

Task Force Members in Attendance: Dr. Katherine Seelman, James C. Noskesy, John Tague, Richard Mcgann, Janet Evans, Aureilia Scott Carter, Joe Wasserman, Liz Healy.

Task Force Members Absent: Linda Dickerson, Jeff Parker, Paul O'Hanlan.

Also in Attendance: Pat Valentine, Sheila Bell, Larry Hockenberry, Charles Morrision, Carol Horowitz, Andrea Bustos, Adoph, Melanie Pfenburger, Chuck Keenan, Heather Gray, Adolphine Breescik, Randy Whitehair, Liz Healy, Matt Pavlosky, Lynda Marnow, Robin Smith, Shelby Weber, Steve Fowler, Carly Denner, Ariel Grace Armstrong, Sarah Fernandez, Richard Meritzer.

Welcome and Introduction:

Dr. Katherine Seelman

Dr. Seelman introduced the main agenda item: Presentations on the Department of Human Services (DHS) Block Grants Program. Under this program funds allocated for human services would no longer be distributed by category as in previous years. These categories included:

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| ➤ Behavioral Health Services Initiative | ➤ Drug and Alcohol Homeless Assistance Program | ➤ Human Assistance Development Fund |
| ➤ Mental Health | ➤ Child Welfare Special Grants | |
| ➤ Intellectual Disabilities | | |
| ➤ Act 152 | | |

Because of the potential impact on the disability community, the Task Force has invited leadership from DHS and Disability Rights Network in order to learn about the planning for the implementation of Block Grants program and how the disability community and the Task Force can be involved in the on-going process.

1. Discussion Human Services Block Grants Pilot Program:

a. Pat Valentine, Executive Deputy Director for Services, DHS

Ms. Valentine introduced herself and her co-speaker Sheila Bell. She explained their roles in the planning and evaluation of children's care initiatives and the integration health service programs. She emphasized that there has been a lot confusion and negative publicity surrounding the Block Grants Program—specifically a proposed 20% cut in all Block Grants program. Ms. Valentine explained that the Block Grants Program is separate from the proposed fund cuts. She also explained the general assistance elimination is separate from this program.

Ms. Valentine directed the Task Force to the included documentation explaining the funding categories mentioned earlier. She explained that block grant funds are still allocated categorically. Rules and regulations for specific fund streams are still applicable, and that the plan for FY2013 was written category by category. At the end of the fiscal year, reports to DPW will include the amount, type, and population in receipt of services. Ms. Valentine reiterated that the program is not the consolidation of funding into a lump sum.

Ms. Valentine continued saying DPW's plans for the block grant program did not include consideration for regulations (State and Federal) on the requirements of services. Ms. Valentine directed attention to Allegheny County's management of mental health and drug and alcohol recovery services. Funding in these categories has been coordinated in a manner that echoes the balance between services provided by government assistance programs and all other services including those reimbursable by conventional insurance. Ms. Valentine used the example that mental health and drug and alcohol abuse program funding provide comprehensive coverage for those without insurance, while those on Medicaid only receive certain designated services according to the Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) Coverage Fee Schedule. The purpose of the Block Grants program is to best utilize all resources available to the residents of Allegheny County.

Ms. Valentine anecdotally referred to a client of family services whose multiple needs negatively impacted the receipt of services through the funding restriction and classification of the current system. Many times the service system is not integrated, connected, and comprehensive. Ms. Valentine, a provider for 17 years prior to joining DHS, explained the frustration of providers and clients whose treatments plans were mitigated by the compartmentalization of services.

Ms. Valentine explained that in order to avoid housing issues and gaps caused by the waiting lists for specific services, a joint service strategy called RESPOND was formed in order to draw housing funding from multiple sources: Mental Health, Disabilities, Waiver, Child Welfare, ect. With the concurrence of the State, the Block Grants Program will ensure that DHS standards and regulations are equal across all agencies or entities (i.e. mental health and child welfare).

Ms. Valentine provided statistics that the majority (53%) of the County population that receives DHS services does so from more than one agency or entity. While 30% receive services by three or more. Block grant funding will enable multiple funding streams to be used for multiple needs. She stressed the importance that Block Grants will not operate as reduction in funding for one service in order to pay for another. Rather, it will ensure that funding is distributed according to consumption. In addition to the Bureau of Financial Operations, there will be an advisory committee with

representatives from the board, the state and advocacy organizations to ensure that no one gets the short end of stick, or that the system is “robbing Peter to pay Paul.” Ms. Valentine announced that there is an open call for concepts that will field ideas and strategies on how to apply the flexible funding streams.

