**Olmstead Consumer Taskforce**

**January 8, 2021**

**This meeting was held via Zoom due to COVID-19.**

10:00          **Welcome and Introductions**

Members present: Dawn Francis, Lisa Pakkebier, Brittney Montross, Jessica Johanns, Harriet Gulbranson, Stacie Lane, Jen Simmering, Michael Martin, Kris Graves, Melinda Haley, Marc Hines, Greg Fier, Michael Martin, Mari Reynolds, Joel Vander Molen, Paula Connolly, Aaron Green, Becky Coffin,

Others present: Pam Rupprecht, Connie Fanselow, Caitlin Owens, Cindy Peterson, Brooke Lovelace, Kim Barber, Julie Bergeson, John McCalley, Fred Wilcox, Todd Lange, Emily Berry

Staff support: Anne Crotty

10:10         **Review, Additional Items, and Approval of the Agenda**

Aaron motioned to accept the agenda. Kris seconded. No nays or abstentions. Motion passed.

10:15        **Review, Corrections and Approval of the November minutes**

Paula motioned to approve the minutes. Jessica seconded. Motion passed. No nays or abstentions.

10:20        **DHS Updates – Connie Fanselow**

* MHDS regions issued a request for proposals to local providers and school districts to award CARES Act dollars. These funds will cover costs associated with the pandemic that are not covered through other sources for things like increased costs, hazard pay, and lost revenue. Regions are using the funding to support projects such as providing additional support to school staff, de-escalation training for law enforcement, transitional housing programs, technology to provide telehealth services, mobile crisis expansion, and community outreach. CARES Act dollars have also been used across the Medicaid program, with the goal of ensuring that providers are being reached and that providers get the support needed as Iowa moves into economic recovery. Approximately $14 million was designated for nursing facilities and $10 million for Intermediate Care Facilities and Psychiatric Mental Institutes for Children to be used for increased costs due to COVID 19. Funds must be used by December 2021.
* There are several changes in progress to the County Social Services region. Cerro Gordo, Webster, Wright counties have been accepted by CICS. Pocahontas and Humboldt counties have been accepted by the Rolling Hills region. Hancock County is in discussions with North West Iowa Care Connections. Emmet County is in discussions with the Sioux Rivers regions. Any finalized changes will go into effect on July 1, 2021.
* The Children’s Behavioral Health Board is working on a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) Checklist, to help distinguish between children with an ongoing SED and those with a temporary issue or need for support. They are also discussing programs that help to build relationships between children, families, and law enforcement. The Board is discussing universal screening for children and mapping programs to show which services are available by area. The Board filed the annual report in December and held a special meeting to gain feedback from families. Special meetings are not scheduled at this time, individuals can send feedback to Torie Keith ([vkeith@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:vkeith@dhs.state.ia.us)) or can attend a board meeting as a member of the public.
* IME is considering permanent changes to allow the continued use of telehealth during the pandemic. IME is reviewing pre-COVID data and current use of telehealth during the pandemic. Current services will continue for at least 60 days after the public health emergency is declared over. Telehealth is also anticipated to be addressed during the legislative session.
* The five contractors for the COVID Recovery Iowa program have made over 250,000 contacts though groups, the warmline, materials distributed, phone calls, texts, and emails. Some of the activities include wellness activities, interest groups, virtual events, and a pen-pal program for older adults, and outreach to specific populations. The program will provide additional resources for individuals who are struggling with social isolation. Funds for this program are approved through June 2021.
* Iowa’s DD Council provided funding to develop a curriculum and provide training on Person-Centered Planning and Positive Behavior Supports, with disability service providers as the primary audience. The goal of the project is to increase provider capacity and commitment to serving people with complex conditions, while improving outcomes. The 22 trainers will deliver the training statewide as part of the strategic plan and implement their own personal plan to disseminate the training. Team members include individuals from DHS, Resource Centers, Money Follows the Person, Managed Care Organizations, MHDS regions, disability service providers, and Iowa Association of Community Providers.
* DHS and Iowa Department of Public Health are reviewing strategies to better coordinate mental health and disability services at DHS with behavioral health services at IDPH. A request for proposals has been released for a vendor to conduct an independent review of DHS and IDPH and provide a report with recommendations on how to better coordinate work, redesign the service delivery system, and improve outcomes. The selected vendor will be expected to reach out to stakeholders, identify strategies to expand existing funding sources, engage all levels of staff to ensure voices are heard, and recommend the creation of an improved organizational structure. It is hoped that the improved structure will optimize service delivery, ease work, and integrate overlapping services. The report will focus on connection points between the agencies and with other agencies. Stakeholders will have opportunities to provide input throughout this process.
* The State legislature must must pass a budget for the next fiscal year. It appears likely that legislators will try to keep budgets the same and the legislature also may redraw district lines. Iowa uses a non-partisan process to draw lines without consideration of political party or current representation of the area. Other issues that may come up include:
* **COVID Relief.**  Legislators may want to have a say in how any new or remaining federal COVID relief funds are spent.  To date, the Governor has been able to make decisions on how $1.2 billion in state aid has been spent.
* **Economic Recovery** Legislators are interested in what the Governor's Economic Recovery Work Group will recommend to jumpstart Iowa's economy and get Iowa workers back to work.
* **Telehealth.** Legislators will consider legislation that requires all insurance plans to pay the same rate to providers, regardless of whether the service is delivered in person or virtually. They are expected to consider whether this should be for all services, or just those deemed behavioral health. They also may consider whether to require insurers and Medicaid pay equally regardless of the technology used, including situations when only telephone is available, and whether payment should be made no matter where the patient or provider are located.
* **Childcare**. Childcare is critical for essential workers, yet childcare providers have been struggling to survive with most families staying home. State childcare assistance does not phase-out as a person earns more. Instead, it immediately shuts off, something advocates called "the cliff." Lawmakers are expected to consider some type of phase-out of assistance so the cliff becomes more of a step down, but would depend on resources available.
* **Support for Caregivers**– Iowa has always had a shortage of direct caregivers and direct support professionals, but COVID has really emphasized the issue. Advocates want the state to invest time and resources into keeping existing workers in these jobs, and get more people to choose this profession.
* **Changing Tables** – Last year, a bill nearly passed both the House and Senate that would have required Interstate rest areas to include adult changing tables in restrooms. A similar bill may be introduced this year.
* **Accessible Gas Pumps** – While some gas stations have made accessible gas pumps a priority, others have not.
* **Home Modifications**– The Accessible Homes Coalition is again setting its policy sights on a program that would give small grants to individuals with disabilities or chronic conditions to make their homes more accessible. They are continuing to work with the Iowa Department on Aging to develop options that may leverage federal funds.
* **Medicaid Managed Care Changes** - Providers want to see more accuracy in payments, less paperwork to get authorizations, and more transparency overall in MCO decision making. Medicaid members want more consistency and reliability.
* **Mental Health & Disability Services Region Funding** - Since the 2015, no state funding has been dedicated to helping pay for the new services regions are required to develop for adults and children. Some regions may face cuts if funding is not identified soon.

