

Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council
Draft Quarterly Meeting Minutes ~ June 24, 2021
via Zoom

Present: Amanda Bianchi, Gina Carrera, Anastasia Douglas, David Frye, Melanie Feddersen, Mike Gruteke, Hillary Hill, Terry Holden, Steve Kieselstein, Dion LaShay, Ted Looby, Lindsey Owen, Candice Price, Courtney Quinlan, Beth Sightler, Havah Walther, Jesse Suter, Crista Yagjian,

Absent: Kaiya Andrews, Julie Arel, Betsy Choquette, Hannah Neff, Monica Ogelby, Esq., John Spinney,

Support Staff: n/a

Guests: Latoya Todd with GT Independence in North Carolina.

VTDDC Staff: Kirsten Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Chelsea Hayward

1. Welcome:

The Meeting began at 10:01 am. Courtney greeted everyone warmly and welcomed the three (3) new members -- Ted Looby (parent), Lindsay Owen (representing Disability Rights Vermont), and Beth Sightler (representing a non-profit serving people with developmental disabilities). They said hello and introduced themselves to the other Council members.

For an ice-breaker Courtney asked, “What is something you look forward to doing this summer.” Everyone took turns replying. Many people plan to garden, play and hear live music, enjoy the outside, and spend time with family and friends.

- Review Group Agreement for Zoom Meeting –
- Assign Roles –
 - Jargon Buster was Dion
 - Timekeeper was Crista
 - Keeper of the Rudder was Terry
 - Keepers of the List were Courtney and Amanda
 - Processor was Mike
- Adopt Meeting Minutes from March – There was no discussion.

Motion: Dion made the motion to accept the meeting minutes from March 26, 2021. Mike seconded. Voting record attached.

Motion passed: 14-3-0.

2. **Membership:**

Beth Sightler is from Champlain Community Services in Colchester. She will fill the vacancy left by Julie Cunningham for a “representative of a non-profit that serves people with developmental disabilities. Council members voted on recommending her to be appointed to the Council by the Governor.

Motion: Steve made the motion “To recommend to the Governor that Elizabeth Sightler be appointed to the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council for a first term of three years as a representative of a non-profit organization that serves people with developmental disabilities. Mike seconded.

Motion passed: 15-2-0. Roll call attached.

3. **Final Goals and Objectives for the Five-Year State Plan:**

Kirsten reviewed highlights from the five (5) public comments received. She noted that commenters urged the DD Council to continue its work in cultural and linguistic competency and to work in partnership wherever possible. The Plan may be challenging for staff, because it adds several new areas where the Council will support initiatives. Kirsten also noted “What’s missing?” including mention of special education and health equity.

- Planning Team 2 – Crista read the slides and led discussion on **Goal 1: Empowering People**. The objectives cover Leadership Development, Support for Self-Advocacy, Guardianship, Peer Support, and Family Caregivers of Adults. Terry asked how the Council would identify what it is that parents of adults want. Kirsten noted that the Council often uses focus

groups early in developing a new project. Gina wondered if a website with comprehensive information about adult services would be helpful.

- Planning Team 1 – Steve read the slides for **Goals 2 and 3 which both look at improving services.**

Goal 2 addresses Gaps in Services, with three (3) objectives that target Universal Design, Housing, and Transportation. Beth talked about barriers for people who use accessible vans and other transportation support. She wondered if there was a way to making transportation resources consistent across the State. She observed that there is a cap for transportation spending and that some agencies cannot take on the expense of purchasing an accessible van(s).

Goal 3 is about Addressing the Needs of an Underserved Group. Council members brainstormed how to find and address what people need. Terry suggested a poll within one of the self-advocacy groups. The two (2) objectives cover Customized Employment and Adult Services.

- Planning Team 3 – Anastasia reviewed **Goal 4, Systems Change.** The four (4) objectives under this goal will Raise Awareness, Support Ongoing Policy Advocacy, Address Systems of Care, and Seek to Improve the Direct Support Workforce.

4. **Vote to adopt the Draft Goals and Objectives:**

Motion: Dion made the motion “That the VTDDC submit the revised Goals and Objectives, as presented today by the DD Council’s three planning teams, to the Administration for Community Living as part of VTDDC’s Five Year State Plan for 2022-26.” Crista seconded.

Motion passed: 15-3-0. Roll call attached.

- Next Steps & Development of Work Plans – Steve described an activity he called “Cat Nap.” He asked everyone to look at the 5 Year State-Plan and daydream about what the future could look like if one of the objectives

were accomplished. (See below). Throughout the summer, members are invited to share ideas for implementing the Five-Year Plan Objectives. These will be researched by staff and developed in collaboration with the Program Committee.

5. Policy Committee Report:

Susan reflected on the Council's success during this legislative session. Four (4) of five (5) platform items identified by the DD Council were taken up this session and passed.

