



MINUTES

Transitions Stakeholder Advisory Council

Google Hangout Weblink: meet.google.com/emq-kfpb-aex

Google Hangout Call-in: +1 470-268-2030

PIN: 614 405 288#

Thursday, March 4, 2021

2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Clarice Ambler, DRCOG X
- Ed Milewski, Jr.
- Meghan Baker, Disability Law Colorado X
- Jenn Ochs X
- Anne Bartels, Sandata X
- Lisa Smith, Team Rubicon X
- Amy Dixon, CPWD X
- Neal Waite, ADRC Region 3B X
- Monique Flemings, AHOD Services
- Miriam White, SJBAAA X
- Paige Gallaher, Atlantis X
- Billy Allen, Brad Taylor, Brooke Elenga, Cheryl Transitioning Home, David Disability Law Colorado, Danny Manzannenes, Frank Rivas, Ian Engle, Jessica Comer, Jose Garcia, Michele Chamberlain, Luke Wheeland, Ryan McGee, Tina Strang, David Monroe
- Jennifer Giurgila, Jefferson County X
- Fallon Gillespie, Rocky Mountain Human Services X
- Ashly Johnson, DRCOG X
- State Staff: Katy Barnett, John Barry, Nora Brahe, Matt Bohanan, Ann Watts, Courtney Thomason, Lori Thompson
- Jennifer Krulewich, Focus Cares X
- Tracy Martinez, Touch of Care

Attendance Link: <https://forms.gle/EDaybu73WZAnPZH7>

1. Welcome and Introductions

2:30 p.m.



- Approval of the February Minutes- Minutes were approved.
- Purpose of Today's Meeting- Katy provided an overview of today's agenda with primary focus on isolation and Covid-19 discussion, followed by Council updates and open forum.

2. Program Updates

2:35 p.m.

Lori Thompson, CM Quality Performance Division/Access Unit, shared details on curriculum the Department has been working on with University of Colorado, Colorado Springs called Speak Up. The new class is for people with disabilities receiving HCBS service and is designed to help support them to express what is important for them and what they want to achieve and lead their own person driven plan. The curriculum is designed for a 10-week class that will meet for two hours each week. The course focuses on a variety of topics including becoming a leader, power of language, disabilities rights movement, creating goals and concluding with student presenting their own individual person driven plan to the class. Support staff is welcome to attend with the individual. Everything is currently remote through Zoom. Two classes are running simultaneously starting in 3/17 to 5/26 and 3/17 to 5/19. Luke Wheeland asked if it is available to send out to families. Lori confirmed we can forward anyone [this flyer](#) with more details on the program.

- Katy shared update on Covid-19 vaccine, we are currently in Phase 1B.3, which includes people age 60+, frontline essential workers in grocery and agriculture and people 16-59 with 2 or more high risk conditions. Link to update vaccination information: covid19.colorado.gov/for-coloradans/vaccine/vaccine-for-coloradans
- Nora Brahe gave a shout out to one of the TCA's, Mi Casa developed by Lisa and Mike Payne that provides services to Pueblo and south central Colorado region. Mi Casa recently received the Small Business of the Year award from the Latino Chamber of Commerce in Pueblo. Congrats!
- Katy shared an update on the Case Management Redesign project to make sure everyone was aware of the opportunity to participate with redesign process including how case management agency works with the Department when there isn't a provider for a certain service in the area. Stakeholders can share feedback through the CMRD Survey link that is open for most of the month. See [Informational Memo IM 21-021](#).
- Matt shared the Department is prioritizing MFP work and will have an update soon. They are working with CMS and have received accolades on how all this is coming together. Matt gave Katy credit with how this Council meeting has evolved. He shared the team wants to make sure that everyone can share and



discuss openly and the Department can take back information on how they can be better.