Discussion:

* Greg asked for more information on mobile crisis response. Kris shared her personal experience.
* Connie will see if someone from DHS can attend the March meeting to present on the state response to investigation at the State Resource Centers.

11:40 **Legislative Priorities**

The taskforce discussed several possible legislative priorities. It was determined that it may be best to reach out to other groups that are already doing work in these areas and determine how to partner to advance legislation of mutual interest. Other priorities may arise in the future and the Executive Committee can take action as needed since the deadline may be short. Priorities identified include:

* Funding telehealth at the same amount as an in person visit and allowing the use of telehealth beyond the COVID 19 public health emergency
* Addressing shortage of direct support providers
* Adult changing table bill
* Accessible gas pumps
* Home modifications

12:30 **Officer Elections**

Joel motioned to accept the candidates of Lisa for Chair, Kris Graves as Vice Chair, and Melinda Haley as Secretary. Harriet seconded. Motion passed. No nays or abstentions.

12:00 **Taskforce Committee Reports**

* 1. Executive Committee Report – no report
  2. Nominations Committee Report
  3. Olmstead Plan Committee Report
  4. Community Access Committee Report – no report
  5. Medicaid Committee Report

12:30      **State Agency Reports**

Reports for the Iowa Department of the Blind and Iowa Department of Public Health were emailed to members prior to the January 8 meeting.

12:45      **Taskforce Member Reports**

Dawn shared that partners are collaborating to plan the 2021 Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution (SOAR) Conference, which will be held virtually.

1:00 **Public Comment**

Brooke with the DD Council shared that the council is hosting virtual townhall meetings to offer opportunities for small groups of people to talk with their legislators. The DD Council also updated their Take Action tool on the ID Action website.

1:30      **Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.