

DS Imagine the Future Task Force
Vt. Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
May 22, 2014

Meeting commenced: 1:00pm

Members present: Anne Bakeman, Max Barrows, Linda Berger, Gail Falk, Camille George, Deborah Lisi-Baker, Ed Paquin, David Peebles, Susan Ryan, James Smith, Theresa Wood, and Marie Zura

Members absent: Bill Ashe, Nancy Brieden, Susan Buckley, Lisa Maynes, Cheryl Phaneuf, Sr. Janice Ryan, Karen Schwartz, Jennifer Stratton, Tracy Thresher, Karen Topper, and Marlys Waller

Guests and Staff: Rich Atkinson, June Bascom, Nicole LeBlanc, Pam McCarthy, Betty Milizia, and Susan Yuan

Announcements:

- GMSA - Voice & Choices Conference is being held on May 28 & 29th
- June 5th – Parents w/Disabilities Conference in Mass. Contact Susan Yuan for more information.

Minutes: The March and April minutes were reviewed: Max Barrows motioned to accept the minutes with a correction to the April minutes, and Marie Zura seconded the motion. Motion to accept the March minutes as written, and the corrected April minutes was accepted by all.

Reports from Workgroups looking at Employment, Residential and Technology:

Employment Initiative:

Jennie Masterson presented the work from the Employer Contracted Work Supports Workgroup. This workgroup is a result of the 2013 Legislative Summer Workgroup which was tasked with improving quality and service options for service recipients through new and innovative strategies. The goal of this employment initiative is to explore how agency supported employees staff would mentor business to take on the responsibility of providing work supports to its employee and the impact on employer, employee, and the DDS supported employees system. The pilot tests the notion that work supports provided by the work site team or by a co-worker will lead to authentic inclusion and increased investment in the employee by their work team. The goal is to support the whole organization to support the employee.

Group Comments:

- Should there be a pilot program? Can it be negotiated with employer? Uncomfortable with the “money” being given to the employer. Jennie noted that the plan is for there to be 3 pilots.
- It was suggested that this type of initiative is less about employee than employer and providing training and support to them to provide appropriate accommodations.
- Employee – should we have higher expectations – add in pilot – talk about what’s reasonable. For employers – setting the wage? It was suggested to set criteria for employee and employer.
- Do you have a profile of people with disabilities that would benefit from this pilot? DAs/SSAs would identify good candidates and help to develop a general profile.
- One person commented that she doesn’t see anything different in the pilot that employers aren’t doing now. What makes this pilot program different? Many

employers do not have to participate in the brainstorming in the process. It shifts the responsibilities to the employer.

- Are there savings associated with this? Jennie reported this was not necessarily the case in one state that they researched, but that there are other potential benefits (and things that need to be taken into consideration) as well.
- How would it be funded? Some on the Task Force would like to see it funded by general fund dollars.

The Task Force then weighed in on whether this project should move forward: 5 were in support, and 1 supported conditionally.

Next Step: Camille and others will have an internal discussion with Commissioner Wehry. The details of this presentation will also be presented to the State Program Standing Committee.

Supported Living and Technology Workgroup:

Nicole LeBlanc and Anne Bakeman presented the findings of the Supportive Living and Technology Workgroups. They would like to create an **Independent Living Task Force** to explore ideas that will propel forward collaborative efforts to achieving the following four goals in systems serving Vermonters with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Goal #1: Create more Options & Opportunities for Rental Assistance.

- Explore creative use of housing vouchers for sharing subsidized apartments by two housemates.
- Explore other avenues to increase funding for and availability of housing.

Goal #2: Increase Affordable, Accessible, & Appropriate Rental Units/Alternative Housing

- Consider assistance to bring available housing up to DAIL's safety and accessibility standards.
- Explore how self-advocates, housing professionals, service providers, etc. can collaborate to increase access to affordable and accessible housing.

Goal #3: Build a Culture of High Expectations and Greater Independence

- Create a dialog with stakeholders (self-advocates, family members, providers) about self-determination, independence, and the dignity of risk in regard to expanding interdependent/independent living.
- Educate individuals, family caregivers, & providers about self-determination, independence, and the dignity of risk.
- Educate and encourage school transition teams to plan for independent living.
- Support peer mentoring to foster social connectedness and build confidence as individuals seek greater independence/independent living.

Goal #4: Enhance the Use of Technology to Support Independence and Social Connectedness

- Make it a priority to explore how to increase access to the use of phones, internet, and social media for individuals with I/DD.
- Create an online *Technology Resource Guide*.
- Develop the capacity to train and support people's use of technology, including addressing privacy, safety concerns and social isolation as well as troubleshooting when problems arise.
- Explore use of You Tube and other online media to demonstrate and teach practical, independent living skills.

- Develop opportunities for individuals & families to have a hand-on experience with an array of technologies – (e.g., try out centers, technology fairs).

Group Comments:

- This doesn't focus on home ownership, would like to see more home ownership.
- Is any of this going on in VT right now – small houses, etc.?
- Is this able to be a pilot?
- Interrelationship between housing, jobs & technology.
- Look at Medicaid funding for technology.
- What would take for the agency to work on these ideas?
- How do we build better community?
- Concerned about isolation that some may experience.
- What is the inter-relationship with the proposed task force with the current work groups?
- Promote co-housing.
- Connect with mental health.
- It was suggested that opportunities with Homesharing be explored.
- More options for people to live together – more opportunities for relationships.

The Task Force was then asked to weigh in about the recommendations, particularly creating a Task Force. The consensus of the membership is to move forward. These are some things to focus on:

- Vouchers.
- Co-housing, collaborative housing
- The role of services in the home.
- Make sure technology piece is addressed. Not lose sight of it.
- Dedicated staff with specialized knowledge.

Next Step: Camille will follow up and share results of this discussion with Commissioner Wehry.

Next Steps for the DDS *Imagine the Future* Task Force:

The June meeting will be the final meeting of the Task Force. At this meeting, the Task Force will hear from the Workgroup that has been looking at the DD Act and any recommendations they have for possible changes that may be needed to help move toward a future vision for Developmental Disabilities Services in Vermont.

In addition, David Peebles will begin drafting the final report of the Task Force. The report will include a summary of the charge and composition of the Task Force, key activities undertaken by the Task Force and recommendations made by the Task Force. It is planned that this will be sent out in advance of the meeting so that Task Force members may review it in advance. At the meeting the Task Force will provide input regarding any suggested changes to the report.