

Advocacy, Outreach, and Education Committee Meeting

Thursday, May 2, 2019 from 12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m.

Waterbury State Office Complex

Cherry C Conference Room, HC 2 South, 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671

Meeting called by:

Sam Liss, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:23 p.m.

Members Present:

- 1) Sherrie Brunelle
- 2) Diane Dalmasse ex-officio, non-voting
- 3) Martha Frank (via Skype)
- 4) Marlena Hughes
- 5) Sam Liss
- 6) Bill Meirs

Members Absent:

- 1) Max Barrows
- 2) Cari Kelley
- 3) Michelle Paya
- 4) Calla Papademas
- 5) Sarah Launderville
- 6) Olivia Smith-Hammond

SRC Liaison:

James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

Debra Kobus

Interpreters:

None.

Speakers or Presenters:

None.

Guests:

Helena Kehne

1) Introductions (Sam Liss)

Discussion:

Those in attendance went around the table and introduced themselves.

Conclusions:

Thanks to everyone!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

2) Approval of Agenda (Sam Liss)**Discussion:**

Sam asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. There were none. Sherrie moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 5-0-0.

Conclusions:

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

3) Open for Public Comment (Sam Liss)**Discussion:**

Helena Kehne was recognized as being in attendance.

Conclusions:

Thank you, Helena, for attending!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

4) Approval of Minutes for March 7, 2019 (Sam Liss)**Discussion:**

Sam asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the March 7, 2019 minutes. There were two corrections. Sherrie moved to approve the minutes as amended and it was seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 5-0-0.

Conclusions:

March 7, 2019 minutes were approved as amended.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload approved minutes to SRC website. **Debra Kobus**, May 7, 2019.

5) Legislative Updates (Group)

Discussion:

Sam told the group that there had not been much activity on the items that they had been following since the last time they met. Items we have been following are listed below with updates provided if applicable.

- **Attendant Services Program (ASP). Update:** At the last meeting, Sam reported that we were hoping to unfreeze the program to new applicants. Unfortunately, there is currently a gap in the State's budget. The bill is in Senate Appropriations and it is not considered a priority. Many individuals testified. It doesn't look good for the program to be unfrozen this session. Currently, no one can even apply so there is no wait list. The main advantage of the program is that those that are not eligible for Medicaid can receive their personal attendant care services but can also direct their care without impoverishing themselves.

Prior Background: Working through appropriations to unfreeze the **Attendant Services Program (ASP)**. The Attendant Services Program has been frozen for four years. The advocates successfully advocated to have it return but with a smaller budget. The budget surplus was the rationale for the legislative push. Currently, and unique to Vermont, there is no resource/income limit for program; but there may be need to compromise to pass the bill. The program allows more people with disabilities (PWD) to gain and maintain employment. This program is for middle class individuals who would have to impoverish themselves in order to get services. Commissioner Monica Hutt agrees with the inequity but is concerned that when the legislature hears that people have funds in the bank, we may need to compromise on the resource/income limit. Bill Botzow suggested that the advocates work on the financial threshold not the legislators in the best interest of individuals with disabilities. This will be VCIL's main legislative platform.

- **New: The \$15.00/hour minimum wage bill** is moving forward. The House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee approved legislation Friday to increase Vermont's minimum wage to \$15 by 2024. The bill has already passed the Senate. The House committee didn't make many changes to the bill, but this week's deliberations were occasionally tense as lawmakers argued for protections to prevent the bill from hurting the business community. The bill, S.23, would raise the minimum wage to \$11.50 in 2020, \$12.25 in 2021, \$13.10 in 2022 and \$14.05 in 2023. The measure seemed to hit a speed bump Tuesday after an analysis found a bill amendment would have forced the state to increase Medicaid spending by as much as \$27.9 million over the next five years.
- **New: The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)** has two policy proposals 1) eliminate work disincentives for Childhood Disability Beneficiaries (CDB's) and 2) eliminate the termination age of 65 for MBIs (Medicaid buy ins) as authorized in the Ticket to Work Program of 1999. Senator's Portman and Casey may sponsor the bill appending it to an appropriations bill or the Empower Care Act. It is moving slowly.
- **The Empower Care Act (Money Follows the Person Reauthorization) was introduced (HR5306 S2227)** (<https://medicaid.publicrep.org/empower-care-act-one-pager/>) that would reauthorize, and appropriate money follows the person Medicaid demonstration project that would shift money from institution care to home and community-based care. This is important because more people with disabilities could live at their homes and be able to work. The president signed three months of appropriation. **Update:** We are still waiting for longer term legislation.
- **The Able Age Adjustment Act (S651)** (<http://www.ablenrc.org/news/introducing-s-651-able-age-adjustment-act>) was introduced with strong bipartisan support. It requires large offsets so as not to increase taxes. **Update:** The positive movement is the National Down Syndrome Society now supports it. The National Treasury Association is taking a different stance by supporting it as it is the right thing to do.

- **New:** Diane said that she was excited about news about the **Sheltered Employment Act** as the Civil Rights Commission has called it a civil rights issue. Competitive Integrated Employment has been our focus in Vermont.

