

# Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Statewide Planning and Policy Council Annual Report to the Governor For Calendar Year 2014

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In 2011, when the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) became a new state department, the Tennessee Code was updated to reflect that change and also to create the State, Regional, and Developmental Disabilities Statewide Planning and Policy Councils to allow for public collaboration on issues affecting the department and the people interested in DIDD services. Tennessee Code 33-5-601 created the Statewide Planning and Policy Council (SPPC) for DIDD to assist in planning a comprehensive array of high quality prevention, early intervention, treatment, and habilitation services and supports and to advise the department on policy, budget requests, and developing and evaluating services and supports. As stated in the Tennessee Code, section 33-5-602 (c), the council, in conjunction with the commissioner, shall present a report annually to the Governor. The following constitutes the third annual report, covering calendar year 2014, of the council.

The Statewide Planning and Policy Council met in Nashville four times during 2014: February 26, May 21, August 20, and November 19. A quorum was present for each meeting and official minutes were recorded, posted on the state website, and distributed.

The Department also supports the East, Middle, and West Regional Planning and Policy Councils (EPPC, MPPC and WPPC), as well as the Developmental Disabilities Statewide Planning and Policy Council (DDPPC). Each of these councils consists of a chairperson, plus eight additional members. They have each met four times during 2014, approximately three to five weeks prior to when the Statewide Planning and Policy Council has held its quarterly meeting. The chairpersons of each council have attended the SPPC meetings and provided reports, highlighting recommendations and/or other significant issues that arose in their meetings.

The agendas included a section devoted to updates provided the Commissioner of DIDD and/or members of the executive management team upon the council's request. Previously much of the council's time during meeting surrounded departmental updates, therefore this year the department presented information upon request of the council to allow more working time during the meetings. The department provides management resources to help in the development of each meeting's agendas, follow-up on topics, arrangement for department updates, and overall support. Additionally, the department devotes administrative support to assist with meeting set up and minutes.

The membership of each council, by design, is diverse, representing all stakeholders in the system including people supported, family members, service providers, and advocates.

This diversity not only allows for enriched discussions, but also necessitates establishing some common points of reference and education.

This year, the Statewide Planning and Policy Council gathered recommendations made by the East, Middle, West and Developmental Disabilities Councils for review to determine recommendations that would be adopted in the annual report. Some recommendations made by the councils throughout the year were either adopted by DIDD and/or were already in development. One example is the addition of Semi-Independent Living services to the Statewide and CAC waivers. Previously this service was only available in the Self-Determination waiver, a waiver with a lower individual cost cap, resulting in low utilization. By adding this service to the Statewide and CAC waivers, a more affordable and person-centered option is now available for individuals in every waiver program.

## 2014 Planning and Policy Council Recommendations

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### EMPLOYMENT AND INNOVATION

1. The Council recommends to re-evaluate/re-design the Vocational Rehabilitation system to create a system easier to navigate than the current system; that it more accessible by people with all severity levels of intellectual and developmental disabilities; and to make the process to take less time and fewer obstacles for people to obtain employment which may include adding more case managers so that more people can benefit from the process in a shorter period of time.
2. The Council recommends creation of an alternative system to VR as an option for people to access assistance in their search for employment, including funding for job coach support. Completing the VR process would not be a pre-requisite to qualifying for this system.  
The program would have multiple funding sources and would serve people, with all disabilities (not only ID), not a waiver participant, persons on the waiting list, and individuals transitioning from school services.
3. The Council recommends for DIDD to continue addressing barriers with Vocational Rehabilitation services.
4. The Council recommends creation of an Employment Consortium in both middle and west regions of Tennessee, modeling after the Knoxville Area Employment Consortium (KAEC). This model serves as a multi-functional resource for people with disabilities, families and providers. Each Consortium would serve as the point

of contact or umbrella organization to facilitate a smooth progression of information and resources to promote successful employment opportunities specific to rural areas.

