



Mission: To support and provide advocacy for providers to ensure the availability of high-quality programs, services, and funding adequate to support the individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities they serve to achieve a life of increasing independence, productivity and integration.

Board Report

January 22, 2025



OPRA's Guiding Principles

Anchor Statement: Ohio's providers are focused on supporting the success of the people we support.

Principle #1: We believe the primary focus of our work is the positive and supportive relationship between front-line professionals and the people they support.

Principle #2: We believe providers should be supported and trusted to support people with developmental disabilities and operate effective and successful organizations.

Principle #3: We believe providers must be sufficiently compensated to deliver essential services to meet the needs of the people they support in an ever-evolving society and system.

Principle #4: We believe all services currently provided across the spectrum of services should be recognized as crucial to each and every person we serve.

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Safe Place Statement

We would like to thank you for attending this meeting. This meeting, like all of the OPRA Committee meetings, are designed to offer a safe place for OPRA Members to share thoughts, opinions and ideas. The OPRA Team and the OPRA Board relies on these discussions to inform our efforts to provide Advocacy, Information and Resources. We are respectfully asking you, as a participant, to assist us to make this a safe place for professionals to openly share without fear. It is important that when personal experiences are shared, there is an assurance that what is shared stays within this group. We are looking forward to an open and honest conversation and we would like to thank you for being a part of this important meeting.

OPRA Board Meeting Agenda

January 22, 2025

10:00am – 1:00pm

- Welcome/Introduction
- Safe Place Statement
- Approval of October 2024 & December 2024 meeting minutes
- Policy Discussion
 - State Budget Updates
 - Coalition plan
 - Budget Process
 - House and Senate Committee Appointments
 - The Present and the Future of County Boards
- CEO Report
 - Finalize Strategic Plan
 - Training Plan
 - Committee Discussion
 - Membership Update
 - Partnership Summit
 - ANCOR Membership
- Open Discussion
- Adjourn OPRA Board meeting

OPRA Foundation Board Meeting Agenda

- Convene the OPRA Foundation Meeting
- Approval of Meeting Minutes
- Update on Just Culture Learning Collaborative
- The OPRA Foundation and OPRA Conferences
- Adjourn OPRA Foundation Meeting



Board of Directors Minutes

Date: October 23, 2024

Time: 10:00am – 11:30am

Location: Polaris Hilton (Pre-Conference)

Board Members:

| Present | | | Absent |
|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| District 1 | District 4 | District 7 | Felicia Hall |
| Jamie Steele (Virtually) | Roy Cherry | Diane Beastrom | |
| Jim Steffey | Steve King | Tami Honkala | |
| | Tim Menke | | |
| District 2 | District 5 | At-Large | |
| Ashley Brocious | Steve Colecchi | Bob Gaston | |
| Scott DeLong | Jeff Johnson | Kurt Miller | |
| Dennis Grant | Michelle Madden | Tim Neville | |
| District 3 | District 6 | | |
| Edgar Barnett | Adam Guinther | | |
| Mary Thompson Hufford | Bob Heinzerling | | |
| Lisa Reed | Liz Owens | | |
| | | | |

OPRA Staff: Rachel Hayes, Teresa Kobelt, Scott Marks, Pete Moore

Guests: None

Minutes*:

| Agenda | Discussion | Tasks/Conclusion | Responsibility |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <i>Call to order</i> | Adam Guinther called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. | Safe Place Statement read. | |
| <i>Approval of minutes</i> | The minutes from 6/26/24, 7/24/24, and 8/23/24 were reviewed. Roy Cherry motioned to approve all three sets of minutes; Lisa Reed seconded. | Unanimously approved | |
| <i>Finance Committee Report</i> | Liz Owens reviewed financials, including monthly financials and investments and recommended approval. The finance committee will likely make recommendations next month to move money in investment accounts. Tami Honkala motioned to approved September Financials; Michelle Madden seconded. | Unanimously approved | |
| | Liz Owens reviewed OPRA's draft 990 and recommended approval for signing and filing. Jeff Johnson motioned to approve; Michelle Madden seconded. | Unanimously approved | |
| <i>Governance Committee Report</i> | <p>Bob Gaston updated the Board on several items the committee has been considering, and discussed whether these need to be addressed through code of regulations, board policy, or other means, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should definition of "Public Entities" be added to code of regulations – awaiting Vory's review; • How to designate corporate office (i.e. for national/multi-state orgs); • Whether a member can have more than one person on the Board at any given time; • Whether you should have to be a fully paying member (not new/discounted rate) to be on the board; • Terms of at-large board members – should they be allowed to serve multiple terms. | <p>Bulleted items will be taken up with the Executive Committee – to be scheduled soon.</p> <p>Board members with any other Governance issues should bring them to Board Chair.</p> | Executive Committee to schedule meeting. |

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| Agenda | Discussion | Tasks/Conclusion | Responsibility |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| | <p>Scott shared update on NMT rule – it is through clearance and has been final filed. Will go into effect on January 1, 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14(c) – Pete attended meeting w/Reps Jarrells and Lipps, parents and a provider from Montgomery Co. OPRA continues to press for the need for replacements and supports. Pete introduced the idea of an “Accessible Ohio Business” which seemed well received. Also discussed other states, like Kansas, and potential federal legislation. • Kurt Miller asked if there was any update on the DRO reassignment. There has not been. | | |
| <i>CEO Report</i> | <p>Pete walked through OPRA’s 2025-2026 strategic plan. The Board was supportive of the plan and made suggestions for changes, clarification, and strengthening the plan.</p> <p>Rachel provided update on “OPRA Gives Back”. Based on previous feedback, OPRA will look at December as a possible time to organize an event as well as help members market events, share what they’re doing, etc.</p> | <p>The OPRA team will incorporate Board’s feedback and share final plan with Board before end of year.</p> <p>Rachel will be sending more info to members about OPRA Gives Back.</p> | <p>OPRA Team</p> <p>Rachel/OPRA Team</p> |
| <i>Open Discussion</i> | None | | |
| <i>Adjourn</i> | Ashely Brocious motioned to adjourn; Liz Owens seconded. | Unanimously approved | |

* More detailed information available upon request

OPRA Board of Directors Minutes

Date: December 18, 2024

Time: 9:00am – 9:20am

Location: Virtual

Board Members:

| Present | | | Absent |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| District 1 | District 4 | District 7 | Edgar Barnett |
| Felicia Hall | Roy Cherry | Tami Honkala | Diane Beastrom |
| Jamie Steele | Steve King | | Jim Steffey |
| | Tim Menke | | |
| District 2 | District 5 | At-Large | |
| Ashley Brocious | Steve Colecchi | Bob Gaston | |
| Scott DeLong | Jeff Johnson | Kurt Miller | |
| Dennis Grant | Michelle Madden | Tim Neville | |
| District 3 | District 6 | | |
| Mary Thompson Hufford | Adam Guinther | | |
| Lisa Reed | Bob Heinzerling | | |
| | Liz Owens | | |

