

July 19, 2023 Legislative Committee Minutes

Attendee Legislative Committee Council Members: Brady Werger, Matthew Conaway, Eric Evans, Amber Gale, Paula Motsinger, Kevin Harris, Roxanne Cogil

Absent Council Members:

Council Staff: Brooke Lovelace, Carlyn Crowe, Lindsay Hommer

Public:

Welcome

Crowe welcomed all attendees.

Legislative Agenda for Next Year

Crowe shared the legislative plan document as was shared at the last meeting and stated that she will revise after more input that she hopes to get today. Several on the call today were not at the last meeting so it is a good time to get more information on current issues in our priority areas before we put together an agenda for 2024. The planning document is just that and not intended to be what we share outside of the council.

Proposed key policy areas are:

Education

Employment

Access to Care

Supportive Community

Focusing in on Employment

Crowe asked if we should key into "Future Ready Iowa" under the employment topic. Could it work for people with disabilities? Lovelace stated this program will have a new name. Evans stated that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has gone through many changes with the government realignment recently. In the past VR had been helping people who are not on Social Security by supporting their degree seeking college education at 40% funding. They have recently increased this support to 60%. Evans asked for everyone to support DIF grant initiatives for competitive integrated employment. Supportive employment for people with mental health concerns is a focus of VR. Evans stated that supporting funding increases for programs such as Realizing Educational and Career Hopes (REACH) is important. Also, Iowa is leading the nation in job candidates with disabilities starting their own businesses. VR could use a couple more positions to support these people. Lovelace asked if it would be appropriate to ask for more funding to create these positions. Evans stated he will look into this and if they could ask to hire new positions, there is a 78% match from federal funds. Currently there are only two positions that do this work. Crowe asked if Evans could break this down into a dollar amount so if we ask for this, we have an exact amount of funding needed. Evans stated he could do this. Cogil asked if the Department of the Blind will still be providing VR services. Evans stated that they are.

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Access to Care

Crowe asked Motsinger if the waiver restructuring (waivers to be based on need not diagnosis) must go through the legislature and be in the Iowa Code or if it is considered a rule or State plan implementation. Motsinger stated that she did not believe the waiver restructuring needs to be placed in Iowa Code or go through the legislature but, we do need legislative support to buy down the waitlists. The new waivers will look at the needs of the applicant and not just the diagnosis. Right now, Iowa has seven waivers but with the restructuring, Iowa will have two or three. Currently the wait time for a waiver can be 5-6 years. On the brain injury (BI) and intellectual disability (ID) waiver there is priority needs and emergent needs assessment. Motsinger stated that through an exception to policy these have been included for the Health and Disability (HD) and the Physical Disability (PD) waiver also. When waivers are restructured, they would like emergent needs moved up the waitlist for all waivers. The restructuring of the waiver program is called the Hope and Opportunities in Many Environments (HOME) project. Evans asked if there will be a needs assessment completed to determine if someone would move up the waiver waitlist after the waiver redesign. Motsinger stated that currently waitlists are determined by application date unless there is an emergent need. Only four of the seven waivers right now have this option. Motsinger stated that another big need is rate increases for our provider community. Providers are struggling to keep staff due to wages. Motsinger stated that some providers have not seen significant rate increases since 2014-2015. Harris suggested we present a comparison stating what the salary is for a direct support professional compared to someone working at a retail business. Harris stated there should be rate increases depending on the type of care they are providing also. Motsinger stated that some of the direct support professionals are on Medicaid and if their wages were increased they could come off of Medicaid. Lovelace stated Liz Matney suggested we put the percentage of direct support professionals receiving public assistance in our agenda. Cogil stated they are able to pay the staff more through Consumer Choice Option (CCO). Gale stated that she too has experienced this.

Another issue that Crowe stated that she has heard from families is from people in southwestern Iowa and they have to go to Iowa City to see a specialty doctor because they are not allowed to go to Omaha, which is much closer but out of state. This is not unique to this part of the state, it happens to many. During Covid, they could see specialty doctors in other states on telehealth but that is not allowed now. Motsinger stated she will check into this.

Regarding our other two priority areas, Crowe stated access to education and the concern of funding, including Area Education Agencies (AEA), is another topic she would like to look into and if anyone would like to assist her that would be great. We will also keep working on Supportive Community issues for the next draft.

Next Meeting

Harris and Crowe will work on the next meeting agenda.

Action Items

Creating change with and for persons with developmental disabilities so they can live, work, learn and play in the community of their choosing.

IOWA DD Council

Preparation, Participation, Power

Share any additional thoughts on issues or policy areas and reach out to Carlyn if you would like to make sure they are included in our agenda.

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