

THE GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

MEETING MINUTES
February 16, 2018

Location: PA Department of Education's Heritage Room
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126

Members in Attendance:

Badger, Josie (Absent - Unexcused)	Pennington, Stephen S. (Absent – Excused)
Barbour III, Arthur (Absent - Unexcused)	Roth, Terry
Giambrone, Charles	Seidl, Katherine S. (Absent – Excused)
Goldstein, Sarah E.	Snyder, Rev. Sally Jo
Lipsitz, Kay L.	Walker, Shirley
Nauman, Timothy L. (Absent - Unexcused)	Whitney, Pamela (Absent - Excused)
Oakes, Ken	

Guests in Attendance Representing the Governor's Cabinet for People with Disabilities:

Dept. of Aging: Patrick Lally
Dept. of Banking: Becky McDicken
Dept. of Community & Economic Development: Autumn Anderson
Dept. of Education: Keith Focht
Department of Human Services: Jen Swails, Ben Laudermilch
Dept. of Labor and Industry: Sec. W. Gerard Oleksiak, Denise Verchimak (OVR),
Denise Brown (ODHH)
Dept. of State: Peter Speaks
Dept. of Transportation: Toby Fauver
PA Council on the Arts: Amy Gabriele
PA Developmental Disabilities Council: Dana Thompson
PA Housing Finance Agency: Roberta Schwalm
PA Human Relations Commission: Michael Hardiman
PA State Civil Service Commission: Paula Marinak

Also in attendance was Devon Grant, Executive Director.

Welcome and Call to Order

Acting Chairperson Terry Roth called the meeting to order. It was noted that due to a scheduling misunderstanding there would not be CART at today's meeting. Members and guests then introduced themselves.

Review and Approval of November 30, 2017 Minutes

After confirming no comments or corrections to the draft previously distributed to the members, **Ken Oakes made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2017 meeting, and Charles Giambrone seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

Presentations and Feedback

Employment First Executive Order Plan: Secretary Oleksiak, Dept. of Labor & Industry, first introduced himself and then provided an update on Employment First. David DeNotaris, Director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), is now the lead on the Employment First committee. The committee is meeting bi-monthly via "flash calls" among the various agencies. The update for the first quarter of the 2017-2018 fiscal year is now posted on the DHS website at www.dhs.pa.gov/priorities/focus-on.

Sec. Oleksiak highlighted one of the efforts to be led by OVR. Using the Government Service Intern job classification, the Governor's Office of Administration and OVR will implement a program for summer 2018 in which OVR will supply qualified candidates with a disability for Commonwealth internships in Harrisburg. OVR will be responsible for funding the internships and making any reasonable accommodations that may be necessary within an agency for the internships. Several of the members commented favorably on these efforts and Cabinet representatives expressed interest in an intern for their agency.

Next Ken Oakes asked about OVR's progress in getting more of their counselors into schools. Denise Verchimak from OVR reported that OVR staff are providing Pre-Employment Transition Services to students in group settings. OVR is also building capacity via a Provider base to get more Work Based Learning Experiences for students.

Finally, Devon Grant gave an update on proposed Employment First legislation. Two identical bills (HB1641, SB21) have each passed their respective chambers and are awaiting consideration in the opposite chamber. These bills would make Employment First the permanent policy in Pennsylvania.

Budget Update: Next, Jen Swails, DHS Budget Director, provided a budget update. Gov. Wolf announced his proposed 2018-2019 commonwealth budget on February 6. The proposed budget includes continued funding of the HCBS waivers, with additional funding to reduce waiting lists. Community Health Choices became effective January 1 in the Southwest region. It will be rolled out in the Southeast region on January 1, 2019, and finally statewide on January 1, 2020. Currently 85,000 individuals from the Southwest have been enrolled, and payments are being made. It will require some tweaking but nothing major. The proposed budget also would reduce the waiting lists for the Intellectual Disability Waivers, and eliminate the gap for individuals graduating high school.

Ken Oakes then asked about closing the State Centers, and urged the GAC to consider this a priority issue. Funding for the State Centers includes maintaining facilities for approximately 800-900 individuals. Although the administration is on board with closing these facilities, it cannot be rushed without considering the impact to the individuals, families, staff, and communities. The recent closing of the Hamburg State Center went well. Residents were either moved into the community or to the remaining State Centers, depending on their choice. Shirley Walker expressed her concern that the State Centers are still accepting new admissions, despite all studies showing the cost savings by supporting individuals in the community.

Terry Roth then asked about reduction in funding for Community Mental Health. Ms. Swails confirmed the reduction, but explained that there is a concern that CHIPS dollars are not currently being spent timely. The focus is on encouraging the counties to use their funds now.

Ms. Swails then reported on the lawsuit concerning the forensic unit of the Norristown State Hospital. Public forums were well attended, and negotiations are continuing with all parties involved.

Next, Shirley Walker asked about a rate increase for caregivers of individuals with disabilities. Ms. Swails responded that Gov. Wolf would like to raise the minimum wage for all workers. It is estimated that by raising the minimum wage to \$12/hour the state would save \$100 million in DHS alone because individuals would no longer need benefits under TANF, MA, etc. Ms. Walker pointed out that the state is the only payor under the ID system. Raising the minimum wage for caregivers without an increase in the rate paid to the provider organizations would result in fewer individuals served. She urged the GAC to also consider this a priority issue.

