



**Office for People With  
Developmental Disabilities**

# **Implementation of OPWDD Transformation Panel Recommendations**

## **Quarterly Report to the Legislature**

April, 2017

## Introduction

The Transformation Panel (the Panel) is a group of stakeholders brought together by Acting Commissioner Kerry A. Delaney to examine questions fundamental to the service system regulated and operated by the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). The Panel was asked to consider questions regarding transformation initiatives for residential services, employment and self-direction, managed care, and the sustainability of the service system.

Between February and December 2015, the Panel met numerous times, and its five subcommittees also delved into questions surrounding residential services, care coordination, employment-related transportation, the workforce and self-direction. These conversations formed the basis of the recommendations contained in the Panel's report, *Raising Expectations, Changing Lives*, which is available at OPWDD's website.

The vision of the Panel is that people with developmental disabilities will be accepted as part of our communities, living the lives they choose while experiencing good health, growth, and personal relationships. The focus is on the quality of the person's experience and the outcomes that people we serve have told us they want, including living and working in the community while directing their own services and supports. Integrated, quality services must be supported by networks of high performing providers with the flexibility to meet people's needs.

The Transformation Panel's membership includes:

- Convened by: Acting Commissioner Kerry A. Delaney, OPWDD
- Charles A. Archer, The THRIVE Network
- Gerald Archibald, The Bonadio Group
- Nick Cappoletti, Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council Chairperson, Parent
- Sheila Carey, New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
- Donna Colonna, Services for the Underserved
- Susan Constantino, Cerebral Palsy Associations of New York State
- Barbara DeLong, Parent
- Stephen E. Freeman, Freeman and Abelson Consulting
- The Honorable Aileen M. Gunther, Chair,  
New York State Assembly Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Ann Hardiman, New York State Association of Community and Residential Agencies
- Steve Holmes, Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc.
- Steven Kroll, NYSARC
- The Honorable Robert G. Ortt, Chair,  
New York State Senate Committee on Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities
- Clint Perrin, Self-Advocate
- Peter Pierri, Interagency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies (*former member, retired*)
- Michael Seereiter, New York State Rehabilitation Association
- Robert Scholz, Civil Service Employees Association
- Seth Stein, Moritt, Hock & Hamroff

- Arthur Webb, Arthur Webb Group, Consultant

The Panel continues to meet periodically to provide input into the progress of implementing the recommendations. This report is an update from OPWDD on progress so far in implementing the Panel's recommendations, as well as next steps.

## Planning to Implement the Recommendations

A thorough planning process was conducted to determine how to implement the recommendations of the Transformation Panel. Implementation steps were determined for each of the recommendations.

In many cases, recommendations are being advanced individually. However, some recommendations have greater interrelations; these recommendations are being approached from a systems perspective. A major systems improvement which is planned to advance many of the Transformation Panel's recommendations and the larger transformation of the OPWDD system is the introduction of an enhanced system of care coordination for people with developmental disabilities, which is referenced in the section on implementation regarding care management and assessment; further information on the care coordination initiative can be found at the OPWDD website

## Implementation Progress

The following section highlights progress made from January 2017 through the end of March 2017 in implementing the recommendations of the Transformation Panel identified in the Panel's February 2015 report, *Raising Expectations, Changing Lives*.

This report reflects deliverables achieved from January 2017 through the end of March 2017. Deliverables were due for selected, but not all, recommendations during this timeframe. This report includes tasks and products scheduled and completed in the specified time period.

### Residential Support

- **Multi Year Housing Strategy** OPWDD has developed a multi-year housing strategy, which is supported in the FY 2018 State budget. The strategy was developed based on data gathered through the Residential Request list outreach and a review of those now working with OPWDD's Front Door to obtain a residential opportunity. The multi-year housing strategy will rely on both existing capacity and new development of residential supports. Of the 6,800 people estimated to seek residential supports over the next three years,<sup>1</sup> 5,050 are expected to access certified residential opportunities while 1,750 individuals are expected to access non-certified residential opportunities. Certified

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<sup>1</sup> The estimated number of people seeking OPWDD residential supports was determined through an analysis of data including survey results from the Residential Request List outreach.

residences are more typically staffed 24-hours a day (“supervised residences”), although may be staffed fewer hours per day (“supportive residences”), while non-certified opportunities are typically rental subsidies to pay for apartments. The strategy leverages existing capacity in OPWDD residential services while also allowing for new development. OPWDD provider projects will also be eligible to receive funding under the \$20 billion affordable and supportive housing set-aside, which will help address this need.

The multi-year housing strategy focuses on individuals living at home with aging caregivers; living with caregivers who have disclosed they are having challenges supporting their loved on; or those with an ISPM score of higher than one (an ISPM score of one is the lowest level of acuity measured under the ISPM methodology). Each individual served through the multi-year housing strategy will be offered person-centered residential support opportunities in the community, identified on an individual basis and with consideration of the person’s needs and goals. OPWDD will be releasing Requests for Services beginning this fall to develop the new capacity needed.

