



FULL COUNCIL MEETING

DRAFT MINUTES

Friday, January 19, 2024

10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

3839 North Third Street, Suite 306

Phoenix, Arizona 85012

Meeting held via teleconference

The full Council meeting of the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) was convened virtually Friday, January 19, 2024, notice having been duly given. Present and absent were the following members of the ADDPC:

Council Members Present

Melissa Van Hook, Chair

J.J. Rico, Vice Chair

Monica Cooper

Meghan Cox

Kin Chung-Counts

Bianca Demara

Vanessa Felix

Ben Kauffman

Kathy Levandowsky

Kristen Mackey

Janna Murrell

Gabriela Orozco

Kelly Roberts

Vijette Saari

Mary Slaughter

Sophie Stern

Mateo Tree Top

Council Members Absent

Erik Jensen

Kristina Lopez

Council Staff

Jon Meyers, Executive Director

Marcella Crane, Contracts Manager

Michael Leyva, Contracts/Grants Coordinator

Jason Snead, Research & Communications Specialist

Lani St. Cyr, Fiscal Manager

Members of the Public/Guests

Jessie Barbosa, ADHS

Ashley Alcaraz, ADDPC Intern

Evelyn Casuga, ASU Center for the Future of Arizona

Kim Dorshaw, Disability Rights Arizona (formally AZ Center for Disability Law)

Ian Dowdy, ASU Center for the Future of Arizona

Jacy Farkas, UA/Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities

Diedra (De) Freedman, District West DDD Independent Oversight Committee

Marilyn Gonzales, DES-Division of Developmental Disabilities

Gail Lanham, Disability Rights Arizona (formally AZ Center for Disability Law)

CJ Loiselle, AHCCCS

Kelli O'Toole, The Opportunity Tree

Lori Sandaine, The Opportunity Tree/AZ APSE
John Shepard, UMASS Boston-Institute for Community Inclusion
Jean Winsor, PhD, UMASS Boston-Institute for Community Inclusion
Susan Voirol, Diverse Ability Incorporated

A. Call to Order/Welcome and Introductions

Chairperson Melissa Van Hook welcomed everyone to the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC or Council). The meeting was called to order at 10:02 AM. Introduction of Council members and roll call completed.

B. Minutes from November 17, 2023, Meeting

Chairperson Melissa Van Hook reviewed the November 17, 2023, minutes and asked the Council members if there were any comments or corrections to be made. As no changes were offered, a motion was called to approve the November 17, 2023, minutes. Vijette Saari made the motion, seconded by Monica Cooper. The motion carried.

C. Fiscal / Contract Update

Lani St. Cyr reviewed the ADDPC Financial Update and supporting documents. The fiscal updates are as follows:

The Council has fully spent the FFY 2021 award amount of \$1,535,342. ACL granted a one-year no cost extension for FFY 2021 funds. The final report is due at the end of January 2024.

The Council has received the full allotment for FFY 2022 in the amount of \$1,500,930. This is level funding to FFY 2021 excluding the Puerto Rico reallocation. ACL has granted a no cost extension for FFY 2022 extending the project period through September 30, 2024. The Council has fully obligated these funds and will need to complete the work by September 30, 2024. There is approximately \$58,451 remaining to be liquidated.

The Council received a third allotment of FFY 2023 funding in the amount of \$398. This brings the current FY 2023 total amount to \$1,501,328. There is approximately \$16,639 remaining to obligate. The obligation and period of performance requirements are through September 30, 2024. The final report is due September 30, 2025.

The Council has received a second allotment for FY 2024 in the amount of \$315,010, bringing the current award amount to \$511,294. The obligation and project periods are through September 30, 2025. The final report is due September 30, 2026.

Next, an update was given on the additional awards the Council has received.

The Council received \$84,288 for COVID-19 Vaccine specific projects. ACL granted a one-year no cost extension for these funds. The funds needed to be obligated, and work completed by September 30, 2023. The final report is due by the end of January 2024. The Council has spent \$83,993 and will be reverting \$295.

The Council received an additional award in the amount of \$95,319 to Expand the Public Health Workforce within the Disability Network. These funds are being tracked and reported on separately. The obligation and project period are through September 30, 2024. The contract for this project has been awarded and the funds encumbered. The Council received the first invoice in the amount of \$52,316, which leaves a balance of \$43,003 remaining to be spent.

The Council Funded Projects sheet was also reviewed. This sheet shows all projects currently funded by the Council. Not much has changed on this sheet since the last Council meeting. Staff are following up with any outstanding invoices.

