December 12, 2016

Minutes

Present: Laurie Raymond, Bridget McCabe, Mary Chris Semrow, Olivia and Maura McDermott, Nonny Soifer, Staci Converse, Margaret Cardoza, Cathy Register, Jamie Whitehouse, Luc Nya, Arthur P. Clum, Patrick Moore, Jerry Silbert, Janet Rancourt, Jennifer Putnam, Heidi Mansir, Cullen Ryan, and Vickey Rand. Via Zoom – Bangor (UCPofME): Andrew Cassidy and Teresa Barrows. Sanford (Waban): Morgan Jones. Biddeford (Community Partners, Inc.): Meg Dexter. Auburn (John F. Murphy Homes): Ann Bentley. Brunswick (Independence Association): David Cowing. Misc. sites: Peter Plumber, Amanda Eisenhart, Romy Spitz, and Dulcey Laberge.

Cullen Ryan introduced himself and welcomed the group. Participants introduced themselves. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes from last month’s meeting. Minutes were accepted.

*Thank you to Senscio Systems, who has very generously covered the cost of lunch for our meetings!* *For more information on Senscio Systems you can visit their* [*website*](http://www.sensciosystems.com/)*, or connect with them on* [*Facebook*](https://www.facebook.com/senscio) *and* [*Twitter*](https://twitter.com/senscio)*.*

**Featured speakers: Teresa Barrows, Behavioral Health Director, and Dulcey Laberge, Youth Transition Specialist, DHHS-OCFS. Topic: An update on the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) and a follow-up on the Blueprint for Effective Transition.**

**Cullen:** Three years ago we started the [Blueprint for Effective Transition](http://www.maineparentcoalition.org/blueprint-for-effective-transition.html). When we created the Blueprint it seemed to win great favor with the Coalition. We then presented it to the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) and the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS), and it seemed to be met with welcome. I think the biggest thing we’ve seen in terms of the Department’s implementation of things related to the Blueprint was “[High School and Beyond: A Guide to Transition Services in Maine](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/MSK.HDBK-update(6.23.16).pdf)”, OCFS’ transition guide which incorporated a lot of the ideas from the Blueprint. We are all anxious to see effective transitions; not just transition during the brief period of time between adolescence and adulthood but all transitions that occur over one’s lifespan. However, the Blueprint dives into how that big transition from children’s to adult services would best happen, and included a lot of inclusive activities for success, such as children’s and adult case management overlapping during transition, ensuring kids are prepared for an adulthood rich with employment, continuing education after high school, and an abundance of natural supports.

**Teresa Barrows**: I am the Children’s Behavioral Health Director for OCFS and I have asked Dulcey to present with me today as she is our Youth Transition Specialist.

**Dulcey Laberge:** My role at OCFS is to serve older youth in foster care and in the community. Today’s presentation will focus on Children’s Behavioral Health strategic goals and objectives.

**Begin Presentation**. [**Click here for the presentation**](http://www.maineparentcoalition.org/december-2016-presentation.html)**.**

**Teresa:** There are children eligible for Section 28 services who are not receiving them. Within Section 28, there are regular Section 28 services, and specialized Section 28 services, for which there are a limited number of Board-certified Behavioral Analysts. We are working very hard with our [KEPRO](https://www.kepro.com/) (formerly APS Healthcare) partners. We are trying to find different strategies, such as working with MACSP ([Maine Association for Community Service Providers](http://meacsp.org/)), to brainstorm workforce development ideas.

Additionally, we have a lot of youth with challenging behaviors who are difficult to serve. Residential providers are working diligently to serve these families. There are some youth who are too hard to serve, and as such are using out-of-state programs to meet their needs. The Department’s commitment is that 90% of people in need of services will be served in-state. We are working with DRM ([Disability Rights Maine](http://drme.org/)), providers, and other State agencies to find ways to serve youth in-state.

There is a Youth in Transition Steering Committee that meets monthly with a broad array of stakeholders. This group is looking broadly at transition to ensure we’re not working in silos, and to ensure people don’t fall through the cracks.

We are working towards using one standardized CANS ([Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cbhs/provider/cans.shtml)) assessment. Currently, different versions of CANS are being used throughout the state; we are moving towards one standardized CANS assessment. We are also adopting a process similar to the PCP (Person Centered Planning). We hope to roll these new initiatives out in the spring and will be meeting with provider groups quarterly to solicit feedback regarding these practices.

**Dulcey**: We’re thinking about one’s whole life holistically, to ensure people in care leave that care with the same life skills that all of us would need to be successful. We’re focusing on how we can best partner with community providers and other state agencies, and looking at where networks are being built in the community and how we can support that work.

The [transition guide](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/MSK.HDBK-update(6.23.16).pdf), along with other efforts, breaks down silos, looks for ways we can partner with each other, and really recognizes that to best support young people transitioning to adulthood we all have to work together.

