

To: Frank Berry, Commissioner DBHDD
Cc: Dr. Charles Li, Assistant Commissioner Division of DD
From: DD Advisory Council
Topic: Advisory Council Year End Report

Date: December 7, 2013

The Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council would like to thank you and Dr. Li for the leadership you have demonstrated over the past year. We would like to express our appreciation for affording individuals, families and providers the opportunity to be a part of the continued efforts to improve service delivery to citizens with developmental disabilities in Georgia. Since we began our efforts, almost one year ago, we have focused our attention on areas in which we believe can improve the quality and efficiency of service delivery. While the agenda of priorities was significant, we have tried to remain focused on matters in which change would result in wide-spread improvement for individuals, families, service providers, and other stakeholders within the DD system.

To date, we have worked diligently to represent the DD Community in an objective way while embracing diversity as a means to explore options for improvements that will meet the needs of the DD community at large. Having an opportunity for individuals, families, providers and advocacy agencies, to work together on the Advisory Council has helped to cultivate and strengthen needed partnerships across the service delivery system. Together, we have learned that changes are also needed in relationships across organizations and within the system at large. The Council feels very positive about the progress that has been made relative to the “us versus them” culture that has often stood in the way of positive change.

Here is a summary of the progress we have made in advisory council work over the past year:

Partnership-Every Council meeting commenced with an opening round. The purpose of the opening round was to afford members the opportunity to share positive things happening in their daily work. The skills used in supporting individuals, and in facilitating change within organizations were shared and celebrated. Sharing success provided different perspectives, and often shed light on needed changes within the larger service delivery system that might promote growth and enhancement of positive outcomes.

Policy Review Calendar-The Council recommended and participated in the implementation of a new process for review of policy changes and revisions. This process provides an opportunity for thorough review and comment by all stakeholders regarding the impact for proposed changes in DBHDD’s Division of DD’s policies and standards, and any recommended changes for DD waivers made to DCH. The Council reviewed and provided feedback regarding a variety of policy changes and revisions throughout the year.

Communication-Consistent monthly updates from Dr. Li, Sara Case, and other DD staff have been a real asset to the enhancement of communication between the Division and stakeholders. This has also provided an opportunity for the Council to actively engage in dialogue with the Division, request progress reports, and provide insight regarding a variety of issues and topics. Council members who represent families, advocacy groups, and providers have been very consistent in providing feedback and facilitating opportunities for input from their respective stakeholder groups. We have contributed to several additions of the DD Connection newsletter and recently made recommendations for enhancing the content. Strategies for enhanced and reciprocal communication with the regions were recommended by the Council. Michael Link met with the Council to discuss the recommendations and

agreed to implement strategies that would achieve consistent information being distributed across and from each region. Customer Satisfaction training will also be provided to regional staff after the first of the year.

Supported Employment Leadership Network (SELN)-Several Council members are actively engaged in the work of the SELN. This is a priority for the Advisory Council, and we remain optimistic for the plan to increase the number of individuals in Supported Employment 100% by close 2015. We recognize and support the recommendations from SELN regarding funding and the restructure of service delivery regarding needed to meet the goal.

Redesign of the DD Quality Management System-The Council continues to be involved in this process. We have participated in the focus groups facilitated by Support Development Associates (SDA), and helped to ensure that other stakeholder groups, such as families, providers and individuals have had an opportunity to engage and provide feedback. We have requested and been provided regular progress reports by Division staff. The Council will continue to support the redesign work and identifies it as a very high priority for needed improvements to the entire service delivery system.

Exceptional Rate Process-Several members of the Council have participated in a workgroup to simplify and create a more user friendly process. This is important to the success of the hospital transition work and to sustain successful placements and outcomes for individuals using DD services.

Support Coordination- When in January, 2013, the Council identified priorities for needed improvement to the service delivery system; support coordination was rated as one of the highest. A workgroup was formed to look at improvements and the design needed for an effective support coordination system, but work was suspended pending the recommendations of the Division's consultant. The Council promoted stakeholder attendance at focus groups held by the consultant across the state.

To enhance the Advisory Council's work we embraced new and shared learning. During the past year, presentations to the Advisory Council have included the following topics and presenters:

- Facilitation of Council planning meetings and work on best practice, SDA-Mary Lou Bourne
- The Departments Housing White Paper, Doug Scott
- The Aging and Disability Resource Connection, Maria Lee
- Supported/Customized Employment, Nancy Brooks Lane
- Court Monitor/DOJ, Elizabeth Jones
- GCDD-Advocacy, Eric Jacobson, Darcy Robb
- Communication/Regional offices, Michael Link

This is a brief summary of our work and accomplishments so far. We are excited about the progress that is being made and look forward to the results of more positive change. Again, we thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully,
Deborah Conway, DD Advisory Council Chair

Bruce Linderman, Estelle Duncan, Sheryl Arno, Eve Bogan, Lynette Bragg, June DiPolito, Scott Crain, Mitzi Proffitt, Nandi Isaac, Twana King, Bobby Holcomb, Heidi Moore, Mitzi Proffitt, Rita Young, Nicki Wilson

