

Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

Notes for Team #2, Meeting 1 - December 29, 2020

via Zoom

Present: Crista, Gina, Amanda, David, Jesse

Guest: Greg

Staff: Kirsten, Chelsea

Welcome

Greg began the meeting at 10 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 #2 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.

➔ For those who lose their thoughts quickly, someone suggested “writing down ideas” until it is your turn to speak.

Understanding our Goal Area and citizen empowerment.

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 #2. The group discussed what “citizen empowerment” means and what the Council has done in this goal area in the current Five-Year State Plan.

A “citizen” is someone who lives in a town, state, or country. A citizen has all the **rights** and the **duties** that go with living in that town, state, or country.

“Empowerment” is the process of becoming stronger, especially in the sense of claiming one’s **rights**. How do you get more powerful? Participants had several ideas:

- Speaking at the Statehouse and following the issues.
- Listening to people in the DD Community (grassroots).
- Practicing speaking up at a self-advocacy meeting or a Council meeting.

Activities in this goal area currently include the Vermont Leadership Series, peer-to-peer training in self-advocacy, support for Vermont’s cross-disability coalition, developing a story bank, and learning more about people who do not receive services.

A poll was used to determine if team members understood the scope of Goal Area #2. All indicated that they understood or mostly understood how the Council helps to empower people with disabilities and their family members.

Understanding what the DD Act says and what we must do for 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.

1. Many people feel isolated and don't get enough access to services/help, even before the pandemic. Where's the work force?
2. People hope there will be greater support for transitioning young adults, as well as more opportunities to use technology.

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:



Self-Advocacy & Family Empowerment Employment

Home and Community-based Services



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.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12 noon.

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