

2019

STATEWIDE PLANNING & POLICY
COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

Statewide Planning and Policy Council

Recommendations 2019

For all recommendations made in this report, the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) Statewide Planning and Policy Council (SPPC) would like to encourage that the efforts applied to resolution may be directed by a continued effort to ensure diversity, inclusion, and equity. Please ensure these issues are considered and, if necessary and appropriate, applied to all recommendations past, present, and future. The SPPC wishes to thank DIDD Commissioner Brad Turner and DIDD for its leadership, accessibility, and continued involvement with council activities across the state

- 1. SPPC Recommendation:** DIDD continues to look to find solutions to the ongoing DSP workforce crisis and challenges experienced by the provider community to find quality support professionals.

DIDD Response: DIDD agrees that challenges in recruiting and retaining direct support professionals is one of the most pressing issues that is facing not only DIDD but the entire longterm services and supports community. To that end, DIDD is committed to continuing to work with providers and our partners at TennCare to address this issue. This includes the continued work to make the funding for a \$10 average hourly rate for DSPs a recurring budget item, as well as continued investments. In addition, DIDD will continue its participation with TennCare on its workforce development initiatives, including QuILTSS, and other strategies to professionalize the DSP profession through its Workforce Challenges workgroup.

It's also important to note that continued development of progressive program design will also take into account the DSP workforce shortage and leverage the successes of both person-centered planning and utilization of enabling technology as well as natural supports. This is in concert with best practice as we work towards greater independence as directed by the people supported through DIDD.

Furthermore, DIDD is very appreciative of the work done by the planning and policy councils on this effort. There is no easy solution, but with the continued investment and focus of all stakeholders on this important issue, we are hopeful we will continue to see progress on all fronts.

- 2. Recommendation:** DIDD forms a statewide collaborative to address the DSP workforce crisis, consisting of people vested in the issue to come up with innovative ways to address the crisis.

DIDD Response: DIDD currently partners with TennCare on the Workforce Challenges Workgroup. This group consists of providers across the state, MCOs, and other stakeholders to work towards a solution to this issue. However, recognizing the need for a more formal effort, the Department and TennCare are partnering to establish a Workforce Challenges Advisory Group. This will bring together stakeholders along with national experts to strategize and look at best practices to solve the challenges currently experienced across the LTSS landscape in Tennessee.

- 3. SPPC Recommendation:** DIDD continues to coordinate consistently with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) to ensure supports are available for people with I/DD and co-occurring mental health diagnosis.

DIDD Response: DIDD will continue to actively lead and pursue support options that target persons with co-occurring diagnoses and significant behavioral health support needs. Through collaborative efforts with both the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse and the Managed Care Organizations working with this shared population, DIDD will coordinate efforts to develop programming options.

- 4. SPPC Recommendation:** DIDD continues funding Enabling Technology and evaluates its expansion to enable participating providers continued access to funding for people already enrolled in the program.

DIDD Response: We are pleased that the SPPC sees the tremendous benefits that DIDD's Enabling Technology program brings to people across Tennessee who are now able to connect with their communities, natural supports, and find independence many did not think was previously possible.

With recurring monies already dedicated to the DIDD Enabling Technology program, DIDD will seek to both grow utilization and assist agencies to adapt to a Technology First culture of business that is self-sustaining. Efforts will include the continued provision of access to expert consultation opportunities and pilot program designs that assist in the identification of best-practice implementation and support strategies.

- 5. SPPC Recommendation:** DIDD explores tech options for health-related tasks.

DIDD Response: With funding provided through the DIDD Enabling Technology Program, DIDD will develop and implement a technology and/or telehealth pilot to test the effectiveness of technology on health-related tasks, accessibility, and outcomes.

- 6. SPPC Recommendation:** DIDD identifies strategies to increase the availability of affordable housing and explore greater collaboration with TDHA on housing grant opportunities.

DIDD Response: Through active participation and membership with the Taskforce on Housing and Health, convened by the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disabilities, DIDD will seek to identify what role other participating state agencies might have in supporting people with disabilities to locate stable and affordable housing. Additionally, this Taskforce seeks to identify gaps in existing statewide systems serving aging and disability populations. With continued exploration into grants offered to Community Housing Development Organizations, DIDD will develop informational materials that will assist those interested in applying for available grant opportunities.

- 7. SPPC Recommendation:** DIDD adopts the DSP Toolkit created by the EPPC, publishes it to the DIDD website, and shares with other departments, such as Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Tennessee Commission on Aging, and TennCare CHOICES Program.

DIDD Response: DIDD believes the toolkit provides a useful glimpse into the roles and responsibilities of a DSP. Upon approval by the SPPC, it will be added to the DIDD website under the "DSP Resources" tab.

8. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD adopts the definition of a Direct Support Professional (DSP) developed by the MPPC.

“DSP” (Direct Support Professional) is defined as follows:

- 1) Has completed all initial training mandated by the State of Tennessee
- 2) Completes and maintains ongoing training as required by the State of Tennessee
- 3) Responsibilities of Direct Support Professionals to people with disabilities include compassionate support and inclusive interaction in the home and community settings.

DIDD Response: DIDD has reviewed the response and agrees to use the definition created by the MPPC in its future policies and the provider manual.

9. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD adopts and publishes to the website the Residential Supports Resource Manual.

DIDD Response: Upon approval by the SPPC, DIDD will place the residential resources manual on the DIDD website and make people aware of its availability through Open Line.

10. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD continues to provide administrative support for and endorse the Family Support Program, which fulfills a need for people with I/DD who may not be eligible for ECF CHOICES or CHOICES.

DIDD Response: DIDD continues to support the recurring state funding for the Family Support Program, which provides a vital service for many families across the state who do not have access to, or who do not want, waiver services. The administrative support from DIDD will continue and DIDD will continue to work with the Family Support Council to bring awareness to this important program.

11. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD continues to provide administrative support for and endorse the TN Council on Autism Spectrum Disorder.

DIDD Response: DIDD believes the Tennessee Council on Autism Spectrum Disorder plays an important role in bringing self-advocates, parents, state agencies and stakeholders together to review and plan for a system of care for persons with autism throughout the lifespan. DIDD will continue to provide administrative support for the council and work with the members on their goals and recommendations.

12. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD ensures stakeholder involvement in the transition of TEIS from DOE to DIDD.

DIDD Response: DIDD is in the process of meeting with and talking with a diverse range of stakeholders about TEIS to understand the successes and challenges that exist within the program. This includes its intents to visit all 9 Point of Entry Offices, meetings with EIRA directors, and visits and meetings with vendors and other agencies who play a role in the program. Most important, it has heard from families who have benefited from the services and will continue to engage them.

Because DIDD prioritizes communication with its stakeholders in all of its programs, the department has already hired a Public Information Officer who is dedicated to the TEIS program.

13. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD develops options for continued educational opportunities for individuals past age 21 who are not appropriate for career center services but still capable of continued skill development.

DIDD Response: In effort to further opportunities for persons with disabilities to successfully enter the workforce, and in concert with our dedicated efforts toward the principles of Employment First, DIDD will work to develop a pilot project design that seeks to provide for education and/or training opportunities for persons aging out of the school system but not employed or seeking employment. Project design may focus on both technical training and higher education with the expected outcome being gainful and competitive employment.

14. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD explores how to increase transportation options for people with disabilities, rural and urban, with particular focus on those living in rural areas.

DIDD Response: DIDD will continue exploration and development efforts that intend to increase access to transportation for persons living with disabilities in all Tennessee communities. Recent pilot project designs such as a collaborative effort with the City of Chattanooga and the Orange Grove Center seek to increase the accessibility of public transit for those living with a disability. Through a broader collective and cross-departmental effort organized through the Employment First Taskforce, DIDD will continue to lead exploration into the development of affordable and sustainable transportation solutions for persons living with disabilities in all communities.

15. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD facilitates Tele-Med to collaborate with specialists in medical and mental health to provide services and supports to individuals in rural areas who would otherwise not have access.

DIDD Response: DIDD will initiate pilot programming to test and determine the efficacy of Tele-Health supports across multiple service settings. Through the identification of interested providers in both HCBS and ICF support settings, DIDD will seek to implement remote clinical support options in an attempt to allow broader access to persons with limited access to easily accessible medical supports. Additionally, DIDD will seek to collect data on the ability of Tele-Health supports to divert persons from dangerous and costly emergency room visits.

16. SPPC Recommendation: DIDD establishes ex-officio membership slots on SPPC to represent Katie Beckett and TEIS stakeholder collaboration.

DIDD Response: DIDD agrees that stakeholders from all of its programs should be represented on the SPPC. To that end, DIDD published in the TEIS February newsletter a "call for interest" to invite persons involved in TEIS to apply for membership to both the SPPC and DDPPC. Once those interest forms are received, DIDD will review and determine how best to proceed with adding council members, taking into account the requirements that the council must be comprised of at least half persons supported and/or family members. DIDD also agrees it should add Katie Beckett stakeholders as well, and upon program implementation, will also acquire interest from potential members. In addition, DIDD will ensure that TEIS and Katie Beckett program staff are available when requested by the SPPC to provide pertinent updates and answer questions and concerns.