- **ACT 35** (S. 16), an Act regarding equitable and inclusive school environments:
 - Creates the Task Force on Equitable and Inclusive School Environments. The Task Force will make recommendations to end suspensions and expulsions for all but the most serious student behaviors.
 - Data similar to that reviewed in the “Kicked Out” Report will be collected and monitored by the Task Force and the Agency of Education.
 - Prohibits students under the age of eight (8) from being suspended or expelled unless the student poses an imminent threat of harm or danger to others in the school.
 - Slows down charging families with truancy.
- **ACT 33** (H.210), an act related to addressing disparities and promoting equity in the health care system.
 - Creates the Health Equity Commission, which will guide the creation of the Office of Health Equity, which shall be established not later than January 1, 2023.
 - The Commission and, later the Office, will promote health equity and try to eliminate health disparities among Vermonters, particularly those who are Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color, individuals

who are LGBTQ, and individuals with disabilities. This includes advising state government and the legislature.

- The DD Council has a seat on the Health Equity Commission.
- **The State Budget for Fiscal Year 22.**
 - Includes a 3% budget increase for designated and specialized services agencies.
 - Includes continued support for parent and family caregivers.
 - Includes money for social services including emergency housing.
- **J.H.R. 2, Apologizing for the legislatures role in Vermont's eugenics policies.**
 - The legislature sincerely apologized and expressed sorrow and regret to all individual Vermonters and their families and descendants who were harmed as a result of State-sanctioned eugenics policies and practices.
 - Pledged to work to eradicate the legacy of its prior actions by listening to and working with the affected individuals and communities.
 - Recognized that further legislative action should be taken to address the continuing impact of State-sanctioned eugenics policies and related practices of disenfranchisement, ethnocide, and genocide.

Susan lead members in an activity where they recorded "thank you notes" to their legislators. The activity continued during lunch.

--- There was a 45-minute break for lunch --

6. Cat Nap, an activity to dream about the future.

Steve facilitated this activity. He opened by giving an example: A dream that could result from Plan Objective 3.1 (Customized Employment) would be that a trained coach visited all currently unemployed individuals with complex

disabilities and/or substantial support needs. The coach would talk with and/or observe each person to learn what that person loves to do and what they're good at. This information would help design a unique career path that fits the individual.

Members shared their dreams:

- Mike's dream is for better transportation with a system that's more connected and friendly to all passengers.
- Terry's dream is for an interactive website with all the plans available in the adult system.
- Beth's dream is to not have to beg for annual increases every year from the Legislature. People with disabilities should be included in the State budget.
- Ted's dream is for adult services that have consistent and safe housing with supports.
- Havah's dream is that when anyone needs access to their State Government that they can get forms in plain language so that they may fully understand what's happening to them as it happens.
- Crista's dream is for her to be better prepared now so that her son has an easier time transitioning in the future.
- Lindsey's dream is for a uniform system of care across the counties in Vermont, so that people don't have to choose to re-locate or go without the services they need.
- Courtney's dream is for there to be a place/avenue-for-employment for parent advocates to always be available to other parents that learn from and share advice.
- David's dream is for everyone to get equity in services that they deserve.
- Gina's dream is for there to be more connections between parents, as well as more employment and transition options for young adults.
- Dion's dream is for people to get services with the person-centered model to follow their needs, wants, and dreams.
- Candice's dream is for all hotels to have universal design so that she can be comfortable when traveling.

- Anastasia’s dream is for there to be a mentorship program between self-advocates so that her son may have someone to talk to who gets him.
- Jesse’s dream is for there to be more readily available information on transition – early intervention, adults to older adults, etc. There’s so much to know.
- Kirsten’s dream is for everyone who works at a health clinic have basic training in disability awareness, universal design, plain language, and how to communicate with those who use alternative and augmentative communication.
- Susan’s dream is for the State government to stop wasting money on healthcare delivery experiments like OneCare VT and instead get back to helping people who need affordable, high quality healthcare.
- Chelsea’s dream is for there to be more representation of “all types of people” in media, advertising, in government, etc. so that all voices are seen and heard.

7. One-Time Investment Funds for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS):

Kirsten provided some background about this issue. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has created a pool of one-time funding that states can use to improve Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). The funding is estimated to be \$162 million and represents a rare opportunity to invest in the expansion and quality of HCBS. This funding must be used by March 31, 2024. It cannot be used to pay for services that the State has already agreed to. It can be used to increase rates, pay for new services, and to enroll new groups of Vermonters in HCBS. Kirsten reviewed some positive aspects of the initial spending plan and some significant drawbacks. In particular, she is concerned that only \$4 million has been set aside to support a transition to conflict of interest free case management services. In addition, while the Plan commits the State to a public process in developing HCBS improvement activities, there has been very little stakeholder engagement so far.

Council members expressed concerned that the I/DD community was getting “crumbs” at a time when there are so many needs in developmental services. Members discussed the pros and cons of taking a strong stand in our comments. It was suggested that the Council’s formal comments be firm and balanced, while members express their feelings more frankly in individual comments. Kirsten agreed to create a “toolkit” with talking points to help self-advocates and family members write comments. It was also suggested that we send them the new Five-Year State Plan with VTDDC’s comments, and ask, “How are you going to help us make this a reality?”