OPRA Staff: Melissa Fannon, Rachel Hayes, Teresa Kobelt, Scott Marks, Pete Moore, Sonya Summers, Christine Touvelle

Guests: None

Minutes*:

| Agenda | Discussion | Tasks/Conclusion | Responsibility |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Call to order</i> | Adam Guinther called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. | Safe Place Statement read. | |
| <i>Finance Committee Report</i> | Liz Owens reviewed November financials and investments. Liz noted OPRA is finishing the year strong and recommended approval. Michelle Madden motioned to approve November Financials; Roy Cherry seconded. | Unanimously approved | |
| | <p>Liz Owens asked Pete Moore to update the Board on OPRA's 2025 proposed budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pete discussed personnel changes and new contracts impacting the budget, including a contract admin and marketing firm under professional fees. Scott Marks provided more detail, including operating income and margin, noting OPRA did better on dues than anticipated. Scott also pointed out the Works for Me contract with OOD – which will cover much of the increase in the professional fees line item. There was discussion about pulling out the Works for Me lines as “grant expense” – while there is no difference in bottom line, in the budget it might add clarity. Travel is up due to new administration, anticipating more national work, “right sizing” last year. There was a question about increase in office expenses. The budget includes funds for needed office updates, including flooring. Jeff Johnson noted what a nice turnaround this year's budget was from last. <p>Liz Owens motioned to approve the 2025 operating budget. Lisa Reed seconded.</p> | Unanimously approved | |

| Agenda | Discussion | Tasks/Conclusion | Responsibility |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------|----------------|
| <i>Other Business</i> | <p>Pete provided an update on 2025 Board meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> January's Board meeting will be in person at Arc Industries on January 22. The 2025 calendar has not been finalized, but Board meetings will generally take place the fourth Wednesday of every month. May & October Board meetings will take place the day before the conferences. August's Board meeting will take place with the Board Retreat. <p>Tami Honkala asked for an update on District 7 vacant seats – one left by Connie Boros and one when Diane Beastron retires at the end of the month.</p> <p>Pete shared that Connie's seat will be filled by Laura Lamb. Laura will be appointed by Board Chair for remainder of Connie's term and begin attending in January.</p> <p>The vacancy that will be left by Diane has not been finalized.</p> | | |
| <i>Adjourn</i> | Ashley Brocious motioned to adjourn; Michelle Madden seconded. | Unanimously approved | |

* More detailed information available upon request

Policy Committee

The policy committee serves as the clearinghouse for most issues affecting any aspect of DD services and makes recommendations for action to OPRA's board of directors. Every effort is made to allow sufficient time to discuss issues in detail in order to understand the impact on individuals and providers, and to consider what position OPRA should take on a given issue. OPRA Committees examine issues and may pass them on to the Policy Committee for review. Ad hoc workgroups may also be established from time to time to examine issues more fully. The policy committee is chaired by the vice chair of the board of directors with a representative provider group selected to serve as the core committee. This core committee is tasked with convening and commenting on policy issues as they arise, whether during a meeting or between meetings. Other committee workflows through policy committee to the board of directors, and vice versa.

Policy Committee Meeting
Wednesday, January 8, 2025
10am-12pm via Zoom

Quick recap

The meeting covered various policy and budget-related topics. Discussions included proposed rule changes for employment services, budget strategies for the upcoming fiscal years, and the need for transparency in county board finances. The meeting also addressed the organization's plans for improving rates, maintaining coalitions, and adapting to potential changes in regulations and funding mechanisms.

Next steps

- All members to provide feedback on the proposed Basic Employment Skills Training rule, especially regarding the 4-year timeline and place restrictions.
- All members to analyze and provide feedback on the new group career exploration rate model compared to current community vocational rates.
- All members currently providing group employment services to provide feedback on the proposed 8-person limit.
- All members to provide Scott Marks or Teresa with feedback on the remote supports proposal prohibiting monitoring bases in residential settings.
- All members to prepare for budget advocacy using the new budget guide tools, including the "Meet Your Legislator" worksheet.
- Christine to update the budget guide with committee assignments once they are announced.
- Pete to forward the Legislative Service Commission language for ICF equipment to the team.
- OPRA team to develop and share additional budget advocacy tools with members.

Policy Committee Meeting Update

The meeting started with a safe place statement, emphasizing the importance of open sharing and confidentiality. Scott DeLong introduced Jeff Johnson as the co-chair of the Policy Committee, highlighting Jeff's valuable contributions and experience.

Rule Proposals for Employment Services

Scott Marks discussed three rule proposals related to employment and pre-vocational services. The first proposal is for a service called BEST (Basic Employment Skills Training), which is intended to replace the current Vocational Assessment and Basic Skills (VABS) service. Scott highlighted that the new service will have a soft four-year timeline before potential monitoring by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD), and it will be available only to individuals on Places 1, 2, or 3 of the path. The second proposal is for changes to Group Employment Supports (GES) and the Career Planning Service. The third proposal introduces a new service called Group Career Exploration, which is intended to replace some of the services currently provided as community VABS. Scott also discussed the new rate model for the Group Career Exploration service, which may not be viable for all providers. He encouraged feedback on these proposals, particularly from those who currently provide community VABS services.

New Rule Proposals for Group Services

Scott Marks discussed the new rule proposals for group employment services. He highlighted that the new enhanced rate structure is available for groups of 8 or less, and there is no longer a small group requirement. However, he noted that the service is prohibited from being provided in provider-owned or controlled settings, which could pose challenges for certain service setups. Scott also mentioned that the department had removed the original proposal for an even higher rate for groups of 2 or less. He encouraged the team to provide feedback on the new limit of 8 and the potential impact on their services.

Earn-Out Clause and Career Acts Discussion

Jeff and Scott discussed the progress of the group's work, highlighting the significant change in the earn-out clause and the transition to the career acts. They expressed concerns about the lack of a daily rate attached to the new career acts and the ambiguity around the term 'facility-based work settings'. Jeff also mentioned the need for the Department to define 'facility-based work settings' clearly. Scott agreed, noting that the Department's efforts look better but also present challenges. They also discussed the proposed rule from the US Department of Labor (DOL) regarding the phase-out of commensurate wage, with Jeff suggesting that the Department's communication about the transition to the county boards would be crucial. Scott mentioned the opposition from the House Committee on Education and Workforce and the need for more feedback on the group employment setup. They also discussed the potential impact of the change in administration on the proposed rule.