- Ann with DOLA said it is worth noting they had their first meeting after the January housing conversation with this group. Nora was instrumental in pulling the meeting together with individuals in Steamboat. Ann invited anyone that would like to do a deeper dive into housing in their region to get in touch with her or the Department. Amy asked Ann if someone that is trying to get live in caregiver, can they have a husband and wife team as caregivers? Courtney said there is officially one live in aide, but the husband or wife could live in the same room. They would be household member of live-in aide so it would not impact voucher information.

3. Isolation

2:45 p.m.

Katy shared that the survey we did this summer included isolation as a topic for discussion which pairs with Covid-19 for many members as there is a natural flow between the two issues. We need to be cautious of member isolation as well as our own isolation issues. As part of the discussion the Council would like to hear thoughts on this topic as well as resources available to members. Katy introduced Jenny with Focus Care to share her experience with members in this situation.

Jenny shared that isolation is always a risk with members moving from SNF's to the community. Planning always has to be individualized to address specific risk of isolation for each member. Their team always asks if members have a cell phone, have they used a cell phone, and will work with members to engage them with outside community support to help with isolation. Her team also looks at plans to get low-cost internet in the home, there are several grants now to help get members access. Focus Care connects members with support groups that are individualized to meet members needs. They also work with Life Skills Training to build interrelationship skills, transportation training, social opportunities in the community. Also, helping to coordinate as much as possible with nursing facilities so that members can get 2nd vaccine if they have already received the first while in the facility. They want members to feel safe out in the community.

Amy Dixon said they talk to people about LST and they initially want it but when they talk to a case manager later they tell them they don't need it. Jenny suggested honing in on issues they are worried about and let them know LST is a benefit that they are leaving on the table and it is only meant to help them.



Ian said peer mentorship is a very useful tool. Take everything you can get, you can always peel it off later, test it out and see if it is working for you. He added that message comes better when it is coming from a peer rather than institution. Use inclusive words like “we, us, and our”. Many members don’t want to admit they need help as they trying to prove to nursing home they can be independent on their own.

Paige echoed Ian, saying peer mentorship is free and can really help the member and should be added to their plan. Suggested adding additional detail that if you choose this service, this is what you gain.

Jenny also suggested adding services at beginning as it is easier to take them away if not needed but very hard to add at a later date.

Frank stated he has sat through some of the interviews by Case Managers and they tend to steer things toward less services. It appears that he has to be there with the member to guide the interviews a little more for some of our members so he makes sure all appropriate services are discussed.

Katy highlighted Michelle Chamberlain’s chat about The Independence Center which has a technology grant for seniors and people with disabilities so they can get technology such as tablets, chrome books, cell phones, internet, etc. This is available for El Paso, Teller and Park counties. Michelle will send a flyer to Katy to share with group. It is a first come, first serve basis and they have just made the first order for technology and still have plenty of money to buy more. Michelle also shared that all their peer support groups and learning group are being offered virtually which has been very helpful.

Katy suggested the Speak Up program as being a great way to help members ask for what they need. She also shared the biggest barriers they have seen with isolation and resources being used are to help those immuno-compromised.

Paige said overwhelmingly, for their consumers it is access to technology and internet so they can attend doctors appointments, virtual social groups and transportation. Vaccine access for the disability community has been a challenge.

Ian said most difficult challenge is when caregivers test positive for COVID-19. He can’t get tested because nobody wants to transport him.

Katy shared we are on phase 1B.3 which includes essential frontline workers. Next phase is 1B.4 which will include public transit and specialized transportation workers, human services workers and essential workers in public health.



Miriam asked if there's any talk about TSA's and OC's being able to go back in the facilities? Katy shared SNF's are allowing visitors in the next few months. Miriam followed up and asked do TSA's and OC's have to be vaccinated when everything opens up in order to be able to go back into facilities? Katy stated she will take that back to the team and will provide guidance. Katy also shared there is a lot of guidance out there for facilities, but it is ultimately a facility to facility to decision.

