Mill Levy Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
04.19.2019 2–4PM

Present: Ann Pierce (Co-chairperson)
         J.J. Tomash (Co-chairperson)
         Jennifer Beck (RMHS delegate)
         Tim Lomas
         Kate Williams
         Kendall Rames
         Lauren Weinstock
         Betty Lehman (phone)

Guests: Michael Kilgore, Financial Health Institute
        Johnathan Sims, Domus Vitae
        Mikhail Hoffman, Laradon
        Justin Sykes, DHS

Absent: None

Phone: Hannah Kent, DHS
       Paula Ellermann, 24-Hour Flex
       Korben Knudson, Right Turn Rides

Staff: Crystal Porter
       Amy Packer
       Joe Homlar

The Council meeting was called to order at 2:06pm by Co-chairperson Ann Pierce at the Family Crisis Center, 2929 W. 10th Avenue, Denver, Colorado.

Introductions & Minutes Review

The meeting opened with a brief welcome, followed by introductions from the Council members and Denver Human Services (DHS) staff. The Council reviewed minutes from the previous meeting held on 04-04-2019, and no changes or additions were requested. J.J. Tomash motioned to approve the minutes, and Kate Williams seconded- the motion passed with majority vote.

Co-chair Ann Pierce walked the Council through the agenda items set for the meeting. DHS Executive Director Don Mares joined the Council for introductions and thanked council members for their service, time, and energy on the important work set before them.

Subcommittees – Report out

The Council discussed modifying the agenda to spend time with each topic as it is reported out. Kate Williams made a motion that council members explore each topic as it comes up, for a maximum of five minutes. J.J. Tomash seconded, and the motion passed with majority vote.
Subcommittees reported out in the following order: Understanding the Mill Levy, Other Opportunities (related to direct services), Cultural Competence and Sensitivity, and Resources for Transitions. All the subcommittees had accompanying handouts that communicated their work.

**Understanding the Mill Levy Subcommittee**

The subcommittee shared several ideas for recommendation, to develop further. They proposed that some of the points stay with the Council, and others might move forward to DHS.

- Resource to help public understand the Council’s work on funding recommendations.
- Outreach, campaign, or press release about the mill levy itself, what it is, and what it’s doing
- One pager in plain language for the city ordinances to make them more accessible.
- Create a feedback loop on how well contractors and programs that are funded, perform. Tie in for persons accessing the services and the greater community.
- Assist individuals on the waitlist through an emergency fund and connection to community wide resources.
- Bring more partners for contractors to the table to bring more programs to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Council members asked several questions related to the waitlist idea. DHS suggested engaging RMHS on services already being provided through the existing contract, in particular the Waitlist Coordinator position. Co-chair Ann Pierce asked how these kinds of assistance might be defined as an emergency, and how responsive RMHS can be in situations that are time sensitive. Jennifer Beck shared the overall RMHS client assistance response time averages 5-7 days. She reports there are many instances where RMHS tries to move more quickly, while still obtaining the supporting documentation they need.

Kendall Rames asked for more details about the status of the waitlist, and Jenn Beck provided additional background on those waiting for the HCBS-DD waiver, and how the State works with CCBs to manage those that are waiting. Council member Lauren Weinstock arrived during this discussion.

Betty Lehman commented that the proposed feedback loop should be focused on outcomes for the persons and their families, and in alignment with the values of the Mill Levy Advisory Council.

**Other Opportunities Subcommittee**

The subcommittee explored other opportunities related to direct services for families and shared the following proposed recommendations:

- Set up a respite service fund to be dispersed to family members/guardians who do not have other resources and may have been denied by other funding sources.
- Compile resources for home modifications and connect families with organizations, and potentially contract out for this service; look at engaging nonprofits should DHS go out to RFP.
• Set up an independent, citizen volunteer appeals board to review denied funding decisions across current and future mill levy programs and for the funds to come from the DHS funds; several proposed details for this recommendation were included in writing.

Crystal Porter asked the subcommittee to define independent, which they said meant not seated with DHS or other affiliated staff. The Council asked clarifying questions for each of these proposed recommendations, with several minutes spent dissecting the appeals board idea. Kate Williams asked that the Council review the last bullet point on the appeals board and recommended that if DHS were to reverse a funding decision, those funds be distributed from DHS funds through the organization that originally denied funding, instead of directly to the person appealing the decision.

Council members requested more information from RMHS on the current process for reviewing denied funding decisions, which Jennifer Beck provided.

*Cultural Competence & Sensitivity Subcommittee*

The subcommittee discussed opportunities to promote cultural competence, sensitivity, and inclusion in the Denver community to improve overall quality of life for Denver residents. In a written report that included a start on research, the subcommittee proposed that the Council recommend the following:

- Provide trainings, potential incentives to encourage inclusion and the development of organic, interest-driven friendships in the community. This could be achieved through clubs that already exist in Denver.
- Promote inclusive clubs and organizations on DHS website.
- Develop an annual award ceremony for recognition.
- Start small and local, learn from experiences to grow this initiative.

The subcommittee wants to see Denver become the most welcoming and inclusive city in America. The stated goal was to increase opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be involved and included in their community, potentially through natural intersections such as participation in interests and hobbies they love within existing organizations and clubs in Denver.

*Resources for Transitions Subcommittee*

The subcommittee discussed shifting the conversation from transitions from an education program to transitions to an independent adult life. They reported services are largely found through word of mouth, which can limit the choice and opportunity of individuals and their families. In a detailed one pager, this subcommittee proposed that the Council make the following recommendation to DHS:

- Make an independent website directory of services in the Denver area that has a log in option and searching and filtering options.
  - Incorporate a ratings system on service providers that can be given by previous clients, while maintaining confidentiality, to be moderated and maintained by the website admin. Providers could maintain their own profiles.
DHS stated they are in the early stages of exploring a client-facing portal as part of this discussion. Lauren Weinstock mentioned provider fairs as another option to connect people directly to services and resources, and proposed that the Council’s webpage could have a role in sharing information out.

Discussion

Council members chose to move forward all recommendations that resulted from subcommittee work. The Council members took a written vote that resulted in prioritizing the recommendations for DHS.

- Independent Appeals Board (5)
- Website Directory (4)
- Understanding the Mill Levy (3)
- Inclusion (2)

DHS mentioned that the proposed recommendations leave room for various models for execution, which could impact response timelines and how people are served. Kate Williams motioned for the Council to move forward with all recommendations as presented by the subcommittees and prioritized for DHS review. Ann Pierce seconded. The motion passed with majority vote. DHS then shared next steps in the recommendations process, which includes research and review with management.

Public comment (2 minutes per speaker, up to 20 minutes)

Co-chair Ann Pierce recognized members of the public for comment. No one signed up, so the Council opened it up to anyone in attendance that might wish to make a comment in the remaining minutes. Guests introduced themselves, and 3 public comments were made from various professionals who work for community providers. Towards the end of public comment, DHS clarified that the Council would not be making recommendations of specific vendors, and that the Council is focused on identifying the underserved needs of people with intellectual and disabilities in Denver.

After the public comment period, Tim Lomas proposed the Council consider varying the scheduled times and locations of meetings to create greater access to Denver residents that may wish to sit in. The Council agreed to explore options to offer variety. Ann Pierce motioned to end the meeting, J.J. Tomash seconded, and the motion passed. The Council meeting adjourned at 3:47 pm.

The next Council meeting is Thursday, May 9. Details for this meeting are available on the website.

Mill Levy Advisory Council sessions are recorded; recordings are available upon request.