Budget and Industry Trends Discussion

In the meeting, Scott Marks discussed the proposed rule and the feedback received over the past few weeks. Pete then introduced the budget discussion, highlighting the work of the budget coalition and the Industry Trends Report (ITR) led by Christine. The ITR focused on service availability and stability, with most providers increasing capacity in at least one service area. Christine also mentioned the need for a third edition of the ITR to capture more data points. Jeff asked about the specifics of serving individuals with complex medical and behavior support needs, to which Christine responded that while there was some increase in shared living, there was not enough variation to warrant further analysis. Pete emphasized the importance of using visuals and concise text in their communications with legislators.

State Budget Strategy and Waiver Rates

Pete discussed the organization's strategy for the upcoming state budget covering fiscal years 26 and 27. He highlighted the need to stabilize the system, sustain services, and set the stage for future success. Pete

emphasized the importance of gratitude towards legislators and the need for a multi-year approach. He also outlined the organization's request for statutory authority to implement a formula for updating waiver rates without legislative intervention. The organization plans to ask for a percentage increase for the budget year 2024 to fill the gap until the new formula is implemented.

County Board Funding and Transparency

Pete discussed the county board's lack of additional funding for the next budget ask, emphasizing the need to focus on state funds. Stephen raised a question about the total amount of funds the county boards are sitting on, to which Pete responded that the exact numbers were not available but could be obtained through a records request. Stephen then decided to submit a public records request to all 88 county boards to determine the actual amount of funds they are holding. Matthew and Dan Connors shared examples of county boards using their reserves for various projects, while Pete and Stephen discussed the need for transparency in the county boards' financial dealings.

Improving Rates and Coalition Strategy

Pete discussed the strategy for improving rates and maintaining a coalition. He mentioned that the plan for the upcoming year involves working through a mechanism during the interim period, with a proposed 3.4% increase to be implemented on January 20th, 2026, and a 2.3% increase on January 1, 2027. The increase is based on the consumer price index and is supported by many entities. Pete also mentioned that the governor's budget will be crucial in determining the strategy. Molly asked about the success of this plan and who the levers should be put pressure on, to which Pete responded that they are waiting for committee assignments to know who to work with. Jennifer raised a concern about the cost modeling and how it reflects the true cost of the business. Pete acknowledged this concern and mentioned that they would have to do a lot of data collection to address it. The team also discussed the ICF formula, with Pete stating that their main goal is to keep the Professional Workforce Development add-on as long as possible to get a full year's worth of cost data.

Equipment Costs and Budget Adjustments

Pete led the meeting, discussing the ICF and capital equipment costs, which have doubled in some cases, and the need to adjust the cap. He also mentioned the need to serve people not only in ICF but also in the waiver with specialized in complex needs. Tim shared that he had forwarded the LSC language for the equipment to Pete. Christine presented the budget guide, which includes definitions, the budget process, and various committees of jurisdiction. She also mentioned the possibility of a new Senate Medicaid committee. Scott discussed remote supports and assistive technology, mentioning a proposal to prohibit monitoring bases in residential settings. He encouraged feedback on this proposal. The conversation ended with no further topics to discuss.

NEXT MEETING: Core Committee – **February 12, 2025** 10:00am – 12:00pm (Virtual)

OPRA Committee Reports



Day Array

Summary

This committee provides a platform for information sharing, networking, deliberating, and problem-solving topics and issues unique to leaders in the day array. Topics covered in meetings may include, but are not limited to, updates from the field, national and state trends, policy and rule review, best practices in organizational leadership, operating fiscally sound organizations, and identifying and mitigating organizational risk as relates to the broad array of services and supports, including day programs, active treatment, vocational training, career development, and employment. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the policy committee for review and action.

Committee Chairs: Anne Haning (Belco Works), Chelsea Ashcraft (Ohio Valley Goodwill Cincinnati)

OPRA Staff Lead: Scott Marks

OPRA Day Array Committee Report

Thursday, December 5, 2024

9:30am-11:30am

Quick recap

The meeting focused on the progress of the Employment First Advisory Committee, the importance of employment navigators in counties, and the proposed rule by the US Department of Labor to phase out the 14c subminimum wage for people with disabilities. The committee also discussed the upcoming training work groups, the formation of a project search subcommittee, and the expected release of the group employment supports proposal. Concerns were raised about the timing and planning for the upcoming changes, especially with the budget for 2025 already in place.

Summary

Dol. 14 C. Rule Discussion

In the meeting, Scott initiated the session and asked participants to turn on their cameras. He then started the recording and handed over the meeting to co-chairs Chelsea and Dan. Chelsea expressed her excitement about the meeting and her role as a new co-chair. Scott then discussed the agenda, which included a review of the recent Dol. 14 c. Proposed rule and planning for the committee's next year. He also mentioned that Ann was experiencing computer issues and would be back shortly. The conversation ended with Scott handing over the discussion to their guest, Keith Banner from Dodd.

Employment First Advisory Committee Progress

Keith discussed the progress of the Employment First Advisory Committee, which had its first meeting in eight years. The committee, comprising 31 stakeholders, focused on competitive integrated employment and its localization. Keith also mentioned the Quality Pilot's upcoming quarterly meeting and the July 2025 amendments for group employment supports and best pre-vocational services. He highlighted the success of the Works for Me initiative and the ongoing partnership with Ood and Dodd, with a focus on data analysis. Lastly, he mentioned the upcoming rule-making process for group employment supports and best pre-vocational services, set to start in January.

Task Force, Advisory Committee, and Grants

Keith provided a refresher on the task force and advisory committee, explaining that the task force consists of state agencies supporting people with disabilities, while the advisory committee is made up of associations, family representatives, and advocates. He mentioned that the advisory committee was established to inform the work of the employment first task force and to communicate with stakeholders. Keith also discussed the grant they received from OP and neon, which will focus on business engagement and supporting the field. He expressed interest in revisiting the concept of local leaders and employment navigation, as these were key factors in the success of the employment first project. Lastly, he suggested conducting a survey or assessment to determine the current state of employment navigator positions in county boards and regions.

Employment Navigators and Payment Processes

In the meeting, Keith, Scott, Ann, Cindy, and Teresa discussed the importance of employment navigators in counties, especially in light of recent changes. Keith suggested conducting a survey to understand the current status of employment navigators in counties. Ann raised a question about the process of authorizing the 90-day ready for new outcome-based payments, to which Keith clarified that it is triggered by an authorization through the HCBS waiver service, individual employment support. Scott asked about the process of getting the Nmt to Cie authorized, which Keith promised to answer in an email after consulting with Jolynn. Teresa suggested the potential use of Medicaid Administrative claiming for employment efforts, which Keith agreed to explore further.