Other legislation we have been following. No further updates available:

- **The Transformation to Competitive Employment Act** (<https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/2019-01-29%20Transformation%20to%20Competitive%20Employment%20Act%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>) provides states, services providers, subminimum wage certificate holders, and other agencies with the resources they need to create competitive integrated employment service delivery models and the inclusive wraparound services that some individuals with disabilities will need. The clauses are also in the **Raise the Wage Act** (Senator Sanders) (<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/download/raise-the-wage-act-of-2019?id=48B66B6B-34E4-4149-BC0D-62CF888E4C4A&download=1&inline=file>).
- **The Disability Employment Incentive Act (S25)** <https://trackbill.com/bill/us-congress-senate-bill-255-disability-employment-incentive-act/1660188/>. On January 29, 2019, the bill was reintroduced. The bill text had not changed from last year. It will expand three existing tax credits to support employers who hire individuals with disabilities and make workplaces more accessible to those employees.
- **Money Follows the Person Bill (Medicaid)**
More good news! Short-Term Money Follows the Person Extension signed into law! Now we need to wait (and advocate for) a long-term extension.
- Last week U.S. Representatives Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI) introduced a **companion bill** in the U.S. House of Representatives which is **identical to the Senate bill S. 2227, the EMPOWER Act**. This bill would renew the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program as well as improve it.

- Two bills were introduced **S269 and HR860 identical to the Social Security 2100 Act** (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1902>). This would update and raise minimum monthly benefits, generally, thus, would assist people with disabilities (PWD's) who don't necessarily earn in enough months throughout life to receive a subsistence benefit. Bills were sponsored by Representative Larson in the House and Senator Casey in the Senate. This is important because people with disabilities do not earn enough money to receive enough social security or disability benefits to live on.
- Representative Welch and Senator Casey working on an **Enhanced work Incentives for People with Disabilities Bill** <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2000/ba/2000HB-05778-R000562-BA.htm> at retirement age.
- Policy idea in the Senate to implement a family leave provision within social security allowing individuals to receive compensation which would reduce social security benefits upon retirement. It would be totally voluntary. (Rubio and Lee).
- **Disability integration Act** <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/910>: all democrats signed on. Broader than Empower Care Act. Mandate states towards home and community-based living.

STATE Related:

- The MS Society wants to append to the **Tax Deduction Bill** home modifications for people with disabilities with income limits.

Conclusions:

There is much legislation moving forward and it is important for members of this committee to keep abreast of these. Please see above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

See above.

6) Calendar of Upcoming Events (Group)

Discussion:

5/30/19 Annual Youth Summit.

Martha said the Annual Youth Summit is going fantastic. We had 87 youth signed up. We have registration rolling along as well as the agenda and workshop descriptions. A few of the workshops include Education and Careers, How to Ace a Job Interview, and How to Share a Story. Colorful backpacks have been ordered for those attending. We will be sharing leadership opportunities available within the State with the youth. Martha will be speaking for the SRC to see if any youth would like to make application to the council. Martha said it has been very rewarding seeing this group of young people grow and evolve. Registration is focused on young people interested in advocacy. It will be held from 9 am to 2 pm at Vermont Technical College in Randolph, Vermont. For more information, please contact Nichole Jolly at nichole.jolly@vermont.gov.

June 2019 and Fall 2019 Olmstead Meetings. The State Independent Living Council (SILC) hasn't had this event for three years. We were asked by the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition and Housing Conservation Board to present before the Olmstead Meeting.

10/15/19 2019 VT Youth Core Transition Event.

The date has been confirmed for 10/15/19 and it will be held in Killington again. It is currently still in the planning stage. They had a meeting yesterday and are thinking about doing things a little differently this year by restructuring the event.

An issue with not being able to attend a workshop because it is beyond capacity is being worked out. Pre-registration may solve the problem. Diane mentioned using tickets to get into workshops and only allowing additional people in if there was room.

October 2019 - Spirit of ADA Award Ceremonies will be held in various locations throughout the month. Awards are presented at the place of business of those that received the award.

12/2/19 Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities (aka Disabilities Transportation Summit).

It will be held at the DoubleTree Inn. The Governor has approved the summit. The morning will be on transportation barriers as related to employment. Providers will be there. The State Independent Living

Council (SILC) wants to make sure that not only providers are there but people with disabilities that are experiencing transportation barriers can attend too. SILC wants to make sure that transportation is provided if needed and will provide some funding. The Vermont Department of Transportation will contribute what they can. There will be a luncheon open to the public. The keynote speaker will be in the afternoon. We are hoping to get former State Senator Ted Kennedy Jr. to be the speaker. We are looking for business sponsors to offset some of the costs.

Conclusions:

See above for events to attend or participate in planning!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

See above.

7) Other Business (Group)

Discussion:

1) VCDR: SRC Representative Report (Marlena Hughes)

Marlena was not able to attend the last meeting. Sam said that the Disability Awareness Day met the criteria plus. There were some cuts in funding for it, but SILC made up for the shortage. In the morning concurrent with legislative testimony, the Governor's Committee on Employment for People with Disabilities (GCEPD) held some workshops. There were some great ideas that came out of it.

2) David Sagi Award (Sam Liss)

This award is a newly established one offered through the Governor's Committee on Employment for People with Disabilities (GCEPD). It will be awarded to employers who have made a special effort to make their businesses accessible for people with disabilities (PWD) as employees.

3) Agenda Setting for September 5, 2019

See above.

Conclusions:

See above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Present proposed agenda, **Debra Kobus**, 8/12/19.

8) Adjournment (Sam Liss)

Discussion:

Sam asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Sherrie moved to adjourn, and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 5-0-0.

Conclusions:

Motion to adjourn approved at 1:45 p.m.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Debra Kobus**, 5/7/19.
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, **Debra Kobus**, 5/7/19.
- Minutes approved, **Committee**, 9/5/19.
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Debra Kobus**, 9/10/19.