The floor was opened for questions:

Questions from Task Force

Mr. Nochese asked how the Block Grants funding will be used to assist the deaf and deaf-blind community and if the proposed changes would impact organizations that assist this population.

Ms. Valentine responded saying that the block grants are used for multiple services and that the deaf and deaf-blind community members that are in need of multiple services would not be prevented from receiving multiple services, for instance: receiving peer support services in addition to mental health services.

Ms. Evans asked if is it possible for someone that was been denied acceptance on the Board to still contribute a concept paper?

Ms. Valentine responded that anyone may submit a concept paper.

Dr. Seelman inquired about the deadline for Concept Papers

Ms. Valentine replied that the deadline for papers is March 4, 2013.

b. Carol Horowitz, Attorney, Disability Rights Network

Ms. Horowitz spoke on behalf of the Disability Rights Network in opposition to the Block Grants program. Citing similar application of funds redistribution with Bayview Hospitals, she pointed to the decrease in overall funding that result from the closing of hospitals and the analogous relationship to Block Grants Service. There was additional concern on where the decision for funding lies—citing that county commissioners often determine funding and may be motivated by issues other than care and access.

Ms. Horowitz continued, saying that the program is only in the pilot stage, but the Department of Public Welfare intends to make it a state-wide policy. Differences in needs from county to county will greatly impact the efficacy and receipt of consumers. Additional comments included that funding for the program is determined in February, yet implementations from the call for concepts will be affective April; therefore the funding will drive the plan, rather than the plan driving the funding.

Ms. Horowitz clarified that the shifting of funds is monitored and that approval lies with the Department of Public Welfare. Ms. Valentine challenged the efficacy of the waiver

process, pointing to the fact that of the 11 counties requesting a waiver or exception to the policies, only one was accepted.

Ms. Horowitz asked for clarification on the applicability of regulations across funding streams, stating that Intellectual Disability services are governed by different regulations than Child and Youth services and whether this will result in an issue of multiple funds sources that are beholden to different sets of regulation

Ms. Valentine responded saying that that state has recently gone to a central licensing entity for most services, and that waivers will be administered when essential standards will still be met. Ms. Valentine also added a waiver of regulation is granted when the essential standards are met by existing regulation.

Ms. Horowitz concluded her presentation, saying that at this point the Block Grants program will happen. The DHS advisory board, state and local legislators, and representatives from the community have a great task ahead of them.

Mr. McGann asked for clarification of the term "Commissioners" in reference to Ms. Horowitz's initial comments on the Block Grants program.

Ms. Horowitz clarified saying that in some counties, there are county commissioners that regulate funds related to the block grant and thus these commissioners can decide how that money is shifted within the block grant.

c. Nancy Murray: ACHIEVA, member of DHS Block Grants Advisory Council.

Ms. Murray, a member of the Block Grants Advisory Council, reported the events of the previous Thursday's meeting. She praised the Advisory Council for its membership of more than 50% consumers, service providers, and family members impacted by the Block Grants program.

Ms. Murray provided additional details on the call for Concept Papers. Each concept proposal paper should contain:

- A description of the population currently receiving services.
- An overview of organizations or service providers and what, if any, role they will have.
- Proposal outlines should include:
 - An explanation of how the idea would meet the needs of the described population.
 - Information on any changes required for the concept to be implemented
 - Outcomes of implementing the concept.
 - Amount of funding necessary for the program.
 - Evaluative measures for the proposed concept.

Ms. Murray encouraged those submitting proposals not to be discouraged by the evaluative portion of the proposal; the county will assist in determining evaluations. Proposals do not have to be budget neutral.

Applications are due March 4, 2013; ten concepts will be selected for presentation to the Advisory Council on or around March 15, the Advisory Council will then narrow the final concepts to five.

QUESTIONS FOR PRESENTERS

Mr. Noschese asked if there were any representatives from the deaf community on the Advisory Council.

Ms. Murray said that there is list of all the council members, but that she did not see anyone who appeared to be using interpretative services.