Members want to be “kept in the loop” as the State revises the Spending Plan and establishes more opportunities for public participation in setting priorities and developing specific improvements to HCBS.

8. Draft Budget for FFY ’22:

There was not enough time to present the draft budget and the matter was tabled until the September 30, 2021 meeting.

9. Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

10. Summarize Meeting:

Mike did not have access to audio in order to process the meeting. Terry acted as Processor, saying said that it was an excellent meeting that covered important issues. She thanked Courtney, the presenters, and Kirsten. She wants to see the Council “step up” to make sure the State spends the incoming one-time FMAP funds to truly improve services.

11. Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,


Chelsea Hayward

Att. Roll Call Votes

Draft State Plan Goals and Objectives

Roll Call Votes – June 24, 2021

Name	Vote 1 -- Minutes			Vote 2—ES member			Vote 3—5 year plan		
	Yes	A.	No	Yes	A.	No	Yes	A.	No
Kaiya Andrews									
Amanda Bianchi	1			1			1		
Julie Arel									
Gina Carrera	1			1			1		
Betsy Choquette									
Anastasia Douglas	1			1			1		
Melanie Feddersen	1			1				1	
David Frye							1		
Mike Gruteke	1			1				0	
Hillary Hill	1			1				1	
Terry Holden	1			1			1		
Steve Kieselstein	1			1			1		
Dion LaShay	1			1			1		
Ted Looby		1		1			1		
Hannah Neff									
Monica Ogelby									
Lindsay Owen, Esq.		1			1		1		
Candice Price	1			1			1		
Courtney Quinlan	1			1			1		
Beth Sightler		1			1		1		
John Spinney									
Jesse Suter	1			1			1		
Crista Yagjian	1			1			1		
Havah Walther	1			1			1		
Write in others as needed									

Those in grey did not attend the meeting or part of the meeting 

Goals and Objectives

For June 24, 2021 Quarterly Meeting



Goal 1, Empowering People



All Vermonters with developmental disabilities and their family caregivers are empowered to make personally meaningful, culturally appropriate choices about their services, education, employment, guardianship status, healthcare, living situation, and relationships.

Objective 1.1, Leadership Development

- The VTDDC will support self-advocates and family members to become leaders in the disability rights movement.

Objective 1.2, Support for Self-Advocacy

- The VTDDC will support the expansion and long-term sustainability of the self-advocacy movement in Vermont.

Objective 1.3, Guardianship

- Working with community partners, the VTDDC will promote a range of alternatives to full guardianship, including supported decision making.

Objective 1.4, Peer Support

- The VTDDC will ensure that trained peers are available to support those who need help with their Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and other supports.

Objective 1.5, Family Caregivers of Adults

- The Council will support and connect family caregivers of adults with developmental disabilities.



Goal 2, Gaps in Services

Working with community partners, the VTDDC will address three (3) gaps in critical services for people with developmental disabilities and their family members.

Objective 2.1, Universal Design

- Working with community partners, the VTDDC will advocate that spaces and programs for recreation, health, and wellness are fully accessible and follow the principles of universal design.

Objective 2.2, Housing

- Working with community partners, the VTDDC will develop and promote housing options for adults with developmental disabilities. These living options must be affordable, foster independence, ensure necessary support, and assist in the development of friendships and other community connections.

Objective 2.3, Transportation

- Working with community partners, the VTDDC will develop and promote more affordable, convenient and flexible transportation options for people with developmental disabilities.

GOAL 3, Addressing the Needs of an Underserved Group



The VTDDC will advocate that individuals with complex disabilities and/or substantial support needs have equitable access to, and appropriate supports to realize, opportunities for employment, social engagement, and personal development.

Objective 3.1, Customized Employment

- Working with community partners, the VTDDC will develop and promote customized, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with complex disabilities and/or substantial support needs.

Objective 3.2, Adult Services

- Working with community partners, the VTDDC will develop and promote opportunities for adults with complex disabilities and/or substantial support needs to increase social engagement and independence.
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Goal 4, Systems Change



The VTDDC will support policies and practices that promote self-determination, full community inclusion, and equitable access to high quality services and supports, including special education.

Objective 4.1, Raise Awareness

- The VTDDC will conduct outreach and public awareness campaigns that change perceptions about the abilities and contributions of people with developmental and other disabilities.

Objective 4.2, Ongoing Policy Advocacy

- The VTDDC will monitor state and federal legislation and policy, educating decision-makers and building strategic partnerships as needed. Working through its Policy Committee, the VTDDC will be able to address issue that were not foreseen or that have grown to be a priority.

Objective 4.3, Systems of Care

- The VTDDC will advocate that Vermont adequately fund Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). Vermont will have stable, strong, and equitable service delivery systems that protect the right to person-centered planning, emphasize prevention over crisis care, and provide individualized, flexible supports rather than adhering to rigid service categories.

Objective 4.4, Direct Support Workforce

- The VTDDC will advocate for the professionalization and stabilization of the direct care workforce.