Chuck Giambrone then asked how the Employment First legislation might affect the budget, if passed. Ms. Swails responded that she would need to look into that and will follow-up.

Terry Roth then asked about Act 150 services. Ms. Swails responded that there is no funding in the proposed budget for additional Act 150 slots but she does not think there is a waiting list.

Ms. Roth also asked about the effect of the Federal budget on the State budget. Ms. Swails will also check on that and will follow-up.

Finally, Ms. Roth asked about funding for home modifications. Ms. Swails will also check on that and will follow-up.

Housing Update: Ben Laudermilch, DHS Housing Director (belaudermi@pa.gov, (717) 409-3653), next provided a housing update. The Department of Human Services (DHS) initially released its five-year Housing Strategy in 2016. Recently, a 2018 update was released. www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/housing. The housing strategy concentrates on:

- Individuals who live in institutions but could live in the community with housing services and supports
- Individuals and families who experience homelessness or are at-risk of homelessness
- Individuals who have extremely low incomes and are rent-burdened

The 2018 update describes the challenges faced by these populations and identifies the action steps to address those challenges through four strategies and accompanying goals:

Strategy 1: Connecting people to housing

Goal 1: Build better local and state housing partnerships.

Goal 2: Provide IT tools to the Local Referral Network to better connect individuals and families to housing.

Goal 3: Expand the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance Program in partnership with the PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA).

Strategy 2: Strengthen services and supports that address housing needs

Goal 1: Maximize Medicaid funding for housing-related services and supports

Goal 2: Increase housing opportunities and services for individuals with mental illness and substance use disorder who are involved with the criminal justice system.

Strategy 3: Expand funding opportunities for housing

Goal 1: Develop public and private partnerships.

Goal 2: Target existing DHS resources for housing programs.

Goal 3: Redirect existing homeless and housing services resources toward housing. Partner with the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), PHFA, and the Homeless Continuum of Care.

Strategy 4: Measure and communicate progress

Goal 1: Track metrics and measure outcomes.

Goal 2: Continually improve DHS programs.

Goal 3: Communicate the progress of the DHS housing strategy to stakeholders and advocates.

Mr. Laudermilch also discussed some of the accomplishments of the Housing program, including the housing stakeholder work group and sub group; serving 111 individuals through the 811 program (other states have served 2); and rehousing fifty TANF recipients. Some things in the works for 2018 and the future are: improving MA housing services under the waivers; working with the Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) to address the housing determinants of health; developing outreach materials with partners; and training for professionals.

It was asked whether ABLE accounts can be used for housing. Mr. Laudermilch answered yes. Also, housing choice vouchers are not counted as resource.

Shirley Walker then asked whether there were or will be any webinars specific to Intellectual Disabilities / Autism. Documents for Administrative Entities and Supports Coordinators are currently being drafted, but webinars would be good, too.

Finally, Chuck Giambrone asked about the 202 program for the elderly. HUD separates the 202 program as a priority. It may convert to an 811 type subsidy.

Strategic Planning: 2018 Priorities

Terry Roth began the discussion by stating that she would like to see better communication going both directions between the GAC and the Cabinet.

Next, Devon Grant gave an update on appointment of new members. The Governor's office had asked if there were any applications from the Northeast and North Central regions, and indicated that they would like to make appointments soon. Mr. Grant put a call out to those areas and received a few more applications. The applications will be reviewed and hopefully the Governor will appoint new members soon.

Ken Oakes then asked if we should wait to do strategic planning until after new appointments are made so that the new members can participate in the strategic planning. Others agreed that waiting would be a good idea.

The discussion then turned to holding a Listening Call prior to the strategic planning session to get input from the disability community as to the current important issues.

PennDOT Deputy Secretary Toby Fauver volunteered to coordinate the strategic planning session. He also suggested inviting other groups to participate in the planning discussions. Chuck Giambrone, Shirley Walker, Keith Focht (Bureau of Special Education), and Denise Brown (Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing) also volunteered to help with the Listening Call and the Strategic Planning session.

Public Comment

Elizabeth Hill, PA Society for the Advancement of the Deaf (PSAD), discussed the importance of state bill HB2069, which would provide funding for SSP Providers for deaf / blind individuals. Also, when discussing Employment First, are there statistics broken down by specific disability? She stated that an important consideration for encouraging the hiring of deaf individuals would be to remove the interpreter cost for the employer.

Dan Kleinmann, PA Statewide Independent Living Council (PA SILC), reported that Federal bill HR620 passed the Federal House of Representatives. The bill would delay action on ADA complaints by increasing the time allowed to respond to the complaint. This would mean that

only people with disabilities will have to wait for their civil rights. Mr. Kleinmann reported that some Republicans voted against and some Democrats voted for the bill, but that there should be bipartisan support against the bill.

Ken Oakes made a motion to ask Governor Wolf to urge all PA Congressmen and Senators to oppose Federal bill HR620. Chuck Giambrone seconded the motion. With none opposed, the motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.