Luke shared that starting Friday, March 5th, Coloradoans with two or more high-risk conditions can sign up to get the COVID-19 vaccine. These high-risk conditions include individuals with Down Syndrome, individuals with disabilities who require direct care in their home, and people with disabilities that prevent them from wearing masks. You can view a full list of the high-risk conditions and get more details here: covid19.colorado.gov/vaccine

Katy added HCPF is working on getting individuals that are home bound vaccinated and we can invite Department staff to the conversation next time to speak about this work. Ian agreed that would be great for home bound individuals and those that can't isolate because of level of care needed.

Jenny said they are seeing more members that are high need and high risk because of lack of PT and OT they have been able to get. Over the last year access to those services in facilities has dramatically declined. Katy stated they will look into this; they know facilities are struggling with staffing.

Amy shared Medicare has the Silver Sneakers program, could that be an option to help with isolation. Miriam said she understands those programs well, but they are closed now and only some insurance companies are a part of it and currently very restricted. Amy asked if it ever be a Medicaid benefit as it is something members need.

Katy stated it's best to look at resources out in the community first before adding new benefits. Creating opportunities for people to stay physically active helps with mental health and isolation.

Paige shared that Staunton State park is a fantastic option for wheelchair users, great trail and you can get a free pass if you have a disability.
cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/staunton

4. COVID-19

3:15 p.m.

Katy shifted gears to talk about COVID-19 and isolation people are experiencing including impact with daily life, changes on how the programs are structured with OC



and some TCA's not being able to go into facilities. What does this all mean and what does this look like to those on the ground?

Paige shared what Atlantis has seen happen in the community. They work only with the disability population and those experiencing homelessness. It's been a bad year for the population they serve, but they did receive funding to help provide programs to people that have disabilities. Atlantis works with Adams, Arapahoe, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Elbert and Jefferson Counties. Atlantis partnered with PCs For People to access virtual medical and therapy appointments through vouchers that are \$250 and so far they have distributed 42 computers. Easy process, the individual comes, signs a policy and self identifies that they have a disability. Atlantis also has a food access program for those that can't get to the grocery store. They have place holder program with the Grow House (near Longmont) that provides boxes of produce every week to consumers to make meals. They can also provide a \$25 gift card so a consumer can get food accessible to them if they are unable to cook. They also have a lot of PPE on hand for individuals and are assisting with shelter in place for consumers experiencing homelessness includes tents, backpacks so they can shelter in place safely. Individuals can arrange to pick up at Atlantis' office or, depending on location, they can schedule delivery. They are also running a pilot relocation program from nursing homes to transition individuals to hotels they are partnered with to quarantine until they can move into the other housing. They have access to community living vouchers through DOLA and they help individuals to get services and are working with PASCO and a couple of other agencies. In addition, they partnered with the Reciprocity Collective and PASCO working to get people experiencing homelessness jobs to help individuals transitioning from nursing homes in this program. They couldn't do it without partnership from the State, DOH, PASCO. To qualify individuals have to meet nursing home level of care. Contact Paige or Atlantis directly if you have someone that needs assistance and mention COVID.

Ian asked if there is a way to replicate the program Atlantis is offering across the state. Paige shared they are looking at future sustainability options.

Brad asked Paige if it's hard to cover everyone in the area as the amount of people in need is very high and asked how broad is the program's reach? Paige shared Atlantis covers everything from Idaho Springs down to south Colorado Springs. Atlantis has a mobile unit and can travel to consumers in harder to reach areas. Vaccine distribution is difficult, and they are trying to figure out how to reach more people. For referrals or more information, please reach out to Paige at paige@atlantiscommunity.org or 303.733.9324 ext.1100 or Anaya Robinson, our Associate Director at anaya@atlantiscommunity.org and 303.733.9324 ext.1220

Ian said the biggest problem is not being able to get in nursing homes. Clarice said it is a hot button topic about who is allowed or not allowed in nursing homes. Suggested reaching out to nursing homes directly to see if they can agree to allow them in. Amy



agreed the inability to go into nursing home and establish relationship with the consumer is not going on right now. The individual is never alone so it makes contact extremely difficult. Clarice said that the resident has the right to private conversation and ombudsmen can help to advocate for that right.