**Cullen**: I am excited to hear that eliminating silos is part of your mission, as this is a key piece of the Blueprint for Effective Transition.

**Discussion:**

-It was stated that it is important to have people with ID/DD in the workforce. However, it was asked if the workforce is ready for these individuals.

**Dulcey:** I would say I think that very concern is at the core of a lot of the work that’s happening through the DOE ([Department of Education](http://www.maine.gov/doe/)) and DOL ([Department of Labor](http://www.maine.gov/labor/)). We partner with them on some of their grants. The goal is to ensure people are leaving high school with paid, meaningful employment experience. DOL is looking at that, how we can best support young people, and ensure that employers are not only prepared for but also supportive of folks. [Employment First Maine](http://www.employmentfirstmaine.org/) also works to ensure that people reach their best potential in regards to employment. This is a high priority of ours as well, and part of our ongoing work and commitment.

-It was stated that there appears to be a lot of ignorance and/or rudeness towards people with disabilities when it comes to employment. It was asked how the Department can help publicize the benefits of people being included in the workforce. It was asked how the inclusiveness of the workforce can be increased so that the dignity of employment is universal. It was stated that educating employers is imperative.

**Patrick Moore:** There’s no question in anyone’s mind that employers need help in accepting the potential of people with disabilities, and creating jobs for this population. However, there are workforce development projects that offer a series of trainings throughout the year. There is the recognition that workforce development is not only about supporting adults with disabilities, but in fact supporting employers to develop jobs with natural supports around those individuals. There is a lot of work to be done; but there is a really integrated approach through workforce development opportunities, DOL, DOE, VR ([Voc Rehab](http://www.maine.gov/rehab/dvr/)), [Jobs for Maine Graduates](https://www.jmg.org/), etc. all with the goal of offering integrated employment opportunities with full pay and benefits. There’s a lot of policy out there – now the programs and the practices are beginning to follow suit. We need to look at small steps. There is ground that needs to be plowed between school systems, employers, DHHS, and the community, but there is a huge effort going on right now.

-It was stated that it takes a team to achieve these goals and people need to come together to actually put some of these plans into action.

**Patrick**: Change starts one conversation at a time. Is there a difference between services available depending upon which geographic area you live in Maine? Absolutely. Also, one of the tenets of workforce development is looking to the small business sector.

-It was stated that there have been several transition fairs at schools in southern Maine, and that the number of kids who have been connected with jobs through these fairs is quite impressive. We’ve come a long way, but there is still more progress to be made.

-It was stated that for people who cannot read, the transition guide isn’t as effective as transition fairs and workshops, which are more interactive.

-One of the greatest predictors of students’ ability to attain employment is their parents’ ability to maintain consistent employment. It was asked how can a parent of a child with disabilities find a job, be there from 7:30am-2:30pm, make a decent wage, and be able to survive the probation period? It is very difficult.

-It was stated that work at the front end goes a long way; doing a lot of the work while people are in high school will pay off down the road. It is good to see the Department looking for a standardized instrument which could be very useful; however, one would hope that a single score on an assessment wouldn’t be the only driver for determining services.

-It was stated that there is a broader issue in Children’s Services. There are currently 235 kids waiting for children’s in-home services. Planning and laying out transition plans are both great, but if there aren’t support workers to provide services to kids and their families it’s all for naught. A provider stated that her agency is struggling to continue to provide those services, operating at a loss last year. There are about six kids at her agency alone waiting for adequate staffing to provide services. It appears that the situation is only going to get worse; if this isn’t addressed during rate setting this will continue to worsen in the coming years.

**Cullen:** This has been a great discussion, thank you both! This got us thinking. We still have some unanswered questions but you’re doing things that are very concrete. I like the idea of closing silos, and beginning transition at age 14. The Coalition would love to help you best implement this. Please keep coming here and talking to us so that we can work together to build a system that will work for everyone.

**End of presentation.** *(Round of applause)*

**DHHS Updates:**

**OADS, DHHS -** [**www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads**](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads)**:**

**Cullen:** Jennifer Fales attempted to attend today’s meeting at the Gardiner site; however due to technical difficulties that site was unable to connect. As such, OADS is unable to be here. I attended the [Adult Developmental Services Biennial Plan](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oads/trainings-resources/documents/OADSBiennialPlanforSvstoAdultswithIDorAutism2017.2018.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery) Forum last week in Brewer. A lot of the plan included carry-over goals from last year. There appeared to be a few loose ends that the Department had not included in the plan, such as asking the 128th Legislature to fund the waitlists. I pointed out including working closely with the Coalition, particularly with parents, as a mechanism to design a system that will work well for everyone moving forward. Attendees were mostly people local to the Brewer area, with approximately fifty people in attendance in total. People can make comments on the draft plan by emailing [OADS@maine.gov](mailto:OADS@maine.gov).

