



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

Tompkins County Whole Health
201 East Green Street
Ithaca, New York 14850-5421

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Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee

May 14th, 2024, 10:00 a.m. Via Zoom

Meeting Minutes **DRAFT**

Minutes Approved

June 11, 2024

Present: James Beaumont; Jeffrey Boles; Sheila McEnery; Allison Weiner-Heinemann; Nancy Saltzman; Walaa Maharem-Horan; and Sally McConnell-Gist

Excused: Cassidy Stanley; and Khaki Wunderlich

Unexcused:

Guests Present: Christopher Kaiser, RACKER; Briggs Seekins, Challenge; Anne Seepersaud, Life Plan; Gabriella Ayers, Catholic Charities; Jamie Kelly, OPWDD; Jennifer Goodman, Mozaic; Jennifer Payne, Catholic Charities; Michelle Gravel, Springbrook; Tricia Tom. Prime Care; Denise Brennan, Prime Care; Lyndsey Paulin, Unity House; Stacy Barrows, Unity House; Bethany Melcher; Greg Kadlecik, TST BOCES

Staff: Margo Polikoff, RN, CSCN; and Karan Palazzo, LGU Administrative Assistant

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The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by James. Sheila motioned to approve the April 2024 minutes, seconded by Walaa; all were in favor.
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Privilege of the Floor: None.

Announcements/Correspondence: Sheila shared that the Ithaca Special Olympics is being held on 6/14 and 6/15 at Ithaca College and volunteers are needed. James shared that a successful "Better Together" event was held last weekend at Stewart Park.

OPWDD Updates - Jamie shared that the OPWDD Strategic Plan public forums have been announced and are open to the public to speak and ask questions with virtual forums that will be held later in the summer. NYS passed a 2.84% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), impacting people who receive self-direction and direct service providers. \$6.7 million was directed to Employment First State for people with disabilities and \$1 million to Special Olympics. She provided her email to contact her for any questions.

Walaa happily announced that a few parents' children whom she shared OPWDD information with were approved for OPWDD. She believes doctors and pediatricians should share OPWDD's information/resources in their offices to make more people aware.

Discussions

Family Support Services (FSS): Lyndsey Paulin, Family Support Services Contract Manager at Racker and Housing Navigator for the ISH Project on Buffalo Street shared that the program is free for parents and caregivers with a loved one at home but with eligibility restrictions. FSS can be used for respite, emergencies, and other requests and helps cover costs for developmental disability needs.

FSS has four programs:

1. Service Access Assistance Program - helps families navigate the OPWDD eligibility process in Cortland, Tioga, and Tompkins Counties.
2. Family Reimbursement Funds (Respite) – provides up to \$3,000/year in qualifying reimbursements for families across NYS including Racker service areas
3. The Autism Lending Library & Sensory Spaces Program is open to all. It offers a variety of sensory items to borrow and provides access to VIP-exclusive events and incentives, gifts, and virtual sensory consultations.
4. Supporting Success Program – helps families with unsafe behaviors, assigns behavior specialists for one-on-work

Stacy Barrows, Program Manager at Unity House oversees the self-direction program and manages the budget shared that the self-direction program team which is comprised of 2 brokers and an administrative assistant. The program works with NYS-authorized independent brokers, giving families the opportunity for self-choice in providing their self-direction services. They serve individuals as young as four years old, openings are available, and referrals are being accepted. She noted that enrolling early is extremely beneficial to help through school, transitioning into adulthood services, or future planning. Individuals need OPPWD eligibility and a care manager to help assist in obtaining approval for self-direction services. Her primary responsibility is overseeing the finance portion, maintaining Medicaid compliance, and ensuring reimbursements through Medicaid.

Individual's self-direction budget amounts are awarded based on their developmental disability profile which will create a personal resource account (PRA). Program options include day hab programs, community hab programs, family-reimbursed respite (\$3,000/budget year), community classes and memberships, household-related items, utilities, and the choice of hiring who they want to work with, with all billed to their budget. They have openings and are taking referrals for self-direction. She referred to the OPWDD website for more information on the self-direction program. With Stacy's years of experience with self-direction, she encouraged anyone with questions to reach out to her and provided her email in the chat.

They are building enrollment in Tompkins, and also serve Cayuga, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties. She added that there is a housing subsidy for those living individuals independently. She welcomes referrals.

Provider Fair Update: The Provider Fair is Wednesday, June 5th from 4:30 – 6:30 pm at Ithaca High School.

DD Subcommittee Goals Review for the Local Services Plan: – The CSB will review the DD goals at their next meeting. James reviewed the DD changes previously discussed.

- Focus on recruitment and reduce vacancies in the workforce for all human service agencies
- Improve Housing accessibility
- Increase funding for crisis services and clinical support

James discussed his delight with the impact of the 2.84% COLA increase for all agencies that provide waiver services but acknowledged his concerns about no COLA increases in the past ten years versus what NYS OPWDD has received. He shared stories and concerns about programs closing and fewer options and choices for services for people with developmental disabilities.

He restated DD's achievements in making the transition process much easier and getting people better informed, engaging with CSE Chairs, TACA, and schools to better improve transition services for students with disabilities, attending student-related events, hosting annual provider fairs, and creating a road map handout for parents and individuals.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

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**The next Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee Meeting is
Tuesday, June 11th, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.**