
- TY20s – 70 individuals currently
  - Actively conducting waiver meetings and PCPs
  - Majority of PCPs submitted have been approved
  - Waiver packets are into EDE

MMARS has set up phone conferences for virtual meetings. Sara liked Rosemary's idea of video calls and will share that with management.

Gloria Odongo, Director of Quality Enhancement, Total Care Services (TCS), reported CCSs have been providing weekly wellness checks on their caseload which should help catch issues before they worsen. Some individuals are opting for bi-weekly or monthly check-ins. Staff are working to ensure services are meeting the individual's needs. Gloria said individuals are asked how their mental health has been affected by COVID-19. There has been an increase in anxiety and depression. TCS is ensuring those individuals have access to needed supports. TCS is restructuring their organization to include a TY manager that focuses on TYs and a new outreach staffperson. TCS has been using Zoom to conduct online meetings.

TY19s – 8 total

- 1 needed a waiver submitted
- 7 have declined or in the process of identifying a provider

TCS submitted an application and was awarded a \$50,000 community-partnership grant for Prince George's County. Gloria said TCS may submit for similar grants for different counties. She will send more information to Betsy.

Claire Funkhouse, Parent, asked if the CCS agencies have staff specifically designated to work on TYs. TCS has a TY team with a TY manager. MMARS has a TY Supervisor who is in charge of tracking and auditing cases, and meeting with the CCSs. Staff also have more concentrated caseloads. CSN has one coordinator working with TY's. CSN has a client cap so TYs will stay with their coordinator.

### **Updates - Federal, State and Local Services and Budgets**

Karen Morgret, Co-Chair, reported providers will not be billed using the new Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) system as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, as details are still being worked out. The LTSS pilot group will continue to use the new billing system. Tom reported the County DD supplement was not cut or decreased. He is involved in several efforts to ensure the state DD rates do not get cut. Karen said everything is on hold currently. Bernie announced more information will be coming out this week. Larry Bram, Co-Chair, said prior to the COVID-19 crisis the Maryland General Assembly had passed a 4% increase. Now there is a multi-million-dollar budget deficit and Governor Hogan has asked departments to determine budget cuts.

LTSS providers are still able to review and approve plans. Some of the providers in the LTSS pilot group have had some challenges so it has not been made available to all providers. The new rates will now go into effect July 1, 2021. There will be no changes to the rates or service definitions before then. Onesta reported Valerie Roddy, Director of Fiscal and Operations, will be providing an update on LTSS, rates and service definitions soon. Specific questions can be directed to Onesta and she will follow-up.

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, Marlena Hutchinson, Deputy Director, Maryland Department of Health (MDH), sent a memorandum to providers allowing more flexibility for SFP signatures and allowing verbal approval due to the current COVID-19 crisis.

Larry reported in February his daughter received a marketing cold call from a provider about an adult day program she qualifies for based on information that is listed in LTSS. The provider was able to do a search in LTSS for certain Medicaid recipients and gain access to their name, phone number, birth date, the last four digits of their social security number, Medicaid number, type of Medicaid, and services currently received. Larry notified DDA about the privacy and HIPAA issue. DDA sent a letter addressing the issue and said it had been resolved. Sara reported she can now only view notes and attachments for clients assigned to their agency. Rosemary confirmed that searches within the system result in only individuals receiving services from that agency. Previously it would pull up the name as well as similar names from all agencies.

### **New Disability Website**

Betsy Luecking, Staff, reported the County has a new Disability Services website. She and Carly Clem, Staff, designed the site to be informational and user-friendly. It is modeled after the County's Public Information Office Senior Services website. She asked Committee attendees to review the site and let them know of feedback and edits: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/disability/](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/disability/).

## **Provider Updates and Announcements**

Larry reported there Kaiser has joined Unite Us, an initiative to provide coordinated care of health and social service providers that work collaboratively to meet people's needs. The referral network works with health plans, health systems, state and local governments, philanthropy, and community-based organizations. Easter Seals will be participating in their first training tomorrow.

Karen reported TLC has been providing mostly virtual programming for employment services, community development services, and personal supports with some in-person programming. TLC has initiated several virtual groups to meet and discuss shared interests such as sports. She noted that some individuals who previously did not want to participate in a group setting feel more comfortable using a virtual platform.

Jenn Lynn, Upcounty Community Resources (UCR), reported UCR has started a virtual caregiver happy hour as many parents want to connect with one another. She asked how providers are considering how to offer event and social programming over the summer. UCR's events typically draw upwards of 200 people. Larry said Easter Seals has had drive-by parades for staff to see clients and they will be doing the same for their Head Start graduation. Claire Funkhouser, Parent, said Community Support Services (CSS) is concerned about their regularly scheduled summer programming. They are considering offering a virtual ice cream social or small groups of ten meeting in-person with social distancing measures, although it may be difficult to enforce the six-foot distancing rule as well as the use of masks. Jonathan Katz, Summer Fellow, County Council, said the Jewish community has shifted to have multiple iterations of their events so shifts of people can participate in smaller numbers. Jonathan suggested that it may be helpful for individuals with sensory disabilities to test different materials of face masks to see which ones they prefer. Larry said Easter Seals will be slowly phasing open their child development centers. Staff have been preparing the children to wear a mask through daily playgroup calls. The first week of reopening the children will participate in a mask decorating activity. Easter Seals also has to change how they serve meals to the children.

