

Olmstead Plan Stakeholder Advisory

Quarterly Meeting

June 26, 2023; 2:00 – 3:00 PM (online)

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Deputy Secretary Debra Farrington

Olmstead Plan Director Holly Riddle, Office of the Senior Advisor for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), opened the quarterly meeting of the Olmstead Plan Stakeholder Advisory (OPSA) and introduced Deputy Secretary Debra Farrington. The Deputy Secretary welcomed the group, thanking advocates, providers and other stakeholders for their work to help people live independent lives in the community. She noted that the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) budget is still under discussion in the General Assembly; however, NCDHHS is continuing to push forward its work under the Olmstead Plan. Deputy Secretary Farrington noted progress in supported employment and the hiring of a new Housing Director in the Office of the Senior Advisor for the ADA. She also acknowledged the 24th anniversary of Supreme Court's decision in *Olmstead v. L.C.* and called the Plan one of the Department's highest priorities.

Updates & Highlights of Progress

Sherry Lerch, Technical Assistance Collaborative

The Technical Assistance Collaborative's Sherry Lerch reviewed examples of progress across the Department through March of 2023. She observed that there is so much work happening that it can be difficult to pick out highlights but stated that the day's presentation would give the OPSA a strong sense of the work taking place. Her PowerPoint is provided in the email to which these minutes are attached.

Prior to beginning the presentation, Ms. Lerch noted that strategies are completed only if all tasks are completed. Since the last Quarterly Report (through March 2023), five additional strategies were determined to have been completed, she said.

Olmstead Plan Priority Area (PA) 1 - *Increased Access to Home and Community Based Services and Supports*

- NCDHHS requested and received approval for funding to expand access to community-based services for children and youth with behavioral health conditions.
- In February, NCDHHS obtained approval of NC's Home and Community Based Services Transition Plan.

PA 2 - *Address the Direct Support Professional Crisis*

- A variety of efforts have been undertaken by Money Follows the Person's Workforce Engagement with Care workers to Assist, Recognize and Educate (WECARE) initiative.

PA 3 - *Divert and Transition Individuals from Unnecessary Institutional and Segregated Settings*

- The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) continued to partner with the Alliance of Disability Advocates of North Carolina (ADANC) and the NC Department of Public Safety to reduce the recidivism rate of individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (I/DD).
- State Developmental Centers have enhanced the pre-admission counseling process to divert individuals from admission to the centers when appropriate and are partnering with Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) for implementation.

- State Developmental Centers are operating a cross-divisional Central Referral Review Committee (CRR) where all referrals receive enhanced screening to ensure LME/MCOs have thoroughly considered all alternative options to divert individuals from admission.

PA 4 – Increase Opportunities for Education and Employment

- NCDHHS is working with the Department of Public Instruction to promote the inclusion of employment in every Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) provides ongoing technical assistance to Local Education Agencies and local VR offices to promote competitive integrated employment.
- During Calendar Year (CY) 2022, a total of 4,996 students received Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). DVRS increased by 19% the number of students served during the same period last year, exceeding their goal of increasing by 5% the total number of students receiving Pre-ETS services.
- All adult State Developmental Center residents have a Career Development Plan documenting their exploratory process to consider paid work opportunities.

PA 5 - Increase Opportunities for Inclusive Community Living

- NCDHHS established performance measurements for LME/MCOs related to housing stability for Transition to Community Living (TCL) members, with incentives for high performance. All six LME/MCOs satisfactorily achieved at least one performance measure related to increasing stability in independent living.
- For Plan Year 1, 86% of Independent Living Rehabilitation Program participants achieved their goal to live independently, exceeding DVRS’ Olmstead Plan goal for 80% or more to do so.
- During the 4th Quarter, 2022, the NC Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) supported individuals’ independence by purchasing \$150,000 in AT devices including: robotics, smart home technologies, 3D printers, aides to daily living, hearing/vision aides, remote monitoring technologies, recreation and accessible gaming and virtual reality technologies. The NCATP also applied for and received grant funding for tele-health/rehab devices. A total of 411 people were served under the two, additional grants this past year.