The Budget Recommendation document was then reviewed. This sheet reflects the projects outlined in the FFY 2024 Workplan as well as the funding that has already been approved in the prior years. FFY 2024 funds will be used primarily for projects to be decided on in the FFY 2025 workplan. Currently, there is an anticipated surplus of \$232,328 for FY 2024 funds. However, there are several new RFGA projects that have not been budgeted for yet and this leaves some flexibility if the Council does not receive the level funding we have been anticipating. When the Work Plan Review Committee next meets we plan to have further discussions on finalizing what will be budgeted with these funds.

Kathy Levandowsky asked if the ADDPC staff has a plan if Congress passes legislation that reduces the 2024 federal award by 9-10%. Lani said there is no plan, because no official word has come from ACL.

J.J. Rico stated that he has heard Congress will pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the federal government operational through March 8, 2024, and with a CR, level funding is expected. Lani stated she appreciated the feedback and that is what ACL will inform the Councils of too.

Jon stated the CR will keep the government from a shutdown through March 8, 2024, and is expected to be signed by President Biden.

D. Executive Director Report:

Jon Meyers reported on the following agenda items:

- Covid-19 Vaccine Access special funding: The first award of the Covid monies was spent on two projects. The final report was submitted to ACL in December 2023.
- Covid-19 Public Health Workforce Development special funding:
As previously stated, the second pot of Covid-related monies is to support the Covid-19 Public Health Workforce Development funds of approximately \$95,000 that addressed the role of public health professionals in serving the aging population with I/DD. Public health professionals from the Regional Center for Border Health/Western Arizona Health Education Center, located in Yuma, led the project and the Sonoran Center acted as the fiscal agent for the contract. The contract was in place for six months; it ended on December 31, 2023. RCBH is currently in the process of finalizing a report with recommendations. When the report is received, staff and the System Access and Navigation Committee will review it and develop policy recommendations for the Council to consider.
- Communications Director search status:
Jon stated that he and several Council members interviewed qualified candidates for the Communications director position and is pleased to announce that Sarah Ruf was offered the position. Sarah previously worked for the ADDPC, and she is familiar with the work of the ADDPC and is looking forward to coming back. Sarah starts on February 5 and Jon thanked Jason Snead for all of his work to assist in this area, such as our website, newsletter and annual report.

- Council vacancies/appointments/re-appointments:
Jon stated that he continues to be in communication with Governor Hobbs's administration and the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions to ensure several vacancies are filled. The Council has several vacancies in mandated positions. They are aware of the Council's vacancies, but the delay is largely due to the number of appointments the Governor must make to fill all the open slots on boards and commissions.

Mandatory memberships that are currently vacant include representatives from the Older Americans Act – which is the position filled by DES Div. of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), Arizona Department of Education (ADE), Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS), University of Arizona Sonoran UCEDD, and a replacement for Mary Slaughter, which is a family member of someone who was institutionalized. Jon was able to clarify the meaning of that vacancy with the Council's technical assistance staff and it can be filled by a representative of someone who has lived in a group home. Jon will continue to update the Council as appointments are made.

- FFY 2023 Program Performance Report (PPR):
Jon stated that the FFY 2023 PPR was submitted on December 27, 2023. The report summarizes each project under the Council's five goals areas and describes our DD Network collaborations. Jon thanked the staff for their assistance. We expect to hear feedback from ACL by mid-Spring 2024.
- 2024 Disability Policy Seminar, April 8-10, Washington D.C.:
The annual Disability Policy Seminar has multiple workshops focused on key disability policy issues, and the final day is set aside for meetings with Arizona's Congressional representatives and/or their staff. It's a very informative conference and previous Council members that attended appreciated participating. ADDPC has funding for up to two Council members who wish to attend. Priority will be given to Council members who have not attended in the past. Council members should inform Jon by February 1 if they wish to attend.

