

Developmental Disabilities Sub-Committee
August 19, 2020

Present: Brian Hart, AJ Kircher, Leisa Alger, Colleen Inthanongsak, Sean Eagen, Melissa Stafford

Excused: Carey Peters, Rene' Snyder, David Adreine

Minutes:

Approved without changes.

Director of Community Services Report – Brian Hart

- **Travel Advisory Impact:** (Who is Essential?) – Brian stated that in March, our building and services were deemed essential. He communicated with staff that our services are essential and will have to be open. We did have a reduction of staff in the building (45%). The others worked remotely. We could not have some work remotely because the State would not allow some of their data bases to be utilized remotely. Moving forward to now with the NYS Travel Advisory, you cannot travel to a restricted State and then come back into work. Brian said he has staff who are upset, and grievances' have been filed. Staff have to quarantine for 14 days when they return from the restricted State for 14 days and use their own benefit time. Person Centered Services stated that their staff having working from home and continue to work from home. They have clients who really would like to see their care coordinator. If staff do travel to a restricted State they must follow the quarantine guidelines. They can continue to work from home, and explain how they are going to maintain the workload. They did have one staff member who was not honest about where she was traveling and was questioned when she came back. Staff need to be honest about it and plan ahead. The new issue is school and how to plan ahead for the new school schedule with work and childcare. Able2 stated that the quarantine helped get them prepared with new policies. The travel advisory does complicate things. They have put policies in place for this, there has to be transparency, and staff need to be up front about things, because of the consequences. They are dealing with a very vulnerable population and need to be careful. It applies to all staff and it is essential that if they travel to a restricted State, when they come back they are to be tested for COVID-19 within 24 hours. They did have one staff person who was not honest. They also had one go to a state that was not on the list, but while they were they the state was added to the list. The staff person contacted us to let us know. Because we are still dealing with this virus the staff need to build extra time off into their request off. When the staff come back they have to be tested for COVID-19 and if the results come back negative, they can return to work and do not need to continue to quarantine. We did have one person delay in getting the negative results to us, which in turn delayed their return to work. Capabilities stated that they are deemed essential even though their focus is only vocational. Their touch point with clients has changed drastically. Their policy is for everyone across the board, that if they take a vacation and travel into a restricted state they need to build in the 14-day quarantine. If possible, they can work from home. ARC stated they are the same as everyone else as their policy pertains to all staff, and they make sure staff have a COVID-19 test

when they return from their vacation, and need to have the results before returning to work. Brian stated that he saw on the news that there is a particular COVID-19 test that comes back with many false negatives. We are essential employees and we need to follow protocols.

Sharing by Community Members

- **Agency discussion of impending cuts** - Brian stated that OPWDD does not communicate well, and he has not seen anything from them on a potential withhold or cuts to funding. ARC stated that they heard from them last night and they are going to do 20% withholding for the 4th quarter, and if they have not paid you yet for the 3rd quarter, they will reduce that amount. Brian stated that the good news is that it is a withhold and not a cut, as withholds are just temporary. The downside to this is if they get the stimulus from the Federal Government and put the money back in their budget, everyone will have to spend it before the end of the year and it is just not enough time. If this happens, they need to give everyone a grace period into next year to make it practical. ARC stated that this withhold may be permanent. Brian stated that OMH clearly felt that is was not a cut, that they Federal Stimulus money will come through. Brian stated that a 20% withhold/cut is significant and results in a loss of services and staffing. By starting with the underutilized programs, it still does not cover the amount of money that is being withheld. Capabilities stated that they would have to cut staffing. There is not enough work to keep staff busy. No business out there wants an extra person in their business just hanging out. They are receiving referrals but they cannot do anything with them because the businesses do not want extra people. Vocational has been hit hard, everything is down. We have waited for a while, but now we have to adjust. ARC stated they are hiring, and Able2 stated they are hiring as well. We all need to apply different strategies, as this has been a tough year on everyone. Brian stated that all agencies will not be successful, and will have to close. Where do these services go? A merger is difficult, and there are some significant challenges. Certain options for certain types of beds will change. There will be a delay in the ability to fill beds. Brian asked if the demand for bed has changed and they stated that it was still about the same. At the beginning of all of this, the State began closing some and it increased, but it has now leveled off. As for the returning of Day Hab, there will be some that we will not be able to serve. Brian stated he is still waiting for an updated State Aid letter because of the ARC merger.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2020.