Shawn Lattanzio, Local Behavioral Health Authority, reported telehealth psychiatric and therapy services have been very successful, particularly with adolescents who prefer the virtual sessions, and attendance rates have improved. There is a lower commitment because they do not have to drive to receive the services. Larry said Easter Seals has had the same success with telehealth.

Susan Hartung, Parent, said it has been difficult as she has not seen her adult children in two months. She said CSS has been incredible keeping everyone as safe as possible. Many of their staff work at two facilities. She thanked providers and their staff for taking care of clients who cannot help themselves and do not understand the current situation.

Jonathan announced as part of his Summer Fellowship project for the County Council he has been tasked to research senior centers, community centers and adult medical day centers and how to make those services better for Montgomery County residents. He asked for individuals with experiences or resources to reach out to him. Larry said he can provide information about Easter Seals's adult day program that serves older adults and adults with developmental disabilities. They have been providing daily care connection calls to every client and delivering needed supplies. They are also working to provide clients with tablets so they can participate in virtual calls. Larry noted that the earliest Easter Seals plans on reopening their adult day program would be in January 2021 and at most 50% capacity.

It was asked if data is being tracked for persons with developmental disabilities who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and if they are disproportionately affected. Kim Mayo, Administrator, CSN, reported Onesta provides her with weekly updates every Friday on the number of positive cases for both clients and staff as well as deaths.

She shares this information with County Council staff and will share the data with the group. Karen said Bernie shares client and staff COVID-19 data from across all the different regions during his weekly Friday webinars.

Beth Shuman, Senior Legislative Aide, Office of Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, said the use of hotlines and helplines is up across the County and for every age group. There is also a tremendous increase in domestic violence. Shawn said there is a real concern that children are not being identified as victims as they are not in day care or school settings, but at home with the perpetrators. Gloria is working to become a licensed therapist. She is seeing an increase in substance abuse as well as kids regressing. She has called child protective services twice since COVID-19 started. Shawn has concerns about distance learning ending. Many kids in special education services have regressed. Karen said the social worker at TLC has received an increase of calls as well helping individuals cope with anxiety.

Larry opened the floor for a discussion on the current situation regarding George Floyd and police reform. Susan reported the County Council is forming a [Policing Policy Advisory Commission](#). She said someone from the disability community should be represented and her husband has applied. Beth reported Councilmembers Gabe Albornoz, Nancy Navarro, Will Jawando, and Craig Rice will be co-introducing a bill tomorrow on police reform that will include banning the use of chokeholds, setting higher standards for police force and requiring police officers to intervene when they witness a fellow officer breaking policy or the law. She said they have the same goals as the police and can make some progress.

Susan said parents in this group have been afraid to call the police when their child was out of control and were unsure of the reaction. Jenn Lynn said she was afraid to call the police when her son eloped. He now provides training to police officers on how to interact with persons with Autism and intellectual disabilities. Jenn Lynn said Montgomery County police are excellent on the whole and are leaders in the nation. The police officers she knows said they are now second-guessing their ability to do their job.

Shawn said it is a challenge and we need police officers who work with other groups of people such as the disability community. She has worked with parents that have called the police on their children because the child has had an outburst and shows major aggression, but the police will not take them because the child has calmed down by the time they arrive. She knows many parents who are afraid of their kids. Susan said the mental health aspect is a bigger issue.

Larry asked how close the County was to moving to Phase 2. Beth said approximately two weeks. The Council will be having a briefing tomorrow and they should have more information then. Betsy said she was told this morning by Odile Brunetto, Chief, ADS, that the County is looking to start Phase 2 on June 15<sup>th</sup>. The DDA will have to decide how to proceed separately as there are concerns about groups just as there are for nursing homes. County Executive Marc Elrich and the County Council have asked several groups to work together on a safe and measured incremental recovery plan. All groups have been asked to make recommendations that align with four guiding principles for recovery efforts: racial equity, inclusion, innovation and sustainability. Odile is co-chair of the workgroup addressing older adults and persons with disabilities along with co-chair Kim Mayo, Administrator, Community Support Network.

The Committee decided to hold a virtual meeting on Monday, July 13<sup>th</sup>.

## **Announcements**

### **Respectfully Submitted,**

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

**Next Meeting**

July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from 4pm to 5:30pm – via Zoom

Instructions to attend will be included on the meeting agenda.