-It was stated that much of what is included in the plan, including a SIS (Supports Intensity Scale) replacement, will result in a systematic reduction of resources.

-It was suggested that the Department utilize a money follows the person plan.

**Cullen:** We would need a full agenda to thoroughly discuss this, as there is a lot there. The draft Biennial Plan does includea standardized assessment tool. The Coalition has always been in favor of an assessment tool; the issue with the SIS was having an assessment carry more weight than the PCP. The idea of a tool could be of value, but we need to know what’s going on, which is best accomplished by having the Department involved in an inclusive dialogue with us.

-It was stated that the message from OADS has been that there is not a Section 29 waitlist. Though there isn’t an official waitlist, they have been putting people in a queue. Since last winter, applications submitted for Section 29 have been accumulating, with people “queuing” for services. Since it is not an official waitlist the Department doesn’t report how many people are in queue; no one knows how many people are truly waiting for Section 29 services. In practice there isn’t a difference between an official waitlist and a queue of people waiting to receive services. The group expressed the desire to have an update on this from OADS at next month’s meeting.

**OCFS, DHHS –** [**www.maing.gov/dhhs/ocfs**](http://www.maing.gov/dhhs/ocfs)**:**

**Cathy Register:** Penquis has made numerous informative videos for children, such as how to brush one’s teeth. The goal of the videos is for people to watch them and attempt the task at the same time and increase independence. ([*Click here for more information.*](http://www.penquis.org/index.php?id=2&sub_id=309)) The update about the CANS is to consolidate it into one assessment versus five different CANS being used across the state. Additionally, the lack of Behavioral Health Professionals (BHPs) across the state is very problematic; we’re working with MACSP and educational professionals to come up with solutions to this.

-It was stated that providing Section 65 services is attractive to people performing the service because they get full-time hours, benefits, and a good starting wage.

**Legislative Updates:**

**Cullen:** Congress passed another Continuing Resolution (CR), which funds the government through 4/28/17. The CR had to be within the mandated FY 17 budget caps, meaning small across the board cuts to FY 16 spending levels, which were already inadequate for renewal funding for programs such as Section 8. When the new Congress resumes budget appropriations it is unclear what will happen with programs such as Section 8. President-Elect Trump recently unveiled Dr. Ben Carson as his pick for HUD Secretary. It is unclear what Dr. Carson’s knowledge base and positions are regarding HUD programs. For the State Legislature, Cloture will happen on 12/30; this is when bills for the legislative session have to be in. I would guess there will be some sort of discussion with the Legislature regarding the rates, which are creating a DSP shortage. This would create an opportunity for us to inform the Legislature about needs, problems we face, and potential solutions. About one-third of the Legislature turned over with the recent election; there may be folks who know nothing about individuals with ID/DD. It is on us to educate Legislators and to impress upon them the needs of our sons and daughters; this is a great time to meet with your state Legislators, have them over to your house, and do just that.

**Disability Rights Maine (DRM)** [**drme.org**](http://drme.org/)

**Staci Converse:** Over a year ago DRM received funding for an advocate and an attorney to solely work with kids. With the Section 28 waiting list being so high, kids are at home waiting for services. There are kids who are out of state ready to transition to in-state residential placements. Over the past year we had our new staff conduct outreach and training. They met with kids, provided a rights training, and trained 291 child welfare workers in collaboration with OCFS on children’s rights. In the summer of 2015, DRM and the Maine Center on Deafness combined. They provide a visual gestural training, which teaches methods for communicating with people who are non-verbal or have non-traditional communication methods. They also have a peer support group which involves individuals with ID/DD who are deaf, hearing impaired, or non-verbal, and focuses on communication issues. There are more than 250 members of this group across the state.

**Cullen:** We are contemplating changing the name of this Coalition, and plan to have a discussion at next month’s meeting. It is hard for folks to get the Coalition’s name correct, and as such different entities refer to the Coalition by different names. A more succinct name for the Coalition may remedy this.

**Cullen:** Check out our website [www.maineparentcoalition.org](http://www.maineparentcoalition.org). You can find the title of any of our past presentations; Click the link, and you will go right to the minutes. There is also a forum on the Section 21 & 29 page on the website. You can log in and post questions/topics for other parents to answer. Additionally, the website can always use more pictures. Take another look at the website from a parent perspective and make sure things are really clear, such as transition. Our goal is to be an easily accessible information clearinghouse.

The next meeting will be on **January 9,** **2017**.

**Featured speaker: Margaret Cardoza, Self-Advocate. Topic: Finding your natural supports.**

Unless changed, Coalition meetings are on the 2nd Monday of the month from 12-2pm.

***Burton Fisher Community Meeting Room, 1st Floor of One City Center in Portland (off of the food court).***