Ms. Bell added that there was one member on the Advisory Council that was chosen from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Task Force.

Ms. Healy asked if any of the Block Grants funds are coming from federal funds, or if they would consist of exclusively state and local funds.

Ms. Horowitz answered, saying that there were no federal funds, and the state was only using money it could control.

2. Approval of November Task Force Meeting minutes

- a. Ms. Evans made a motion to approve the November minutes. This motion was seconded by Joe Wasserman and approved by unanimous vote.

3. Financial Report

John Tague

Mr. Tague reviewed details from the Task Force financial report that was distributed electronically. In-line with the topics discussed at the meeting, Mr. Tague noted that funding for the Task Force would fall under the new Block Grants system, but it was unclear how it would impact the Task Force.

Currently Task Force meetings have a total cost of \$700. Task Force meetings occur ten times a year (fiscal) for a total cost of \$7,000. FY2012 will have nine total meetings, leaving a budget surplus. These funds are usually reserved for flex costs associated with accommodations such as Captioning at Real Time (CART). There is concern that this surplus will result in lost funding per the Block Grants Program

4. ADA Coordination Staff

Mr. Meritzer asked each of the interns from the Office of ADA Coordination, Department of City Planning, City of Pittsburgh to introduce themselves and provide background and information on their projects.

- a. **Sara Fernandez:** Sara is a dual degree student of Law and Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh. She is currently working on health literacy issues and ADA Code Compliance.
- b. **Steven Fowler:** Steven is a Master's student at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Education—with a concentration of Disability Policy in Higher Education. Steven is currently working on Disability Mentoring Day, Strategic Planning Committee issues, and coordinating on a sidewalk project survey assessment tool with the Duquesne University School of Nursing.
- c. **Shelby Weber:** Shelby is an architecture student at LaRoche' College. She is currently working as a design compliance intern. She is also working on CDAP and DesignPGH.

5. Vox Pop

- a. **Vacancies in the City-County Task Force on Disability:**
Dr. Seelman informed attendees of the meeting that there may be some openings on the Task Force. Members are encouraged to review and make comments on the Call for New Members document that was distributed in November. The item was tabled for a later meeting.
- b. Larry Hockenberry asked the DHS representatives if they have encountered any mental health related issues that stem from the use/non-use of cochlear implants among children and families in the deaf community. Ms. Valentine said that to her knowledge there had not been any reported.
- c. An announcement was made about the Magee Women's Hospital's four-month webinar series on Women with Disabilities. This is a webinar series dedicated to the unique issues faced by Women with Disabilities.
- d. Lester Bennette from Three Rivers Center for Independent Living asked if the Federal Government's \$20 Million designated for I.D. and Developmental Disabilities Waiting Lists will impact the Block Grants funding. Mrs. Valentine responded saying that she was not aware of that designation, but that I.D. and Mental Health would fall under the Block Grants program, while waiver dollars did not. Ms. Valentine said she will follow-up with DHS.

- e. Roy Cox from EMS brought up the issue of the emergency response vehicles' abilities to transport wheelchairs and other mobility aids along with the patient en route to an emergency room. Citing examples where wheelchairs and scooters have been left at accident sites, the representative explained that both the City and the County are still deficient in this area.

- f. James (Chris) Noschese asked Roy Cox if It would be possible for EMS personnel to learn basic sign language in order to more effectively serve and triage members of the deaf community. Richard Meritzer explained that funding has been allocated and an RFP has been submitted for communication cards as a stop gap for City Of Pittsburgh Police and EMS. Mr. Meritzer County added, saying that these cards would only be fore City Police and EMS because the funding and responsibility of the Office and the Task Force, but Dr. Seelman and Mr. Meritzer would forward information to Mary Esther from Allegheny County.

A discussion on current, accessible law enforcement vehicles emerged. Mr. Bennette commented on the prescence of an accessible sheriff's vehicle parked outside of the building, and questioned why those vehicles could not be used in situations where wheelchairs needed to be transported along with those in police custody. Mr. Meritzer responded saying that the issue was one of designated use. He added saying the issue is police vehicles that would be used for EMS purposes or vice versa. The city has attempted to acquire a dual-purpose response vehicle, however there have been issues of funding and staffing for these emergency vehicles.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Evans, and seconded by Joe Wasserman.

Meeting Adjourned.