US Department of Labor's 14c Rule

Scott discussed the proposed rule by the US Department of Labor to phase out the 14c subminimum wage for people with disabilities. He highlighted the uncertainty of the rule's future due to the change in administration and the possibility of legal challenges. Scott also presented the rationale behind the Department of Labor's proposal, which is based on the idea that a comprehensive system of new approaches to support people with disabilities towards employment has rendered it unnecessary to depend on subminimum wages. The proposed rule would cease issuing new certificates immediately and only allow renewals for a limited phase-out period ending three years after the effective date. Scott also mentioned that the Department of Labor is seeking feedback on the length of the proposed phase-out, how it could be structured and implemented, and the possibility of time-limited extensions beyond the three years.

Proposed Rule and 'Works for Me' Project

Scott discussed the proposed rule from the Department of Labor, which is due for feedback by January 17th. He emphasized that this is just a proposed rule and its future is uncertain due to the changing administration. He also mentioned that the rule could impact Ohio's future budget and collaboration with legislators. Scott also introduced the 'Works for Me' project, which aims to convene a provider subject matter expert group to discuss best practices and lessons learned from transitioning away from 14 C. He encouraged interested providers to reach out to him for participation in this project. Mary Thompson asked about the potential resources from this project, to which Scott responded that it could include resources for conversations with SSA's and families, as well as a best practice guide or lessons learned guide.

Training Work Groups and Survey

Scott discussed the upcoming training work groups and the survey for the committee to gather feedback on training offerings. He also mentioned the formation of a project search subcommittee for those providing project search services. Scott emphasized the importance of the committee's feedback in planning for future meetings and training sessions. He encouraged members to consider what topics they would like to learn more about and what challenges they face in providing day array services. The survey results will be used to enhance training offerings and better meet the needs of the committee members.

Group Employment Supports Proposal Update

Scott informed the committee that the group employment supports proposal is expected to be released early in the New Year, with discussions scheduled with association members beforehand. He expressed cautious optimism

that the proposal would align with previous conversations and not stray far from the group employment model. Scott also mentioned that a work group is actively working on the settings rule, aiming to eliminate ambiguity and improve the compliance tool. The committee expressed concerns about the timing and planning for the upcoming changes, especially with the budget for 2025 already in place. Scott reassured the committee that he would keep them updated on the proposal and the work on the settings rule.

The next Day Array Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 6th @ 9:30am

The Day Array Committee has two standing subcommittees:

- **Day Services Committee:** This committee is designed for program directors, frontline supervisors, and direct support professionals who are providers of adult day support. Meetings include information sharing, networking, problem-solving and discussion of best practices and trends in day support for adults with DD. Training and updates from the state concerning adult day supports, vocational habilitation, career planning, and non-medical transportation is provided. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the Day Array Committee for review and then forwarded to the policy committee.

Committee Chair: Nicole Smith (RHDD)

OPRA Staff Lead: Scott Marks

- **Employment Services Committee:** The employment services committee is designed for program directors, frontline supervisors, certified employment support professionals, job developers, and job coaches. This committee is a platform for information sharing, networking, deliberating, and problem-solving topics and issues unique to providing integrated, competitive employment services. Topics covered may include, but are not limited to, policy and rule review, state trends, understanding and implementing DODD, OOD, and ODM rules, braiding funding, best practices service delivery, establishing relationships with employers, supervising remote employees, operating fiscally sound programs, and dual customer model, and identifying and mitigating individual and programmatic risk. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the Day Array committee for review.

Committee Chairs: Paul Soprano (UCP of Greater Cleveland), Justin Blumhorst (Capabilities)

OPRA Staff Lead: Scott Marks

OPRA Day & Employment Committee Report

Thursday, November 7th 2024

10:00am-11:30am

Quick recap

The team discussed the recent conference, the implications of the recent election on their services and advocacy, and the implementation of a new fee schedule. They also explored the challenges faced by Project Search providers, the potential gap between the project's end and the implementation of proposed changes, and the use of the VocFit tool for assessing and tracking skills development. Lastly, they discussed the potential for using the VocFit tool in conjunction with Project Search programs and the varying approaches to Project Search in different states

Summary

Conference, Networking, and Committee Updates

Scott, Nicole, Justin, and Paul discuss the recent conference they attended. They enjoyed seeing everyone in person and networking. Justin mentions winning the trivia contest and receiving a signed mug. Paul comments on

Scott's new shaved look. The group is looking forward to the committee meeting and catching up. Scott mentions that Jay Burns from OOD is unable to attend but sent updates to be shared.

Election Impact and Service Updates

Scott discussed the implications of the recent election on their services and advocacy, noting that the outcome might lead to changes in federal agency rules and funding. He also mentioned the potential impact on their relationships with new senators from Ohio. Scott then shared updates from Jay Burns, including the implementation of the new fee schedule and the availability of new forms and an updated services and standards guide. Justin raised a concern about inconsistencies in payments from OOD, which Scott acknowledged as a topic for further discussion.

Addressing Payment Delays and Works for Me

Scott initiated a live poll to gather information about delays in payments and authorizations from OOD, particularly in different regions of the state. The results showed mixed responses, with some areas experiencing significant delays. Scott committed to investigating these issues further. Scott also introduced Mark Miller, a contractor working on the Works for Me project, a partnership with OOD to support people transitioning from 14c or commensurate wage positions to competitive integrated employment. Mark is providing technical assistance and training to providers and coordinating the family caregiver mentor network. Scott encouraged anyone interested in being part of the council of provider subject matter experts to reach out to him. Paul expressed interest in the family engagement and mentoring piece, suggesting its potential applicability to facility-based programs.

Project Search Challenges and Solutions

Scott and Paul discussed the challenges faced by Project Search providers, particularly in terms of retention of students and recruitment. Paul suggested convening a subcommittee to discuss these issues and share best practices. Scott agreed and proposed to schedule a meeting to bring together interested parties. Scott also conducted a live poll to gauge the experience of committee members in getting services authorized, with mixed results. Lastly, Scott asked for feedback on the ADS Quality Pilot, which is nearing its end. The pilot has faced criticism for changing its goals mid-project, which Scott acknowledged as problematic.

Project End, Funding, and Tracking Issues

Scott discussed the upcoming end of the project in early 2025 and the potential gap between the project's end and the implementation of proposed changes. He also mentioned the need to advocate for continued funding for the Quality Assurance Manager position. The team discussed the Outcome Tracking System (OTS) and encountered issues with the pilot program, with some participants not appearing in the system. Scott asked Kristen to email him about her specific situation. Dennis was introduced to present the VOQ FIT tool, version 2.0.

VocFit: Occupational Therapy and Job Matching

Dennis Clary, an occupational therapist with a background in disability services, discussed the development and benefits of the VocFit tool. VocFit is a free, web-based assessment tool that has been in use for 15 years, with a 15-year research history behind it. It is strengths-based, valid and reliable for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and can measure skill change. VocFit is also an internship and job matching tool, with over 200 jobs in its job bank. Dennis demonstrated how VocFit can be used to assess an individual's suitability for a specific job, such as a movie theater usher, and track their progress over time. He also mentioned that VocFit has been used by over 15,000 users around the world.

