

**Access to Health & Human Services Workgroup of the
CJCC Early Intervention & Prevention Committee
June 7, 2022 at noon via Zoom**

Present: Trish Chandler, Kalene Engel, Katie Schild, Amy Sixty, Naomi Morris, Chris Meyer, Karen Sanness, Andy Kranz, Marie Kovecsi.

Minutes by: Kalene Engel

Approve Minutes of 4/5/22 Meeting: Minutes were approved by consensus.

Discussion of Access to Health & Human Services Survey: Kalene and Karin will be meeting with Maureen Holte on June 15th to discuss the survey in greater depth.

Review of Workplan and Discussion of Next Steps: The workplan includes several other strategies that could be undertaken by the workgroup to identify and address gaps in access to HHS programs. Discussion was held on possible next steps, as follows:

- Presentations About Programs:
 - Past: The training that Naomi did on the Combined Application Form in April received very good feedback. Participants were very appreciative of how thoroughly she went through the application and learned strategies that will help them better assist their clients in completing those forms. Similar feedback was received on the training that Loice Odoul did on MNSURE Applications on the same day. Recordings of both trainings will be available soon on the HVMHC.org website.
 - Future: Kalene has received requests for training on the SMRT (State Medical Review Team), MN Choices and Waiver Programs. Karen provided a brief explanation on the programs, as follows:
 - A person must be deemed disabled through Social Security or through SMRT (which is 100% state administered) to qualify for waived services.
 - People under age 65 can access services through a CADI Waiver, which is a federal waiver program for disability services.
 - Anyone can request a MN Choices Assessment, which is an assessment of a person's abilities and what services they might qualify for.

Naomi stated that her staff enter data into the system for SMRT and the people at the state make a determination, but she would appreciate knowing more about what goes into that decision. In response to a question from Trish about whether there was a flowchart for the process, Naomi located and shared the following links:

- [The State Medical Review Team \(SMRT\) / Minnesota Department of Human Services \(mn.gov\)](#)
- [MnCHOICES / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#)

Karen stated that the staff responsible for SMRT/MN Choices/Waivers are a little underwater right now due to staffing shortages, but she will talk to Karen Bunkowski about a possible future presentation on the subjects.

- Communication with Human Services: Workgroup members engaged in a robust discussion of how to best access the right person/department in Human Services and other strategies for improved communication techniques. See the attached handout entitled **Tips for Communicating with Winona County Dept. of Health and Human Services.** Additional items that impact communication were also discussed, as follows:
 - Much of the mail that people receive from DHS is mandated and automated. While it does usually explain what is needed, it is often confusing for clients, especially if they do not keep the notices in order by date. Additionally, if a client is involved in three different programs, they will get notices from three different departments.
 - DHS is working with very outdated systems (MMIS, MAXIS) which are Microsoft DOS systems. They can no longer find college graduates to work on the system; county human services directors have been begging DHS for a more modern system. They are trying to tap into the budget surplus.
 - Marie is attending the State Community Health Advisory Committee Meeting on June 9th. She is aware that Public Health has received some funding. She will encourage them to put funding towards modernization of the software systems.
 - Many clients do not have a stable mailing address, but do have an e-mail address.
 - Often clients do not have their voicemail set up or their voicemail is full, so messages cannot be left.
 - Within Naomi's department, staff have their own caseloads, but when workers are working on a team, there are generic team email addresses.
 - The county is pretty good about giving grace if someone misses deadlines by a couple of days, but some deadlines are hard deadlines that cannot be overlooked.
 - People who work at the front desk of DHS shadow others to learn the systems. Often individuals who work at DHS start in office support and migrate to different areas. There is always someone with experience working at the front desk, so a new staff member has someone to ask.
 - The 457-6500 phone number is mostly manned full time unless they are short staff.
 - Some restructuring is occurring within the position formerly held by Kendra Mann (who retired) so the DHS organizational chart will change a bit.

- There is no portal whereby clients can login and access the current stats of their case.
- Trish and Katie use a checklist with clients to identify what kind of services people are seeking (such as housing, insurance, food stamps, etc) and suggested that it might be a way for the DHS front desk people to narrow down what people are looking for when they come in.

Next Steps:

- Karen review/approve Kalene's summary of communication strategies.
- Karen talk to Karen B about presentation on SMRT/MN Choices/Waivers
- Kalene and Karin talk to Maureen about survey.
- Everyone continue to review workplan and generate ideas/strategies, including training topics

Next Meetings: Workgroup meetings will occur on the 1st Tuesday of the month at noon. The next meeting is July 5, 2022 at noon.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.