5. The Council recommends expansion of school to work services for young adults who are aging out of the school system. IDEA is responsible for the school system, but when the person leaves school progress is frequently lost. Another state addressed this issue by automatically enrolling these young adults into a day program focused on educational training and service. There would have to be sound follow up to ensure the day program was productive in actually guiding the young adult through vocational and solid skill building with the ultimate goal of community employment.
6. That DIDD continue its focus on competitive, integrated employment for people with ID and DD other than ID through rates that incentivize this service option (use data analyzed by Lisa Mills), and employment service definitions that function effectively within an MCO waiver model.
7. The Council recommends permitting waiver recipients to access supported employment services without the requirement to first obtain a closure letter from DHS Vocation Rehabilitation Services. The current waiver requires providers to obtain a closure letter from DHS Vocation Rehabilitation Services before securing supported employment funding through DIDD. Several providers have reported ongoing difficulties obtaining closure letters and cite this as a barrier to getting people approved for supported employment services. DIDD should consider language in the new waiver to remove these barriers to employment. One such possibility is to model their language after that found in the Missouri waiver. If a closure letter is not issued within 30 days the person is presumed to be eligible for SE services.
8. The Council recommends DIDD/TennCare include self-employment and social enterprise as viable employment options in the new waiver programs.
9. The Council recommends that DIDD encourage initiatives around peer-to-peer or family-to-family support that focus on competitive, integrated employment. It is those interactions that often work in terms of getting families to change their minds.
10. The Council recommends assignment of a statewide task force to complete a “top to bottom” review of transportation options for people with disabilities. Limited transportation options have proven to be a significant barrier to employment. Metropolitan areas typically have some form of public transportation available, but

if a person has a job opportunity outside the hours of operation for the public transit system, then the success of employment is inhibited. Transportation options are typically nonexistent in the non-metropolitan/rural areas of the state. A task force can effectively identify the transportation needs and evaluate the current options to develop a strategic plan of solutions to resolve this barrier.

11. The Council recommends creation of grant opportunities for provider agencies to develop flexible, innovative, and cost effective service delivery models. This idea may be tough to implement, but it warrants further discussion. Determine if there are federal dollars available through block grants to assist states in reducing the size of their waiting list. Block grants are typically designed to target a specific state/community issue. The state then has the ability to define how those dollars are used in addressing the issue. Within predetermined parameters as set forth in the grant application, the agency finds innovative ways to serve new people along with people already receiving services.

#### EXISTING WAIVERS & NEW PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

12. The Council recommends that TennCare/DIDD develop a clear, fair and understandable process to address how people (current waiver recipients & new enrollees) access services when there is a significant change in their support needs and those needs exceed the individual cost cap.
13. The Council recommends that TennCare/DIDD provide additional information and clarification on the availability of services for people that currently fall below the individual cost cap for waiver services, but at a later point in time require more costly services due to a change in medical or behavioral support needs.
14. The Council recommends development of care giver services for families in need of services from both Choices & DIDD. Provide parents/primary caregivers with the support they need to keep their family member at home. This promotes the preservation of the family unit in a more cost-effective manner. Oftentimes people end up in the DIDD system as the result of a crisis driven event such as the declining health or death of an elderly caregiver. People entering the DIDD system in crisis typically need 24 hour support. Seeking alternate ways to support families earlier may help to avert the need for more costly support.
15. The Council recommends that the rate methodology for day services include an hourly rate instead of a daily rate.

16. The Council recommends that a funding source be identified to provide grants to providers to reinvent their business to shift away from facility based day services.
17. The Council recommends that DIDD work with providers to address issues around the conversion of facility based day services to community based day services.
18. The Council recommends comprehensive training for MCO's on how to effectively implement community focused waiver services versus acute care services.
19. The Council recommends that DIDD keep funding for the two positions specific to DD other than ID and fill the positions.

#### WAITING LIST & FAMILIES

20. The Council recommends a comprehensive needs assessment be conducted for people on the current waiting list and for people identified as eligible for the newly proposed waivers.
21. The Council recommends consideration of enrolling people at lower levels of service when possible even if residential services are listed as a preference. There should be focus on individuals with aging caregivers and young adults exiting school in terms of priority for waiver services (after crisis people) without excluding the needs of individuals who do not fall into these categories.
22. The Council recommends that DIDD refocus on the original intent of the Family Support Program which is flexible, family friendly supports that cost effectively meet individual needs.