VocFit Assessment and Job Placement

Dennis led a discussion about VocFit, a tool designed to assess the abilities of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in relation to job demands. The team, including Scott, Teresa, and Rachel, participated in a VocFit assessment for Scott, evaluating his abilities in lifting heavy materials, determining priorities, and refraining from unnecessary social interactions. The team then discussed the demands of Scott's job, with the

consensus being that it falls under the category of high demand for all three areas. Dennis also explained the VocFit rating scale, which ranges from low ability to high ability, and how it is used to match individuals with jobs. The team agreed that VocFit is a useful tool for job placement and development, particularly for individuals with disabilities.

VocFit: Skill Assessment and Development Tool

Dennis discussed the use of VocFit, a tool for assessing and tracking skills development. He clarified that 'red' does not mean 'no', but rather indicates uncertainty or lack of knowledge about a skill. He emphasized the importance of continuous learning and adaptation, and the need for accommodations to support individuals with varying abilities. Dennis also highlighted the tool's usefulness in job placement, mentoring, and curriculum decision-making. He mentioned improvements made to VocFit, including a cohort management tool, an expanded job bank, and a pre-project search curriculum. He also mentioned future developments, such as data analysis for a cohort, an AI job matching feature, and a family-friendly experience. Dennis encouraged questions about the tool's usage and its potential applications.

New Job Assessment Tool Discussion

Dennis demonstrated the use of a new job assessment tool, explaining its features and how it can be used to track job progress and changes over time. He also discussed the potential for using the tool in conjunction with Project Search programs. Scott expressed interest in using the tool and mentioned the possibility of forming a subcommittee for Project Search providers. Dennis offered his support and expertise, and Scott promised to send out the necessary resources and information. The team also discussed the potential for using the tool in different states and the varying approaches to Project Search.

OPRA Day & Employment Committee Report Thursday, January 9, 2025 10:00am-11:30am

Quick recap

Johanna and SuAnne discussed their daughters' health issues and dental expenses, as well as a new Zoom meeting and a potential accreditation for their business. Dr. discussed the impact of the CESP on agencies, staff, and individuals with disabilities, and recommended that OPRA offer one-day trainings and increase their relationship with APSE. Scott presented proposed rule changes for employment services, including basic employment skills, training, career planning, and group employment, and encouraged feedback on these changes.

Summary

Health Issues, Zoom Meeting, and Accreditation

Johanna and SuAnne discussed their daughters' health issues and dental expenses. They also talked about a new Zoom meeting and a potential accreditation for their business. SuAnne mentioned a conversation with Deb Zembo about her husband's health and a potential discharge from the hospital. They also discussed a surveyor visit and the importance of staff behavior plans. The conversation ended with Scott, Nicole, and Paul discussing new rules from DOD and the potential for deeper dives into these proposals. Dr. Lindsay Hollingshead was also present to discuss a study on the CESP accreditation and how it could support employment providers.

CESP's Impact on Agencies and Staff

Dr. Hollingshead discussed the impact of the CESP (Certified Employment Support Professional) on agencies, staff, and individuals with disabilities. They found that the CESP is a reasonable requirement, with potential significant benefits for all parties involved. The data showed that wages and hours don't change significantly with or without the CESP, but staff with the CESP placed more people. Dr. also highlighted the challenges agencies face in

obtaining the CESP, such as test anxiety, difficulty in fulfilling CEU requirements, and fitting in the time for training. They recommended that Opera offer one-day trainings, a CESP track at conferences, and increase their relationship with APSE to better understand the CESP. Dr. also encouraged fostering peer-to-peer learning and promoting professional growth within agencies.

Proposed Rule Changes and Feedback

In the meeting, Scott expressed his appreciation for the study's impact on understanding the role of the team, moving beyond just fighting the CESP requirement. He agreed with Mary's suggestion of organizing day-long CESP trainings and networking sessions. Kimberly shared her approval to take the test and her gratitude for the work done by Lindsay. Scott then presented a PowerPoint on the proposed rule changes for employment services, including basic employment skills, training, career planning, and group employment. He emphasized that these were drafts and requested feedback by the 17th. He also mentioned that some problematic aspects might change before the final draft. The team was encouraged to provide feedback and ask questions during the presentation.

Pre-Vocational Services Rule Discussion

Scott discussed the proposed rule for pre-vocational services, which has been in development since 2016. The rule establishes a 4-year timeline for the service before monitoring begins, with a potential extension if necessary. The service is divided into two tiers, with Tier 2 being available to individuals aged 50 or older at the time of the rule's implementation, who are currently receiving vocational services. Scott also highlighted problematic aspects of the rule, such as the elimination of the community best rate and the introduction of a home and community-based setting evaluation, which is not in the current vocab rule. He expressed concerns about the lack of specificity in the training requirement for the second year of hire and best practices. Scott encouraged feedback from everyone on these issues.

Service Tiers for Individuals with Disabilities

Scott discussed the proposed changes to the service tiers for individuals with disabilities. He highlighted that Tier One is intended for those on Path 1, 2, or 3, with the goal of competitive integrated employment, and questioned whether this should be limited to those on Path 1, 2, or 3. He also noted that Tier Two is for individuals 50 years or older, who may be interested in exploring competitive employment or remaining at Path 4. Scott sought feedback on the proposed changes, particularly the 4-year timeline for Tier One and the monitoring of service delivery. Nicole agreed that the increased timeframe would be beneficial for some individuals, while Scott clarified that the service could continue beyond the 4-year period if deemed necessary. Philip asked for clarification on the monitoring process, which Scott explained would primarily involve technical assistance and data review.

Certification, Readiness, and Career Planning

Scott clarified that the certification for vocabulary would switch over to best at the time of implementation, and he would get this clarified. He also confirmed that there are no specific guidelines or expectations from Dodd around assessing readiness for a person graduating from best and is ready for CI, but this would be discussed with the Cle team. Scott agreed to clarify whether the odd through my learning would provide the required training. He also noted that the rates didn't change, and there were no additional resources added to incentivize movement. Paul pointed out that there were no outcome statements for the rules, and the expected outcomes were now contained under tier one and tier two. Scott confirmed that there was no 50% of minimum wage business as discussed previously. He also mentioned that he would compile all the feedback for the next week. Lastly, Scott discussed the career planning part of the proposal, which involved eliminating the community vocabulary. He mentioned that this was a compromise in response to discussions with stakeholders, who were worried about the elimination of good services.

Community Vocab Service and Career Exploration

Scott discussed the proposed changes to the community vocab service, which he felt were poorly worded and unclear. He suggested that the service should not be limited to a facility-based work setting and should not be restricted to provider-owned or provider-controlled settings. Scott also expressed concerns about the rate structure for the new service, which he believed would not be viable for many current providers. He suggested that the community vocab service should be kept alongside the new career exploration service, rather than being replaced. Paul raised questions about the nature and frequency of the service, to which Scott responded that the Department's intention was not to have a daily service, but rather a service that could be provided over a defined period of time. Scott also clarified that the Department's vision was to shift services that were more working-oriented to group employment, while allowing more instructional or exploratory services to continue under the new career exploration service.

