



St. Louis Office for Developmental Disability Resources
Minutes of the Program Committee
February 16, 2023

Board Members Present:

Ken Franklin
Cynthia Mueller, Committee Chairperson
Nina North-Murphy
Sherry Wibbenmeyer

Board Members Absent: None

Staff Members Present:

Shaelene Plank, Executive Director
Nate (Nathaniel) Head, Director of Agency & Community Relations

Ebony Young, Agency Relations Representative
Rachel Shapiro, Executive Assistant

Guests Present: None

The meeting was called to order by Cynthia Mueller at 4:01 pm.

- House of Pais request for FY23
 - a. House of Pais requested \$2,000 for virtual reality goggles to provide virtual services. Ebony observed the services. He has 3 students. Has two goggles– would like 4 more for a small group. Emerging research shows benefits to including VR in education. It is an immersive program that improves focus, keeps students engaged, and helps individuals who cannot articulate. Also builds emotional intelligence, which benefits people with autism socially. The goal is to transfer skills learned in a VR setting to the real world. The software is called Project VOISS (integrates social skills). Teaches those skills in a safe setting.
 - b. Ken asked about the research. Ebony shared the way the technology is already being used by the ARC and by others in similar fields.
 - c. **Nina Murphy moved to grant House of Pais the requested \$2,000 for virtual reality goggles. Ken Franklin seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None opposed. The motion passed.**
- FY24 Funding Cycle Update
 - a. Nate shared a draft of FY24 tentative recommendations. Looks like we will be able to allocate \$6.5 million to existing programs, which leaves some room for new projects.
 - b. Several requests:
 - i. Some agencies requested to decrease their targeted number to be served, as they have not seen the numbers they expected.
 - ii. Seeing rising staff costs. Would like to increase the unit rate and decrease the number served and the number of supports provided. Staff costs push up the overall program costs. Agencies have had to become more competitive in hiring and keeping staff. Besides labor costs, other costs are going up with inflation (insurance, gas, utilities).
 - c. Discussion regarding decreasing numbers
 - i. Agencies are not turning people away; people are not showing up in the same numbers.
 - ii. Transportation is a problem for some. We provide transportation funding, but there is a shortage of drivers to and from workshops. This does not mean individuals are not connected at all. The average participant who may have been enrolled in two or three programs now may only be attending one. Struggling to find staff to go into the homes. Residential is the most expensive. Anything that leads to that causes strain on the system. This is why we must educate

legislators about the budget. The budget increase from last year is the only thing in the governor's current budget. Trying to get \$185.5 million in appropriations that would take it up to the market rate for DSP (\$21/hour), and would also raise rates for TCM. It will continue to be difficult to hire staff if providers cannot pass on any increases to their staff.

- d. We are recommending a 5% cost of living increase for nearly all programs. Some are not receiving 5% due to reductions based on usage. Those recommendations have been communicated to those agencies, and they have agreed to the recommendations.
- e. Green highlighted projects are projects that we are observing. When we see new project requests, may need to look further at those.
- Funds from sale of real estate
 - a. The committee should think about what we want to do with the money from the sale of the Destination Café building. Shaelene would like to see us hold on to it and thoughtfully/strategically decide how we are going to invest it. We are seeing a housing crisis in the city. Hard to find accessible, safe, affordable housing. Would like to reach out to different partners to be involved in conversations regarding housing.
- AADD Conference Sponsorship
 - a. Conference in May. They have asked us to sponsor the conference. They asked last year, but the request came in too late. They have a customizable option (building your own sponsorship package). We are looking at \$3K – with that sponsorship, we can send four staff and have our logo on materials. We typically send staff. PLB also sponsors about the same amount. They do a great job. The conference will be in St. Charles.
 - b. **Nina Murphy moved to sponsor the AADD conference for \$3,000. Sherry Wibbenmeyer seconded the motion. All voted in favor. None opposed. The motion passed.**
- TCM Updates
 - a. HRST (Health Risk Screening Tool) – Our staff is still going through the training. Has been very difficult so far. It is a very lengthy training, and we are not getting reimbursed for it. All SAs must be trained to administer it. It is a web-based virtual training. SAs must pass the scenarios at a 100% rate or re-do the testing. We have had difficulty receiving information and login support from DMH, which is a consistent issue throughout the state. The window for completing the HRST to receive the value-based payment (VBP) is the 1st of May. They are not giving us an extension. Will receive a modified (lower) version of the VBP after May. Trying to do it as fast as we can, but not sure how we will get it all done by May 1.
 - b. Staff are having trouble scheduling consumers for the MAAS as required. The scores yielded are taking people out of waiver eligibility, and they are not supposed to do that (questions were scored incorrectly or missed). Dealing with this on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. Cannot get a copy of the MAAS. We are not administering it (just scheduling it). DMH will not give us a copy for validity and reliability reasons.
 - d. Now we only schedule it and give consumers access to technology to do it. It is all virtual.

Call for a motion to adjourn (Cynthia Mueller) – Nina Murphy moved to adjourn. Sherry Wibbenmeyer seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 4:44 pm.

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Cynthia Mueller, Secretary

3/14/2023

Date Approved