

Whatcom County
Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board (DDAB)
Whatcom County Health Department
September 23, 2019
4:30 - 6:00 PM

Board Members Present:

Megen Porter
Kathleen Harrigan
Aaron Perzigian
Russ Sapienza
Barry McHale

Jeffery Hart
Arrissia Owen-Turner
Todd Donovan

Board Members absent

Board members excused :

N/A

Ken Larson

Guests Present:

Amanda White, Max Higbee Center; Torhil Ramsay, Max Higbee Center; Kate Whiteside, Max Higbee Center; Sylvia Williams, Citizen; Brian Thane, Max Higbee Center; Patricia Alderete, DDA; Scott Watling, DDA; Beverly Porter, Arc of Whatcom County

Staff

Jessica Lee, Program Specialist; Ann Beck, Human Services Supervisor; Anne Deacon, Human Services Manager; Emily West, Coordinator

1.  Call to Order & Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Russ Sapienza and introductions conducted. Quorum was present.

2.  Minutes Approval

Todd motioned to approve minutes as presented. Motion seconded by Aaron.

ACTION July 22, 2019 minutes approved as presented. Aye Nay 

3. Qualified Vocational Provider Changes

Jessica updated the board that vocational provider Advancement Northwest (ANW) gave notice to the County, effective June 30th. The County has been working with families and state Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) case managers to transition around 25 adult clients to new vocational providers. To ensure capacity the County qualified a new vocational provider effective July 1, Washington Vocational Services. (WVS) WVS provides County vocational

services in Skagit County, and is contracted with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to serve clients in Whatcom County.

4. DD millage funding updates

The DDAB priorities related to local funds and the DD County plan have been reviewed and approved by the Board over the last 2 meeting. The County plan and DDAB priorities are intended to ensure alignment in the use of public funds with community needs. There has been a recent change in the availability of local funds for the implementation of the County Plan and DDAB priorities. Anne Deacon the Human Services Manager provided an overview of those changes.

- Approximately \$320,000 a year is collected annually from property taxes (millage) to support DD programs and services. It is a fairly flexible funding source with very few rules other than it must be used to support programs and services for individuals with DD. Millage funds are considered “restricted” funds. (i.e. they must be used for a specific purpose.)
- The Health Department is assigned an indirect administrative rate, on average 15%, that must be paid to the County. Indirect pays for things like human resources, information technology, and payroll. The rate is charged against the direct cost of each program (both personnel and program expenses).
- The majority of County DD program expenses are funded with state funds; around \$3.6 million per year. A limit of 7% of state funds may be used toward the 15% administrative costs. The Health Department has to make up the 8% difference using local funds.
- Anne roughly estimated that 15% of \$3.6 million is around \$540,000. The Health department gets an estimated \$250,000 in “admin” revenue from DDA leaving an estimated \$290,000 owed.
- 2 years ago the health department started applying the 15% admin rate only to millage expenditures. The 8% balance not covered by state admin revenue was not covered by DD millage. That change started to build up a DD millage fund balance.
- The Executive branch reviewed these procedures and determined that the full 15% indirect rate on state expenditures would need to be paid out of available program funds. This means that the 8% of the indirect not covered by state funds over the last 2 years will be collected from DD millage. In addition the indirect rate, due to under collection in previous years, increased to 20% in 2019.
- Due to the above changes, the DD fund balance, previously classified as “restricted” will be classified as “unrestricted” county general fund effective in January 2020.

Discussion of Impact of DD millage changes on DD programming:

- The DDAB previously approved priorities related to investment in “infrastructure” which builds the capacity of the community to support individuals with DD.
- The two infrastructure areas currently in development are providing matching funds for affordable housing projects designated for individuals with DD and increasing capacity for recreational programming.
- “Restricted” DD millage will no longer be available to fund these larger one time “infrastructure” projects in 2020.
- A budget request for County general funds can still be made. The health department will simply need to document need and provide justification to the County executive and council.
- These changes will not impact DD program Staffing.
- Concern from community members associated with the Max Higbee center in the audience were voiced about these changes.
- A request was made to better understand the types of recommendations and priorities coming from other advisory boards. There could be the potential to align efforts.
- Jessica added that the 7% admin rate from DDA is relatively low. Typical allowable state admin rates are closer to 10%. An increase in the state admin rate could alleviate some of the pressure on local funds.

5. Public Benefits 101

The board had previously asked to hear about larger systems outside of the DD programming provided by the County. The group completed a short quiz to test understanding and foster discussion about the realities of public benefits experienced by the DD population and their families. Topics and examples discussed included social security disability, food and health benefits.

6. People First Convention; Ken Larson

Ken was not present to discuss.

7. Public Comment:

- Arrissia met some self-advocates in supported living. She was impressed with the improvement in their quality of life.
- Boundary Bay hosts “Out of the Ashes”, a music group for people with DD every Tuesday from 3:30-5:30 during the summer months.
- Beverly brought up the recent news story related to an “alternative learning environment” (i.e. something other than a classroom) for a student with disabilities which has generated concern. The Arc is and will continue working with families to help navigate the special education system.
- October 6th is the Arc’s annual “buddy walk” at depot market square.

8. Meeting Adjourned: Meeting was adjourned by Russ Sapienza at 6:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, November 25, 2019. This meeting will be in Room A at the Health Education Center

Respectfully submitted by Emily West, Coordinator

HD staff

Jessica Lee

Direct Phone Line

360-778-6047

E-mail

jlee@co.whatcom.wa.us