Shifting to Group Employment and Costs

Paul, Scott, and Anne discussed the implications of shifting from paid work to group employment. Scott clarified that payment is not prohibited in the service and is allowable, but it depends on the individual's budget. He also mentioned that the service rates are lower when done in groups of four. Anne raised concerns about the cost implications of this shift, to which Scott responded that the cost would only be higher if the service is provided individually. Scott also clarified that the new rate proposals include add-ons for services like career exploration and job development. Lastly, Scott mentioned that the classification of art programs as either Best or ADS would depend on the outcomes related to the service, and a meeting at the end of the month would address this issue.

Clarifying Group Employment Rate Structure

Scott discussed a potential misunderstanding in the new rate structure for group employment. He revealed that the new rates might apply across the board for group employment, contrary to the original proposal. Scott also mentioned that the Department had crossed out the current rates and put in a new rate structure in the appendix, which was different from the original proposal. He planned to meet with Dodd to clarify the situation and potentially provide a new draft of the rule. Scott also asked for feedback on the group size limit of 8 people in a group, as it presented a challenge for some providers. Paul asked if it would be allowed to have two groups at the same site with different supervisors, to which Scott responded affirmatively, but promised to get further clarification.

Provider-Owned Settings and Mobile Work Crews

Scott discussed the proposed rule regarding provider-owned and provider-controlled settings for group employment in dispersed enclaves and mobile work crews. He expressed that while the proposal was not fully supported, it was a better starting point than expected. Scott also mentioned a positive conversation with the department about expanding the definition of mobile work crews to include non-mobile work crews in provider-owned or controlled businesses. He noted that the current rate structure for group employment was a significant increase from the current rate, and that this could pose challenges, particularly for larger groups. Scott encouraged feedback and questions about the proposal. Amanda's comment was not included in the transcript.

Community Service Rate and Works for Me

Scott discussed the ongoing process of rulemaking and the potential changes to the community service rate. He emphasized that these were draft proposals and would evolve based on further discussions. Amanda raised concerns about the elimination of the community service rate and its impact on group employment and soft skill training. Scott acknowledged these concerns and suggested potential paths forward, including negotiating with Dodd to retain the community rate model. Scott also mentioned the works for me project, where a small group of providers who have transitioned from providing 14c services to competitive employment would share their

experiences. Lastly, Scott addressed a question from Mary about reporting on the time spent in the Dodd-approved curriculum, promising to follow up on whether this would be a recurring requirement.

The next Day & Employment Services Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 6th @ 10:00am

Health Care

Summary

The Healthcare committee is comprised primarily of nursing staff but does include other members who are interested in health and healthcare related issues. The committee focuses on nursing and medical services in the waiver and ICF settings. Areas of focus include but are not limited to: rules and regulations that affect the DD nursing community, training, education and best practices.

Committee Chair: Shelly Wharton (The Society)

OPRA Staff Lead: Christine Touvelle

OPRA Health Care Committee Report

Thursday, October 17th, 2024

10am-12pm

The Health Care Committee notes will be shared on the next Board Report.

The next Health Care Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 20th @ 10am

Human Resources

Summary

The HR committee is comprised of HR professionals, or anyone responsible for the life cycle of employment for his/her agency. This group of professionals meets to discuss best practices in HR, from recruiting and hiring process, to keeping abreast of upcoming new regulations that affect employment law and/or training requirements.

Committee Chair: Michelle Madden (IOPC), Rachel Murphy (RHDD)

OPRA Staff Lead: Christine Touvelle

OPRA Human Resources Committee Report

Thursday, January 16th 2025

10am-12pm

Quick recap

The HR Committee meeting focused on Employee Resource Networks (ERNs), their benefits, and how they work, with Natalie Longmire presenting on the subject. The team also discussed the challenges of verifying employment history, the implications of marijuana use on drug testing policies, and their experiences with drug testing policies. The conversation ended with a discussion on the potential benefits of employee assistance programs for those struggling with addiction.

Summary

Introducing Employee Resource Networks (ERNs)

Christine, the Director of Advocacy at OPRA, led the first HR Committee meeting of the year. She introduced the topic of Employee Resource Networks (ERNs) and invited Natalie Longmire, the Executive Director of Marion Matters, to present on the subject. The meeting aimed to educate the committee members about ERNs, their benefits, and how they work. Christine also conducted a poll to gauge the familiarity of the committee members with ERNs. Natalie shared her experience in facilitating ERNs since 2017 and discussed the challenges faced by the working poor, known as the ALICE population. She also mentioned the expansion of their services into Ottawa, Erie, Seneca, Huron, and Richland County. The meeting was scheduled for two hours, with the remaining time allocated for questions and discussions.

ERNs: Addressing Employees' Basic Needs

Marion discussed the importance of addressing employees' basic needs, such as housing, transportation, and childcare, to improve productivity and retention. She explained the role of an Employer Resource Network (ERN) in providing a confidential, on-site resource for employees to navigate personal challenges and connect with community resources. Marion emphasized the ERN's focus on building relationships, advocating for employees, and providing ongoing coaching. She also outlined the process of partnering with businesses, including training for management and tracking employee utilization. Marion concluded by highlighting the ERN's commitment to workplace stability and offering a free workplace stability training for partners.

Expanding Employee Resource Networks

Marion discussed the expansion of Employee Resource Networks (ERNs) across the state, highlighting the involvement of various counties and lead agencies. She mentioned that while some counties like Franklin and Union are already involved, others like Lake and Geauga are still in development. Marion also emphasized the importance of open communication and the role of lead agencies like Northeast Ohio's ERN and Lutheran Services in managing these networks. She offered to connect interested parties with relevant contacts and expressed willingness to work with businesses in underdeveloped areas to establish ERNs. Quiana raised concerns about the feasibility of setting up ERNs in multiple counties, to which Marion responded that they were open to discussing potential solutions.

In the meeting, Jennifer and Christine discussed the importance of finding other organizations interested in the Employee Resource Network (ERN) to expedite the process. Marion confirmed that a lead agency would be willing to help with the expansion and that the more involved they are with the program, the better it works. Dottie from RHAM shared her positive experience with the ERN program, highlighting its effectiveness in changing lives and stabilizing staffing. Marion explained the logistics of the shared resource model, including the frequency of sessions and the possibility of rotating sites. The conversation ended with Christine thanking Natalie for her presentation and inviting other providers to share their experiences with the ERN program.

