

## Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

# Notes for Team #1, Meeting 1 - December 18, 2020

via Zoom

**Present:** Candice, Greg, Mike, Kaiya, Steve, Havah


**Guest:** Greg

**Staff:** Kirsten, Chelsea

## Welcome

Greg began the meeting at 1:30 pm. He suggested that members mute themselves and raise their hand (or use Zoom's "raise hand" feature) if they want to speak.


Members to Team #1 went over the "Group Agreements." There were twelve (12) bullet points total. Members were asked if there was anything they'd like to add or change to the group agreements. They broke into small groups to brainstorm and returned after a few minutes.

 It was suggested that everyone keep their camera on when possible during the meeting so we can see each other.

## Understanding our Goal Area and what are the gaps in service?

Kirsten reviewed the 3 goal areas. They are the same as the goals in the current Five-Year Plan:

- 1) Identify and fix gaps in service, including one gap that exists because a group has traditionally been underserved.
- 2) Empowering self-advocates and families.
- 3) Policy change at the Statehouse or in agencies.

 This team will work on Goal Area #1. The group discussed several examples of gaps in service. Participants noticed that gaps in services happen for many different reasons

Examples of “gaps in service”:

- Public transportation is limited. There are fewer choices in rural areas and often “doesn’t go everywhere you need it to go.”
- Housing options are limited. People with I/DD usually live with their family or with another family in “shared living.” There are not many supports that would allow someone with I/DD to live alone. In addition, affordable housing through Section 8 is hard to get and many landlords will not accept a Section 8 voucher.
- Public places are not as accessible as they should be, especially bathrooms. Hotel rooms may say they have “accessible” rooms, but often the shower and/or the bed do not accommodate someone who uses a wheelchair.
- Transition-aged youth do not have options for vocational education after they graduate from school. A small number go to programs on college campuses, but this isn’t a good fit for many young people with I/DD.
- Parent’s with disabilities do not get enough support. Vermont used to have a program to support parents with disabilities. It had a 95% success rate in keeping families together. That grant ran out, and the State chose not to renew this successful and money-saving program.

A poll was used to determine if team members understood the scope of Goal Area #1. All indicated that they understood or mostly understood what “gaps in services” look like.

### **Understanding what the DD Act says about the 5-Year State Plan.**

Kirsten briefly reviewed what the DD Act requires in a Five-Year State Plan. She stressed that goals and objectives must be based on data. For Team #1 this means that there must be facts supporting the idea that a gap in service exists and that it has a negative impact on Vermonters with developmental disabilities.

Kirsten also reminded the group that the Plan should identify partner organizations that will help us achieve each objective.

## **When you think about disability services in Vermont...**

Using a Google Jamboard, everyone's hopes (blue) and fears (red) were collected with digital sticky notes. (See attached).

The group talked about similarities in these hopes and fears. Several members focused on funding cuts, which are anticipated in the next state budget. One member wondered if COVID would become an excuse to reduce services and avoid delivering on promised reforms to the developmental service system.

## **Request for information at meeting #2 in 3-4 Focus Areas.**

Greg shared a list of "focus areas" and asked members to pick which topics they wanted to learn more about at the next meeting. The group picked:



Early Intervention

Employment

Home and Community-based Services

Housing

When asked, the group did not identify any focus areas missing from the list.



A drop-box will be made available to everyone so that they can review notes on all the focus areas.

## **Understanding what we learned from Focus Groups with self-advocates and families.**

Family Focus Groups: There were 6 family focus groups and a total of 23 participants. Half the participants were from Chittenden County and the other half were evenly spread between the other counties. Four of the Chittenden County participants were New Americans.

Parents said there seem to be plenty of mental health therapists in Vermont, but there are few who are trained to work with children, youth or adults with developmental disabilities. They were also worried about staff shortages, limited housing, and whether flexibilities like paying parent caregivers could continue after the COVID-19 Emergency. The Council's Executive Committee has requested

a seventh focus group for parents who support adults that are non-verbal and/or medically or behaviorally complex.

Self-Advocate Groups: To date there have been 2 focus groups with self-advocates. Participants in these groups have focused on wanting more control over what happens in their life. Their concerns ranged from restrictions on who they can spend time with to issues about working, living with a home provider, and guardianship. They also talked about loneliness, especially during the current pandemic. Technology is not a substitute for fact-to-face contact, participants said.

One member of the team wondered why the State hasn't worked on creating *more* opportunities to get mental health supports, especially considering how COVID has made people feel alone and forgotten.

## **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.

These notes were provided by Chelsea Hayward and reviewed by Kirsten Murphy.