

Whatcom County
Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board (DDAB)
Health Education Center
January 28, 2019
4:30 - 6:00 PM

Board Members Present:

Ken Larson
Kathleen Harrigan
Aaron Perzigian

Russ Sapienza
Todd Donovan

Board members excused:

Jeffery Hart
Barry McHale

Board Members absent

Megen Porter

Guests Present:

Rod Duncan, DDA
Sylvia Williams, Private Citizen
Amanda Gates-Portillo, DVR

Kait Whiteside, Max Higbee Center
Beverly Parker, The Arc of Whatcom

Staff

Jessica Lee, DD Specialist; Amber Wolpers, CH Specialist; Ann Beck, HS Supervisor; Emily West, Coordinator

1.  Call to Order & Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Russ Sapienza and introductions conducted. Quorum was present.

2.  Minutes Approval

Kathleen motioned to approve minutes as presented. Motion seconded by Ken.

ACTION November 2018 minutes approved as presented. Aye 5, Nay 0



3. Board Nominations and election of Co-Chair

ACTION



A motion was made by Aaron and seconded by Kathleen to approve the nomination of Russ for Co-Chair.

ACTION Approve Russ Sapienza as Co-chair Aye 5, Nay 0

4. 2019 Washington Legislative Session Overview:

Highlights from the governor's budget related to service impacting individuals with Developmental Disabilities was discussed.

Focus on Direct Support Professionals (DSP) Several budget items focused on increasing wages for individuals who care for individuals with DD in their homes and in the community. A one pager from the *Community Residential Services Association (CSRA)* was shared describing the crisis in the supported living/residential system.

- Rate increases are requested to keep pace with the cost of living. Wage rates are currently only 6% above minimum wage. Residential providers are challenged to hire/retain staff at current rates.
- Turnover rates of residential staff are quite high (49%) which is disruptive for clients and impacts the quality of services.
- In Seattle, where a minimum wage of \$15/ hour was recently passed, the Medicaid wage of \$13.04 is insufficient to meet the new standard.
- Amber Wolpers, DD Transition Coordinator with the Whatcom County Health department spoke to her experiences working in residential. Consistent understaffing and low wages both contributed to her leaving her position.

Other Highlights

- Governor's proposed budget includes funding for high school graduates with DD.
- Several bills attempt to address the gap in special education funding and barriers for individuals with disabilities created by assessments and other graduation requirements.

Arc Advocacy Days

The Arc of Washington organizes [Advocacy Days](#) which are held during each legislative session to involve self-advocates and families and provide opportunities to learn and advocate. The Arc of Whatcom will be organizing a bus from Bellingham on January 30th for the advocacy day focused on Family Supports.

Statewide DDA Data

Prior to each legislative session DDA provides data on services which is provided to advocates and posted on the Arc of Washington State's website. www.arcwa.org. Highlights from that data were discussed.

Overview of DDA budget:

DDA State Budget Category Highlights	%	# served
The 4 state institutions (Residential Habilitation Centers or RHC's) serve the fewest individual, at the greatest cost.	13%	800
Community Residential Services (Supported Living) represents the largest portion of the DDA budget. Individuals rent their own apartment/home, often with a roommate, with support provided by residential agencies.	38%	4,500
In-Home/Community Services: This budget category is primarily made up of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Care services (78%) • Individual and Family Services (3%) • County Employment/Day services (19%) 	34%	28,500
Other community and professional services (respite, therapies etc.)	4%	-
State Operated Living Alternatives and Community Crisis Stabilization	2%	150

The remainder of the DDA budget is committed to case management and administration.

No Paid Services

- Approximately 30% of the 47,527 people enrolled in DDA statewide receive no services or case management. This is referred to as the “No Paid Services” caseload.
- By comparison, Whatcom County is one of two counties with paid services enrollment at 80% or greater. (19% of individuals enrolled in Whatcom are on the *No Paid Services* caseload.)
- 55% of clients on NPS statewide are enrolled in other services (not managed by DDA) such as Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or food benefits. This is a decrease from 77% last year.
- The reason for the decrease in participation in public programs is unknown. Some public programs, however, have seen a “chilling effect” on enrollment related to federal immigration policies.

DDA caseload report and enrollment

- Number of DDA eligibility determinations has increased at an average annual rate of 11.4%
- 84% of DDA application are determined eligible; 16% ineligible.

5. Judicial Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC):

JLARC recently reviewed County employment and Community inclusion services at the request of the Legislature. Highlights and recommendations from the report were reviewed. The report recommends that DDA:

- Measure not only client earnings, but quality of life outcomes (related to power and choice, relationships, status in the community.)

- Ensures that clients are offered the choice to switch to community inclusion after 9 months of employment
- Strengthen and expand the Community Inclusion program, including provider capacity and rate structure.

Although the report highlighted our state's high employment outcomes, it also noted that few individuals meet the state's objective of a "living wage". DDA defines living wage as the individual's ability to meet their living expenses. The report compared earnings against the federal poverty rate.

A group discussion on the recommendations outlined in the JLARC report was conducted.

6. Public Comment:

- Whatcom County Transition Fair is Tuesday March 26, 9:30am – 1pm at Bellingham Technical College, Settlemyer Hall.
- Max Higbee Center is having their Hearty Party 5k Race for Inclusion on Saturday, February 9 from 9am-10:30am.
- WA State Youth Leadership Forum is being held in July. Students are invited to apply.

7. Meeting Adjourned: Meeting was adjourned by Russ Sapienza at 6:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 25, 2019. This meeting will be at the Health Education Center, 3333 Squalicum Parkway.

Respectfully submitted by Emily West, Coordinator

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