ERN Program Benefits and Challenges

Shyam from Anne Grady Services discussed the benefits of the Employee Resource Network (ERN) program, highlighting its impact on staff retention and personal growth. He mentioned that they initially faced challenges with resource allocation and communication, but have since improved by introducing internal positions focused on retention efforts and partnering with success coaches. Shyam also shared that they have about 21 employees on average who have benefited from the program. Matt from Manahan echoed Shyam's sentiments, emphasizing the importance of responsive communication with employees. Quiana from the Cleveland area expressed interest in making the ERN program accessible to all employees across the state. Jennifer from Grace Works shared their experience with the ERN program, highlighting its effectiveness in addressing transportation, childcare, and benefit navigation issues. She also noted the challenges of finding a lead organization and the ramp-up period for new success coaches. Jennifer suggested reaching out to other organizations for potential interest in the ERN program.

ERN, Hot Topics, and Spring Conference

Christine led a discussion on the Employee Retention Network (ERN) and its potential benefits for providers. She encouraged those interested in learning more to reach out to providers who have experience with ERNs. Christine also discussed hot topics, including the use of recreational marijuana and the Pay Stub Protection Act. She encouraged providers to review the FAQs on these topics and to reach out to her with any questions. Christine also discussed plans for the upcoming Spring Conference, focusing on business operations and seeking recommendations for HR speakers. Lastly, she addressed a suggestion for a discussion on background checks and employment verification.

Employment Verification and Marijuana Laws

The team discussed the challenges of verifying employment history, particularly with the high costs associated with third-party services. They also discussed the issue of hiring individuals with a history of marijuana use, considering the changing laws and the potential impact on the workforce. The team agreed to explore potential solutions, including seeking updates on the law and considering the use of physician verification for medical marijuana use. The conversation also touched on the need for a more unified approach to changes in the law, with the hope that this would lead to clearer guidelines for hiring decisions.

Drug Testing Policies and Experiences

The team discussed the challenges of drug testing policies, particularly in relation to marijuana use. They agreed that while marijuana is legal in some states, it is still not legal at a federal level, and this impacts their policies as a Medicaid-funded service. The team also discussed the difficulty of quantifying the effects of marijuana, as it can stay in a person's system for up to 30 days. They considered the implications of this for their drug testing policies, particularly in relation to employees who drive. The team agreed that a zero-tolerance policy for marijuana use is necessary, especially for those who drive. They also discussed the potential for random drug testing and the need for a clear policy on handling positive results. The team concluded that they need to continue to monitor the situation and adapt their policies as necessary.

In the meeting, the team discussed their drug testing policies and experiences. David shared his approach of having a 0-tolerance policy for substance abuse, while Cindy explained that they follow federal guidelines and do not drug test for pre-hire. Keith and Mrs. also shared their policies, emphasizing the importance of having a detailed policy in place. The team also discussed the potential benefits of employee assistance programs for those struggling with addiction. The conversation ended with Christine promising to share resources and gather feedback for future discussions.

The next HR Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 20th @ 10am

ICF

Summary

The ICF Committee provides a platform for information sharing, networking, deliberating, and problem-solving topics and issues unique to leaders in ICF services. The committee examines issues which have a direct impact on the programs, services and funding necessary for the operation of Intermediate Care Facilities. The committee is used to disseminate information, provide updates, and elicit feedback on important issues related to ICF's.

Committee Chair(s): Bob Heinzerling (Heinzerling Community), Kurt Miller (Empowering People)

OPRA Staff Lead: Rachel Hayes

OPRA ICF Committee Report
Wednesday, December 18, 2024
1pm – 3pm

Quick recap

The team discussed various topics including the continuation of Station MD's urgent care service for individuals with developmental disabilities, the new rule regarding training for board members and staff, and the implications of a new bill on healthcare facilities. They also shared their experiences with recent surveys and inspections, highlighting the importance of following policies closely and the need for efficient communication between committees.

Summary

Station MD, Workforce Symposium, and Training

In the meeting, Rachel thanked everyone for joining and announced that they would discuss several topics. Ann Weisant from DODD provided updates on the Station MD Pilot, the 2025 Workforce Symposium, and upcoming training opportunities. She also informed the team about the shutdown of My Learning and changes to the Restrictive Measures Notification System. Emily Martinez from Station, MD, was invited to discuss the service's continuation in ICFs. Ann encouraged the team to share their ideas for future informational sessions for direct support professionals.

Healthcare Assessment Service for Developmental Disabilities

Emily Martinez from Station MD, discussed the benefits of their health care assessment service for individuals with developmental disabilities. She highlighted that the service is virtual, with clinicians trained specifically for working with people with developmental disabilities. Emily emphasized that the service is not meant to replace existing medical teams but to provide additional support. She also shared data showing that the service has successfully diverted 93.2% of emergency room visits in 2024. Emily expressed hope to expand the service to all ICF providers and to be funded through their cost reporting mechanism. She encouraged ICF providers to reach out if they are interested in setting up contracts for the service.

Service Coverage and Budget Discussion

In the meeting, Rachel discussed the ongoing efforts to get the service covered under the cost report, emphasizing the support from the Department and the need for Medicaid to understand the service better. Rachel then transitioned the discussion to the budget, emphasizing the importance of utilizing the professional workforce development add-on funds for direct care costs. She also encouraged sharing information about the add-on with non-opera members. Kurt suggested looking at overall expenses and not just the investment made, while Kathy suggested looking at ceilings, particularly in direct care. Christine and Teresa discussed the potential impact of the department's budget request on the waiver increases.

MUI Rule and Never Alone Act

Rachel led a discussion about the new MUI rule Kathy asked if nonprofit CEOs could provide the training online, to which Rachel responded that she would look into it. Timothy shared that Echoing Hills provides training as part of their board orientation and annually. Kurt expressed concern about the county boards' training and suggested that a better understanding of their training schedule would be helpful. Rachel offered to assist with training for staff and frontline supervisors. Christine then discussed the Never Alone Act, which was passed almost unanimously by the General Assembly and is expected to be signed by the Governor. The bill applies to various entities, including those providing services to children and youth. Christine encouraged everyone to review the bill text and LSC analysis for a full understanding of the requirements.

New Bill Impacts Healthcare Facilities

Christine discussed the implications of a new bill on healthcare facilities, including residential facilities and ICFs. She explained that the bill requires providers to inform residents of their right to designate an advocate and to give them the opportunity to make that designation. The bill also prohibits settings from denying a resident access to their advocate. She also discussed the responsibilities of providers, including informing residents of their rights, allowing access to advocates, and seeking consent for medical information disclosure. Christine acknowledged that there are still some unanswered questions and encouraged the team to share any issues that arise during implementation.