PA 6 – Address Gaps in Services

Expanding Children’s Services:

- High Fidelity Wrap Around is now available in 73 counties with the goal to be state-wide in CY 2023. A Request for Applications has been finalized and will be released in the spring of 2023.
- NC is expanding mental health services in primary care, schools, and specialty care.
- In partnership with the LME/MCOS, NCDHHS has initiated efforts to increase the supply of outpatient therapists trained to treat children with co-occurring mental health disorders and I/DD.

Expanding Adult and Older Adult Services:

- There are ongoing efforts to support strengthening of Peer-Run and Peer Support Services.
- The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) is addressing social isolation by focusing on digital equity among older adults.

PA 7 – Alternatives to Full Guardianship

- NCDHHS and key partners continued efforts to educate the community at large about supported decision-making and other alternatives to guardianship.
- Senate Bill 308, titled “Guardianship Rights,” was introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly on March 14, 2023, updating General Statute 35A by : 1) establishing a notice of rights before and after guardianship; 2) prioritization of less restrictive alternatives to guardianship; and 3) provision of monitoring and oversight tools for the clerks.

- The Division of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS) continues to provide ongoing training for county Departments of Social Services and corporate guardianship agencies about the process to seek full or partial restoration of rights.

PA 8 - Address Disparities in Access to Services

- Community Health Worker (CHW) contracts supported hiring of more than 500 CHWs, including 124 who speak Spanish, across all 100 counties in NC. A Center for Disease Control grant supports the efforts and regional coordinators to continue the work. The Office of Rural Health has worked with Medicaid to develop reimbursement policies for CHWs.
- NCDHHS will require Standard Plans to collect and report quality data on race and ethnicity to assist the Department in assessing disparities. The Tailored Plans will be required to report as well upon launch in 2023.

PA 9 - Increase Input from Individuals with Lived Experience

- DMHDDSAS supports several consumer-run initiatives, including Peer-Operated Respite, a Peer-Run Wellness Center, Sunrise Community for Recovery and Wellness and numerous Oxford Houses throughout the state. The Division plans to release a Request for Applications for a Peer Warm Line in May 2023.
- Division of Social Services staff provided updates to and sought feedback from members of the Child Welfare Family Advisory Council on implementation of the Olmstead Plan.

PA 10 - Reduce Transportation Burdens

- NCDHHS continues to expand telehealth and scope of practice flexibilities to reduce transportation burdens. The Division of Health Benefits updated policies for outpatient and Children’s Developmental Service Agencies to include additional telehealth/telephonic codes for reimbursement.

Refer to TAC’s slide deck for additional information.

Applying an Outcome Orientation Framework Kent Davis, Mathematica

Ms. Riddle asked that Kent Davis of Mathematica pick up the presentation at Plan Priority Area 11. Mr. Davis’s team is providing products to operationalize the Plan, inclusive of measure review and alignment and tools to monitor progress. This work is key to the creation of a quality and outcome orientation framework.

PA 11 - Using Data for Quality Improvement

Mathematica’s role in the Olmstead work, Mr. Davis said, is to: 1) conduct a measure review and alignment; 2) develop processes and tools to mirror progress; and 3) implement and refine a quality assurance and performance improvement system. Tasks involved include:

- Measure review and alignment recommendations
- Data extraction from quarterly workplans
- Design of the progress monitoring application
- Quality assurance and performance improvement (QA/PI)

Ultimately, Mathematica will produce an Olmstead Plan dashboard. It will be released for NCDHHS internal review in the next 4-6 weeks. Mr. Davis stated that today’s snapshot of dashboard would assist the OPSA in understanding this tool and offering recommendations to build on it.

To demonstrate how Mathematica is approaching operationalizing the Olmstead Plan, Mr. Davis offered an example based on PA 7: Explore Alternatives to Full Guardianship. Each Priority Area, he noted, contains strategies, and action steps. Starting with a desired outcome or vision, Mathematica considers what strategies, actions and measures are related this outcome.

