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DAVID HICKS
Chairperson

Approved

Commission on Disabilities Minutes
April 12, 2010

Present: Dana Canevari, David Hicks, Elaine Quinn, Matthew Ranelli,
Linda Reeder, Heiwa Salovitz,

Absent: Chris Getlein, Stan Kontogiannis, RobinTousey-Ayers

Staff: Michelle Duprey

Guest Speaker: Deb Migneault from the Connecticut Commission on Aging

The meeting was brought to order. There was no quorum but the meeting was opened as there was a guest speaker. Deb Mignaeault introduced herself.

Presentation

The Connecticut Commission on Aging (CCA) is located on the 5th floor of the Capitol building. It is an independent non-partisan office whose job it is to advise the State Legislature on policy related to persons who are elderly and with disabilities specifically in regard to long term care. They have an appointed board with 21 members, an Executive Director and now two staff at the Commission on Aging. The statute they were formed under has changed and they have members from all over the state.

(Refer to the hard copy power point presentation for details of the presentation)

What drives the work is exploding demographics. By 2030 the population of people ages 65 years and older will grow by 64 percent. The population is shifting and the elderly population is growing faster than other age-related demographic segments. There will need to be changes in long term care approaches as otherwise it will sink the state budget.

Deb Migneault went on to talk about the current deficit mitigation plan which affects all types of services; various proposals to decrease the deficit will get voted on this week.

Long term care is not just skilled nursing care within facilities, it also includes the full range of supports and services in the community including meals, transportation, services, all the way through to nursing home care. Long term care costs are 13 percent of the state's budget.

In 2006 the state funded a long term care needs assessment and a preference survey. This assessment is used as a guide and the State needs to be moving towards the recommendations of the assessment. The assessment shows that Connecticut residents want to stay in their homes. Living with an adult child was viewed by the survey participants as being just slightly better than living in a nursing home. And what people prefer is actually less costly than relying on nursing home care. A pie chart illustrated that in 2009, 65% of the Medicaid dollars were spent on institutional care and 35% on home care, but 53% of the people were served by the 35% of the budget devoted to home care, vs. 47 % of the people served by the 65% of the budget devoted to nursing homes. It is cheaper to provide care in people's homes in their communities and it is the preferred form of service. She went on to say that if we were to rebalance our system and see it flipped around then there would be 600 million dollars annually saved. As well, providing supports in the community, which is the least restrictive environment, is consistent with the Olmstead decision.

Deb Migneault explained that there is a plethora of funding "silos" (as per chart) that make the system difficult to navigate and they were suggesting that instead of these many silos of funding, that a simpler and more manageable system would be a single fund to cover all Medicaid recipients with spending based on age and functional needs.

David Hicks asked if the State Legislature understands that home-based care saves money. The response is that the nursing home care lobbyists have the ear of the legislature and have convinced them that any beds vacated by transferring people to home care would be filled in the nursing homes with other people and thus it would cost the state more.

Elaine Quinn asked about how co-payments were affecting people getting services and supports. The answer is that they have seen about 300 people drop off the program (this is for the state funded home care program and has a 15 percent co-payment). These folks have current needs that qualify them to be in a nursing home. People might fall off because they are not getting services that help them to stay in the home. Monthly co-payments are getting higher.

Part of CCA's mission is to get people to come together and restructure the community support component across populations and get all of the silos combined. Financially it is really hard because of the advocacy of each group. If they were put all together, under one umbrella it would be cheaper using a flexible funding environment.

Matthew Ranelli suggested that the budget issue and the power of the nursing home lobby were perhaps not the best political avenues to effect change, and that

the moral issue was a better point to apply pressure. He inquired about using the waitlist for making the case that CCA's constituents have unmet needs and asked what the obligations of the state are. As it turns out, there are savings which were to go into the long term care reinvestment account, but the state keeps taking the savings and putting them back into the General Fund and the waitlist keeps going up.

There was more discussion about how this process is in direct violation of the Olmstead Act. Many of the programs have waitlists longer than the number of people they are serving.

Deb Mignaeault then went on to explain the "Money Follows the Person" (MFP) program which is federal funding. With MFP they give a higher amount which is meant to transition non-elderly people with disabilities out of nursing homes. There are twelve hundred applications, from 170 skilled nursing homes in Connecticut. She said CCA uses MFP to get the legislature to talk about the greater issue of long term care. They hope to push the system so the rebalancing can occur.

She then went on to talk about the roadblocks they have experienced with the current administration. (Refer to Power Point for details.)

There was discussion about the ways in which the Commission could assist. Contact information was exchanged and the Commission will be put on the email list of CCA.

[End of presentation]

Matthew Ranelli brought to the attention of the Commission that Linda Reeder's book was just published. Congratulations were given.

Minutes

A quorum was available and the meeting was called to order. The minutes for March were reviewed. Heiwa Salovitz moved to accept them as written which was seconded by Elaine Quinn and the motion was unanimously approved.

Chairman's report

David Hicks reported that he appeared at public hearing before the Board of Aldermen about the budget and spoke against the proposed reorganization that would put Disability Services and Elderly Services under one department. Michelle Duprey reported that she and the Director of Elderly Services were working on a collection of options for the Innovation Based Budget team to choose from including leaving the organization the way it is currently.

David Hicks spoke about a bill that the Transportation Committee is working on which would create a three part pilot program for volunteers to be able to ticket for handicapped parking violations. He said the bill is progressing and he will check in with Rick Lopes, Senator DeFronzo's legislative aide.

He received an e-mail from Mike Piscitelli which suggested that Traffic & Parking is going to move forward on a training program for volunteers to be able to help with enforcement in the City for handicapped parking violations, which the Commission had asked for when Mr. Piscitelli attended a recent meeting.

Department report

Michelle reported on the movement within the Innovative Based Budgeting (IBB). There are no decisions at this point.

Old business

Website update: The consensus was to retake photos of the Commission for the website.

Film series

Dana Canevari reported on her interaction with the Librarian in charge of the Classic film series. She made some suggestions for a film in which Judy Holliday starred, called "A Patch of Blue."

Dana Canevari reported that she had been in touch with Tamar Rogoff regarding bringing the production of "Diagnosis of a Faun to New Haven.

Elaine Quinn talked about the New Haven Museum which was showing three movies and they were doing this a 6:30 pm. Walter Miller is the current Acting Director. She has volunteered to follow up on the possibility of partnering with them for a film series.

ADA Celebration planning- no planning has taken place. Michelle Duprey is on the statewide Committee and said there will be something on the Capitol lawn.

New Business or Other Business

Linda Reeder brought up the question of whether the Commission intended on pursuing a survey or to contact other agencies through e-mail concerning the state's Handicapped Parking law, as her previous email had suggested. David Hicks suggested they talk more on the phone after the meeting.

Michelle Duprey announced that she will be interviewed by Faith Middleton of the local NPR affiliate for a pod casting. She will let people know when it is going to be on. She is being interviewed about the wheelchair accessible taxi that Metro Taxi purchased. She talked briefly about the project.

Public comment

None.

Announcements

None.

Linda Reeder made a motion to adjourn which was seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned.