

Vermont Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing/DeafBlind Council Meeting Notes

May 18, 2023

9:30am-12:00am

Waterbury State Office Complex,

Elm Conference Room

In-Person and Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Welcome/Housekeeping/Announcements

After technical difficulties to start the meeting the meeting got under way. The Captioner will have questions repeated so they can get this information. Also, it was noted that there were no name tags to identify in-person folks so please state your name when speaking.

Presentation 1:

Agency of Human Services and the Office of Health Care Reform with Fran Hutchins and Wendy Trafton.

Fran Hutchins [9817](#) of the American Rescue Plan Act sometimes called the HCBS FMAP for Home and Community Based Federal Medical Assistance Percentage. The 9817 and the HCBS FMAP are the same thing. The overview highlighted the following: (PowerPoint document shared) (this funding opportunity is not for nursing homes, specifically, because they are not considered a home or community based service).

9817 of the American Rescue Plan Act gave states a 10% federal medical assistance percentage, or FMAP increase for Medicaid home and community-based services. And these funds are available to expand, enhance, and strengthen Medicaid home and community-based services.

HCBS is defined broadly by the centers for Medicaid and Medicare. And we know that home and community-based services refers to medical and nonmedical services that are provided in the community rather or home-based setting rather than in an institutional setting and a variety of populations use home and community-based services, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health conditions, people that use substance use treatment services.

But CMS includes state services in the left side which includes home health services, such as nursing services, home health-aide services, medical supplies, equipment, appliances, and therapy services. Includes personal care services that people receive outside of an institution. It includes case management services that Medicaid eligible participants can receive to access needed services. Including school-based services for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities. And rehabilitative services, which is a broad category of services that includes mental health and substance use treatment as well as services like hearing aids. And lastly, private duty nursing, which is offered in somebody's home.

Vermont will claim \$72 Million in funds that we will, then, use as the State share to gross up to \$162 Million over the course of the funding opportunity are available to us through March of 2025. Funding

will be used for 3 categories: Improving services, promoting a high performing and stable workforce, and utilizing systems and data to improve care, promote value-based payment models and support program oversight.

Vermont HCBS spending plan narrative is on our [website](#). It includes a description of the program as well as this document, which is updated every 6 months. The spending plan includes over 80 activities, many of them have a focus on one-time investments which recognizes that this is one-time funding.

To strengthen the HCBS system at a high level, these are some of activities that we've included:

- Provider rate increases
- Increased limits or caps on assistive devices and home modifications
- Workforce recruitment and retention activities, such as the [Premium Pay Program](#) and bonuses for independent direct service providers
- Housing and residential service regional pilot planning grants
- Pilot programs for emergency room alternatives and supportive housing assistance
- Strengthening assessment and person-centered planning processes
- Grants to providers to support quality improvement
- Investments in data systems

Improved Services:

- ✓ We are hiring a contractor and plan to use these funds for startup of the supportive housing assistance benefit, which will include pre tendency sustaining services and community transition services for Medicaid members that meet certain health needs based and risk-based criteria.
- ✓ The Department of Substance Use Programs is also using a contractor to support the expansion of benefit for the community intervention and treatment eligibility group.
- ✓ Startup costs for a couple of new or expanded home Medicare based services. The crisis intervention services will provide community based mobile crisis for Medicaid beneficiaries who are experiencing mental health or substance use crisis.
- ✓ Sustained home visiting program is a long-term home visiting program for Medicaid eligible, pregnant, and parenting people, infants and children who meet certain risk-based criteria.
- ✓ Pilot some new models:
 - Department of Mental Health is offering programming to provide alternatives to emergency room mental health, for people who are in crisis.
 - Department of Disabilities Aging and Independent Living is working on developing a regional pilot planning grant for residential alternatives.
- ✓ A large portion of the funds will go towards rate increases for our mental health, developmental disabilities, brain injury, choices for care, substance use treatment and our substance use treatment providers.

HCBS Workforce:

- ✓ Anticipate that \$25 million of the funding will go towards premium pay payments that are given to providers who make up continuing service commitments to continue working in the field.