Brad voiced concern about not being able to go into SNFs and referral numbers are way lower in his area because TCA presence isn't there. Nursing homes are hurting to fill beds and reluctant to refer people looking to transition.

Ashly with DRCOG said they are experiencing the same issues in the metro area for options counseling. They are running into barriers getting into facilities and only able to do phone calls. Technology in SNF's isn't the same, battling with staff where they are saying "no, they can't move". Clarice added that not having presence in facilities is causing conflict with resident rights. This will vary facility to facility, but the Activities Director is usually best person to reach out to if you are having trouble getting access to residents and to share struggles you are encountering with ombudsmen.

Amy shared some meetings have been with staff and they don't know consumer at all. It's difficult to establish what the resident's real needs, including mental health, are when you can't meet in person.

Ryan included in chat that we have to be more active in scheduling phone calls with the SNF social worker. It seems cumbersome with having to transfer phones etc. It would be good if (in the future) SNFs could set up a video/zoom/conference call(s).

Ian included in the chat that Mental Health is an ever-present issue (and always has been) for nursing home residents, I've never met a nursing home resident who wasn't depressed, this is directly related to isolation, and has been exacerbated by the pandemic restrictions. Nursing home residents are among the first to be vaccinated, therefore, looking forward, we should be cutting them loose to live healthy and safe in the community with adequate services and support. Added- there is no reason that anyone should be forced to live in a nursing home without a choice. This issue has been brought to the forefront with COVID-19 but challenge also provides an opportunity.

Amy asked for perspective on peer counseling in getting individual to get help instead of mental health. Ian said that someone that encourages a peer to access services and supports is easier if the individual can identify with them as a peer. Ian is apprehensive if clinical professional tells him he should do it but if a peer comes along with similar experience and shares their success it may encourage him to do it.

Nora reinforced what Ian said about Peer Mentoring and programs helping individuals is something the group should focus on to help grow peer support.



Frank wrote in the chat, I would say that most of our Members, think that anything that is "not normal" or any additional information they give as a problem and appears as another hurdle that we have to overcome and will keep them from getting into their own place. So many are tight lipped and we have to drag it out with a chain and tractor.

5. Council Updates

3:45 p.m.

Clarice shared she received information from Jennifer Ochs who was recently featured on a podcast. Jennifer is also attending an advocacy skills class through the Colorado Cross Disability Coalition that is only five weeks long and recommends the program. Paige said they send all their staff to that class it is amazing. More details on CCDC website: [Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition \(ccdconline.org\)](https://coloradocrossdisability.org) and Podcast link: <https://linktr.ee/letstalkdisabilitypodcast>

The EDU sub-committee is having another meeting on March 24 at 10am. Send Clarice an email to make sure you are included if interested in attending.

Miriam shared resource information on [Unite Colorado](https://unitecolorado.org), a new program platform that is joining all resources in Colorado in one website. It is not available for the public but for individuals working in the health and social care community.

Amy asked if we know of consumers that provide good peer support. Paige said she will reach out to Amy and share info on Peer Mentorship that Atlantis offers. Amy also asked if anyone had issues with consumers being labeled racist and being rejected for home health. Ian shared in many cases TC are advocates to educate home health agencies about the consumer as the director of their care. Otherwise consumer directed situations works a bit easier as the level of respect much different.

6. Open Forum

4:20 p.m.

7. Adjourn

4:30 p.m.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request for persons with disabilities. Auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities and language services for individuals whose first language is not English may be provided upon request. Please notify John Barry at john.r.barry@state.co.us or the 504/ADA Coordinator at hcpf504ada@state.co.us at least one week prior to the meeting to make arrangements.