This involves such considerations as:

- Do we have all the measures we want?
- Are we counting the right people?

Over time, Mr. Davis said, the team will create more advanced measures; fill in gaps in formulas; set/reset targets for outcomes; and celebrate improvements. He closed the presentation by saying that better formulas mean better results for individuals.

Refer to Mathematica's slide deck for additional information.

Discussion, Suggestions, & Questions Co-Chairs and OPSA Members

Community Co-Chairs Betsy MacMichael, Director of First in Families of NC, and Bryan Dooley, Chair of the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities, opened the floor for comments or questions from the Olmstead Plan Stakeholder Advisory.

Corye Dunn of Disabilities Rights North Carolina asked when the dashboard would be available to the public. Ms. Riddle responded that there was no set date at this time. She will be sure to let members of the Advisory know as soon as the dashboard is available.

Rep. Carla Cunningham was warmly welcomed. She spoke about the issue of disparities for contract providers. When LME/MCOs are selecting contracts, they are not selecting enough people of color, she said. LMEs/MCOs need to take this issue into account, particularly when they are providing community services for people of color. Deputy Secretary Farrington acknowledged that this was a real issue in the behavioral health space. Data, she said, supports that people have better outcomes when they are seeing individuals who are a cultural/racial match. Ms. Dunn asked how the state could assure a measure of equity in contracting. Rep. Cunningham suggested that LMEs/MCOs should provide a list of contracted providers, with ratings, to provide transparency and monitoring.

Carol Conway, a parent, noted that most adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (IDD) are still living with their parents. State programs are focused on transitions out of institutions and are missing the issue of aging parents with adult children with IDD. Dep. Sec. Farrington noted that the Department was aware of concerns with supportive living for the IDD population and the need for a strong model for individuals moving from family homes to their own homes in the community. There is more work to be done, she said.

Ms. Dunn asked about the timeline for resetting goals as we approach the end of the first, two-year Olmstead Plan. Ms. Riddle replied that work on timelines was underway, along with work on meaningful outcomes for the Plan.

Mr. Davis remarked that his team was aggregating strategies and thinking, with the TAC and NCDHHS, about forthcoming goals. With access to Medicaid and registry of unmet need data, Mathematica will be better prepared to fill in the formulas they have developed. He emphasized the need for continued, strong collaboration.

Ms. Riddle pointed to upcoming meetings with NCDHHS leadership to review Mathematica's recommendations regarding those measures upon which we will build Plan outcomes.

Deputy Secretary Farrington observed that people were asking the right questions. The NCDHHS, she said, is seriously thinking about how, when, and what processes will be used to report data and achieve outcomes. The lack of more specific answers today does not indicate that the Department is not thinking about these issues.

Sherry Lerch stated that we have known all along that we wanted the outcome measures that would be the focus of the many activities, initiatives, and funding strategies that are emerging. Prioritization will be important as there is a lot of activity and work being done under the auspices of the Olmstead planning process. She emphasized that it is important to gather input from the Advisory and that the OPSA would have a role in determining the state's priorities moving forward.

Public Comment

Members of the Public

There was no public comment.

Closing Remarks

Betsy MacMichael, Community Co-Chair

Co-Chair Betsy MacMichael thanked Mathematica and TAC for their reports and updates. To date, she said, we have five quarters of input, with three remaining until the end of Calendar Year Two of the Plan. She said that she would like to know which five strategies have been met. She also underlined that it would be helpful for OPSA members to get the consultants' PowerPoints in advance of or during the meeting. Ms. MacMichael also urged greater accountability for Olmstead Plan outcomes at the LME/MCO level.

Ms. Riddle said that comments and questions were welcome at any time. These may be sent to her at Holly.Riddle@dhhs.nc.gov. In closing, on behalf of the NCDHHS, she thanked members of the General Assembly, the Deputy Secretary, TAC, Mathematica, the Community Co-Chairs, and the members of the OPSA and the public for their participation and interest.