- ✓ Support provider trainings (using standardized monitoring tools, training for direct support professionals, trainings around employment support for individuals with developmental disabilities and cultural and linguistic competency).

Utilize systems and data to improve care, Promote value-based payments and Support program oversight:

- ✓ Provider performance incentives (if they meet certain performance measures, they will get up to a 1% payment bump)
- ✓ Early next year that will provide funding to providers to purchase data systems like electronic health records and care coordination tools as well as connect to the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

Upcoming grant opportunities:

(Are going to be focused on Medicaid and community-based services, and the audience will be providers and community-based organizations)

- Estimate about \$20 million we plan to make available to home and community-based providers and community-based organizations that serve individuals who use home and community-based services.
- We have contracted with a technical assistance vendor to help in the design phase of figuring out how to implement these grant opportunities and how to roll them out to the community.
- A list of ideas based on initial stakeholder feedback, ideas from the departments, as well as examples we've seen other states using their HCBS FMAP funding for, while considering if it complies with the federal guidance and feasibility of implementing these programs today.
- Continued to host a number of stakeholder engagement opportunities in the next couple of weeks or months to finalize and inform the design of these programs.
- The goal that will launch and open the applications for those over the summer.

Strengthening home and community-based workforce: This could include things like funding for trainings, for professional development, or strategies to foster employee retention and growth.

Care Model Innovations: that would address health related social needs, health equity, health and wellness, and care integration for individuals who have complex needs.

Technology and Data Improvements: could provide funding to HCBS providers to purchase equipment and secure technology, like, perhaps, an iPad or tablet that would improve the provision of care and reduce burden by allowing staff to collect and enter data at the point of care.

Capital Investment Opportunities: for example, improvements to increase accessibility for individuals who utilize home and community-based services to be able to access the services that they need and integrate into the community.

Presentation 2:

Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Division with Christopher Curtis

Christopher Curtis I am the Director of the Consumer Assistance Program, which is one element of our Consumer Protection Unit. At the Office of the Attorney General. I am a born and bred Vermonter and received the benefit of the great educational system that our state has to offer.

Consumer Assistance Program receives thousands of complaints every year from Vermonters on a wide variety of matters from a retail dispute to a dispute with a home contractor, to a dispute with a social media company and the largest number of complaints are around scams. Scam calls, scam robo calls, email, phishing expeditions, the annoying nuisances that threaten your sort of personally identifiable information or your sensitive financial information. We're currently going through a process of trying to segregate Scam Calls from the kinds of consumer complaints that we can actually do something about. Because most scam calls or a scam reports we get, they're extraterritorial, they're coming from some place outside of the United States. They're part of larger criminal syndicates, we really do not have jurisdiction to enforce. We could go to court and get a default judgment against an actor if we can identify who it was. They don't care, they're criminals. They're not going to stop.

Other Business/Closing

- Children’s Bill of Rights discussion at the July Council Meeting
- Emailing - Massachusetts work around on Deaf Bill of Rights for Children
- Stipend information will be sent to the Council

Public Comment

There was no public Comment

Council Attendance

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spenser Wepler (Chair)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Julie Porter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Krueger
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Will Pendlebury (Co-Chair)	<input type="checkbox"/> Kate Parrish	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Lalanne
<input type="checkbox"/> Bill Hudson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cassie Santo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracy Hinck
<input type="checkbox"/> Ralph Gallo	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Megan Tierney-Ward	<input type="checkbox"/> Pam Hoover
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebecca Chalmers	<input type="checkbox"/> Leslie Davis	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sharon Henry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Linda Hazard	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amelia Briggs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deb Charlea Baker	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kelley Decker	<input type="checkbox"/> Sherry Sousa	<input type="checkbox"/>

Guest Attendance

Name	Organization
Elizabeth Fox	Interpreter
Kristal Hier	Interpreter
Jessica Hutchins	Vancro
Michelle John	VT Hands & Voices
Diane Scott	White Coat Captioning
John Pirone	UVM