- **Allocation of \$10 Million Toward Residential Supports.** OPWDD supported a process whereby stakeholders assisted in developing five plans (one per region) to allocate \$10 million from the FY 2017 budget toward residential supports for individuals living at home. Plans for the five regions—New York City, Long Island, and three Upstate regions—were established in concert with stakeholders via regional stakeholder advisory groups which met to discuss priorities. Agencies were invited to submit proposals to meet local needs for residential supports in response to the stakeholder groups’ findings. Over thirty agencies received awards through this process. Each region’s plan was different, but one common strategy was the establishment of “transitional apartments”<sup>2</sup> to help people determine if they are ready for more independent living. Non-certified and certified opportunities are also being developed. A survey is being conducted to evaluate the allocation process.
- **Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Website.** All of us want to make a difference in the world by sharing our own distinct gifts and giving back in a way that is personally meaningful. The people with developmental disabilities that OPWDD supports are doing just that every single day in communities all across the state, and a new section of OPWDD’s website honors their abilities, interests, hopes and dreams. The website includes a feature highlighting people supported by OPWDD services who are not only pursuing their own unique passions, but are making a difference in our lives and in our communities in the process.

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<sup>2</sup> A transitional apartment is a setting designed to serve individuals who wish to live more independently, but are not yet able to do so, and are in need of assistance in learning the necessary skills that will enable them to reside safely in their own residence. The transitional setting will provide support and guidance to individuals, for a time-limited (typically 6 months – 1 year) period while they develop needed skills.

## Employment & Life in the Community

- **EmployAbility Toolkit.** The EmployAbility toolkit highlights the abilities people with developmental disabilities bring to the workforce and is geared toward employers in the community. The Employability toolkit was distributed statewide by Governor Cuomo's Employment First Commission to partners including Our Ability/The NYS Business Leadership Network, developmental disability provider associations, and State agencies including the Departments of Labor and Education. The toolkit will be further utilized by Chambers of Commerce and the NYS Business Council, as well as agencies providing supported employment services for people with developmental disabilities for use in discussions with employers.

## Supporting Family

- **Enhancing respite services.** Under a proposal submitted to CMS with a pending effective date of July 1, 2017, respite services will be delivered with new categorizations including an "intensive" respite service category. For individuals with significant behavioral or medical challenges, the "intensive" level of respite may be authorized to provide greater reimbursement for people with higher needs in any respite setting) used by the individual. New regulations will clarify the definitions as well as the service limits for each.

## Supporting Staff

- **Addressing recruitment and retention issues facing non-profit service providers.** The FY 2018 Budget invests the equivalent of nearly \$30 million to fund the costs of OPWDD's network of non-profits to comply with the second increase to the State's minimum wage. In addition, the Budget commits resources to support the equivalent of a 6.5% increase to salaries in the non-profit sector of staff in support and direct care positions. An initial increase of 3.25% will be paid on January 1, 2018 for staff in support and direct care positions. Another increase of 3.25% will be paid on April 1, 2018, which will also include funding to support the equivalent of an across-the-board salary increase to clinical staff as well. The legislation authorizing these consecutive increases – above and beyond minimum wage – gives non-profit providers flexibility to address agency-specific recruitment and retention challenges – they can elect to increase all wages or target wage increases to specific positions, based on their operational needs. All totaled, this initiative invests over \$190 million (\$101 million State Share) on an annual basis.
- **Supporting Staff Workgroup.** An OPWDD workgroup is developing recommendations to support staff working in the OPWDD system. The workgroup has representatives from provider agencies and provider associations and has identified strategic goals, such as

conducting an overall review of compensation in the system and increasing focus on recruitment, retention and promotion of the field of developmental disabilities as an employer. Current efforts of the group are to obtain and analyze a variety of survey and employment data. To this end, the State is participating in the 2017 National Core Indicators (NCI) Staff Stability Survey. The NCI survey collects information on Direct Support Professional (DSP) wages, turnover rates, benefits and retention/recruitment strategies among New York provider agencies. Participation will help OPWDD compare the State DSP workforce against national averages and benchmarks. In addition, workgroup efforts have focused on identifying grants and funding sources to assist agencies, and compiling best practices to share with the field.

- **DSP Credentialing.** A workgroup exploring alternatives to funding the DSP credential has put forward a proposal to enhance the credentials of supervisors aimed at improving retention, data collection and assessment of existing, small-scale credential projects developed by providers. The proposed pilot would be completed in 2017 and inform future planning for a credential. Funding included in the FY 2017-18 budget for direct support salary increases may be used to incentivize further DSP credentialing.
- **Enhanced Front Door Staff Training.** Improvements over time have greatly enhanced the Front Door process for individuals and families seeking services through OPWDD. The process is administered through OPWDD's regional offices, and Front Door staff will receive additional training to help refine their skills in working with individuals and families who have a broad array of needs. The training will focus on person-centered planning as well as customer service. Development of the training is underway.

### **Care Management and Assessment**

- **Moving Forward with Care Coordination.** OPWDD is moving forward with plans to establish regional Care Coordination Organizations (CCOs) controlled and operated by entities with experience in coordinating and providing services to individuals with IDD. The CCOs will provide enhanced care coordination services across the medical, OPWDD and behavioral health systems, and are a transitional step toward managed care, allowing a fuller integration of services for the person in a single "Life Plan". The Joint Advisory Council and other OPWDD stakeholders have provided input into this development process, which is ongoing.