ICF Concerns re: SIS

Rachel then led a discussion on the waiver modernization process, focusing on the shift to the Support and Intensity Scale assessment (SIS) and its potential impact on ICFs. Teresa expressed concerns about the lack of provider input in the selection of SIS and the potential challenges it could pose. Rachel emphasized the need for ICFs to have a voice in the process and encouraged the team to share their concerns. The conversation ended with a transition to a discussion on compliance and surveys, with Rachel seeking feedback on recent experiences and promising to share common citations from the Department.

Quality Indicators and Survey Issues

In the meeting, Hester shared her experience with a quality indicator survey at two of their ICFS, which they passed but required a lot of effort. She emphasized the importance of following policies closely, as they will be held to them. Angie then shared their experience with a background check issue and a documentation issue related to HPC. They are appealing both of these issues.

Rachel ended the conversation by promising to share the meeting's information and to explore changes in the committee's structure for the upcoming year.

The next ICF Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 19th @ 10am

Residential Waiver

Summary

The residential waiver committee provides a platform for information sharing, networking, deliberating, and problem-solving topics and issues unique to leaders in residential waiver services. The committee examines issues which have direct impact on the programs, services and funding necessary for the operation of and provision of services to individuals in waiver funded settings. This includes licensed and non-licensed settings and shared living. The committee is used to disseminate information, provide updates, and elicit feedback on important issues related to residential waivers.

Committee Chair(s): Jamie Steele (OVRs) and Susan Berneike (Help Foundation)

OPRA Staff Lead: Rachel Hayes

OPRA Residential Waiver Committee Report

Wednesday, August 21st, 2024

10am – 12pm

Quick recap

The OPRA Residential Waiver committee met on 12/18/24 and discussed various updates and concerns related to their work, including the transition of the Restrictive Measures Notification System to Salesforce, the implementation of a new healthcare assessment service, and the introduction of the Never Alone Act. They also discussed concerns about the use of the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) as a replacement for the Developmental Disability Profile (DDP) and the Assessment and Individualization (A&I) tool, and the potential impact of a new assessment tool on service providers and clients. Lastly, they discussed the need for more training for reviewers and the potential for combining aspects of the current meetings and the ICF meeting.

Summary

Workforce Grant Symposium and Healthcare Updates

The group emphasized the importance of addressing issues with the waiver system and encouraged participants to put their issues in the chat. Ann Weisnant (DODD) then shared updates about the Station MD pilot project, the new healthcare assessment service, and the upcoming workforce grant symposium. She also mentioned the transition of the Restrictive Measures Notification System to Salesforce and the need for direct support professionals to complete training requirements by December 31st. Emily Martinez from Station MD then provided an update on the healthcare assessment service, stating that it is expected to be approved for the waiver on January 1st and that Station MD is the only provider that has applied for the service. Emily also mentioned that the pilot project for the service will remain open until June 2025 and that they are working to get the service funded through the cost report mechanism for ICF providers. Rachel offered to assist in advocating for the service.

Exploring Telehealth Service Benefits and Features

Emily discussed the benefits and features of their telehealth service, Station MD, which provides 24/7 access to specialized physicians for urgent care needs. She highlighted how the service can reduce unnecessary emergency room visits, improve staff efficiency, and provide peace of mind for both individuals and providers. Emily also mentioned that the service is not meant to replace primary care physicians, but rather to fill in gaps in medical care. She emphasized the importance of communication between the service and providers, and the need for an assessed need for the service. Emily also mentioned that they have doctors serving as medical directors for both Waiver and ICF providers.

MUI Rule

Rachel then discussed the MUI rule, stating that the department has decided not to make any further changes to the rule and that training for board members will only be required upon appointment. Rachel also mentioned that the revised rule will be filed in January and that she is willing to provide training on the new provisions. A concern was raised about staff due process rights and the appeal process for Mui cases, suggesting that they share their experiences with Scott Phillips. Finally, Christine was set to discuss updates on the Never Alone Act.

Never Alone Act

Christine provided an update on the legislation, which has been passed by both chambers of the General Assembly and is expected to be signed by the Governor soon. The legislation applies to healthcare facilities, hospitals, and certain congregate care settings, including residential facilities licensed by the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD). The bill requires providers to inform residents of their right to designate an individual as an advocate and provide them with the opportunity to make that designation. The advocate can be anyone, except for certain exceptions. The resident can change their advocate at any time by informing staff. The legislation also prohibits congregate care settings from denying residents access to their advocate during a public health emergency or other public health order. However, there are some exceptions where access may not apply, such as if the resident asks the advocate not to be present or if the advocate has physically interfered with the resident's care. If a provider denies access, the resident or advocate can sue for injunctive relief. The Department of Health is expected to develop a fact sheet on the resident's right to have an advocate, which will be posted on their website.

Rachel then shifted the discussion to the state and federal level, with Teresa and Jamie discussing the waiver modernization effort. Teresa expressed concerns about the use of the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) as a replacement for the Developmental Disability Profile (DDP) and the Assessment and Individualization (A&I) tool, citing concerns about lack of provider input and the potential for families to dislike the new assessment tool. Jamie suggested reaching out to the Department again to ask for a pilot of several assessment tools.

Concerns Over New Assessment Tool

Teresa, Matthew, Jamie, Rachel, and Scott discussed concerns about the implementation of a new assessment tool in their department. They expressed worries about the tool's cost, administrative complexity, and potential impact on service providers and clients. The team also discussed the lack of transparency around the tool's cost and the potential for a backlog due to a limited number of assessors. They noted that the department had not considered the role of providers in the assessment process and that the tool was introduced late in the game. The conversation ended with concerns about the tool's potential to cause a significant backlog in assessments.

Addressing Rapid Progress and Budgets

Teresa discussed the concerns about the department's rapid progress with the State plan amendment and waiver amendment, which could lead to significant investments before public comment. Concerns were expressed about having different quality indicators for different services, suggesting a need for consistency. Teresa updated the team on the budget process, stating that they are considering percentage increases based on established scales and are waiting for the governor's proposal in early February. The team agreed on the need for an ongoing index to keep pace with inflationary increases.

Streamlining

She also mentioned that there was a need for more training for reviewers. Rachel announced that the committee chairs and OPRA were looking to streamline the meetings, possibly by combining aspects of the current meetings and the ICF meeting. She promised to provide more information after the first of the year.

The next Residential Waiver Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 19th @ 10am

Marketing and Communications

Summary

The Marketing and Communications Committee is designed for organization leaders and their marketing and communication staff. The goal is to provide a focus on sharing strategies and tools, develop and hone innovative ideas, and provide feedback to other members of the group. The committee will periodically invite guest speakers to address identified needs of the group.

Committee Chairs: Liz Owens (The Alpha Group) and Carla McDonald (Weaver Industries)

OPRA Staff Lead: Melissa Fannon

OPRA Marketing & Communications Committee Report

Tuesday, January 7th 2025

10am – 11am

The Marketing & Communications Committee notes will be shared on the next Board Report.

The next Marketing & Communications Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, March 11th @ 10am