E. Committee & Work Group Reports:

1. Grants:
Monica Cooper asked that staff present to the Council any committee updates. Marcy stated the Grants Committee has not met since September and will be meeting in Spring 2024, once funding has been identified for several projects in the FFY 24 annual work plan. Also, Marcy is finalizing the Conference /Training Sponsorship competitive RFGA to release.
2. System Access & Navigation:
Janna Murrell provided an update. She stated the committee last met on December 12, 2023. During that meeting, Amber Owens, an ADDPC intern, described the changes made to the web-based resource guide for families living in or relocating to AZ so that they know how to find the right resources and agencies they need to contact depending on the age of their child/family member with I/DD. The web-based resource list is based on the age range of the person with I/DD. The next phase that Amber is working on is to gather and organize resources for the aging/elder populations with I/DD. Janna then restated that the committee would review the Covid-19 Public Health Workforce report that is expected to Jon at the end of January 2024. Lastly, Janna stated the Council submitted to ACL an application for ADDPC to join a nationwide community of practice focusing on the intersection of disability and aging networks for individuals with I/DD. Multiple agencies and partners support the application.
3. Meaningful Careers:

Melissa Van Hook provided the update on behalf of the committee. The Meaningful Careers Committee met on December 12, 2023, and discussed the Center for the Future of Arizona and Institute for Community Inclusion final reports, which were to be presented in detail later during this meeting. The Committee made a recommendation to share the final reports with agency leaders from Department of Education, Division of Developmental Disabilities, and Vocational Rehabilitation, and to have the agency leaders appoint representatives to sit on a work group to help develop a plan to implement recommendations that were identified in the two reports.

Meaningful Careers will gear up to present a new webinar series building on last year's successful partnership with the DD Network, AZ APSE chapter, and Vocational Rehabilitation. It is still in the works but the tentative title for the new series is Creating an Independent Life. Please stay tuned for more information.

4. Behavioral Health & I/DD:

Jason Snead provided the update. The Behavioral Health and I/DD Committee core group on crisis response provided input on the statewide survey that was designed by Noble Predictive Insights (NPI). The survey is meant to gather data regarding individuals with disabilities, caregivers and family members experiences around Arizona crisis and behavioral health systems. To date, 160 responses have been submitted. The survey is open until January 31, 2024. Please contact Jason or Jon Meyers if anyone has questions.

5. Work Plan:

Kathy Levandowsky stated the Committee met on November 3, 2023, to discuss the performance measures that all Councils are required to use to collect output and outcome data for reporting in PPR. The next meeting is scheduled for February 16, 2024.

F. Community Partner Presentation:

Group Home Monitoring Pilot Program. The Council invited J.J. Rico, Kim Dorshaw, and Gail Lanham with Disability Rights Arizona (formally AZ Center for Disability Law) to speak about the Group Home Monitoring Pilot Program being conducted by DRAZ as a result of legislation signed by Gov. Ducey in 2022. Gail started the presentation clarifying that the program is known as the Compliance, Oversight, Monitoring and Investigations Team, or COMIT. Disability Rights Arizona has the responsibility for monitoring of individual group homes and investigations. Part of this responsibility is to have a team of four for individual monitoring and a team of four for investigations.

Disability Rights Arizona is the state's Protection and Advocacy system. Then-Gov. Ducey created a task force in 2019 charged with finding ways to improve services and protection for some of Arizona's most vulnerable residents. The focus is on individuals with developmental disabilities who reside in group homes who have complex needs, including a behavioral health diagnosis.

The legislation requires the state's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) to contract with the Protection and Advocacy organization in the state of Arizona to undertake this program. DRAZ receives a roster with a third of the group's homes to monitor each year. In 2023, the list was received in May, so the team had less than a year to complete all the work. As of this date DRAZ is waiting on the 2024 roster.

Ashley Alcaraz asked if children with developmental disabilities are in group homes. Kim Dorshaw clarified that the youngest they have seen is three or four, but most individuals with I/DD being monitored for this program are adults.

DRAZ hired monitors and investigators and provided training in 2023. The hired investigators attended visits with the monitoring team to learn from them and to assist them. A total of 122 monitoring visits were done from May through December 2023.

The determination of who to visit is based on which incidents are new, and which ones would have more of systems change impact, and if the team is seeing common trends that need to be addressed.

JJ Rico added clarification to the investigation aspect, explaining why it DRAZ's investigations are secondary. He stated DRAZ does not have access to the state's investigation files due to a state statute that precludes anyone except the state to have that access. As a result, if someone a quality-of-care complaint is filed, once it gets into investigation stage it belongs to the state and that is something DRAZ only learned in 2023. J.J. stated that he would like to improve or change this process in the next two years so that DRAZ can really evaluate its investigations and compare them to what the state has done. But at this point, as Gail described, it's more of a secondary investigation. Determining priority of which incidents to investigate is based on which will assist in improving the system and those that contain the most alarming allegations, those that are high risk for harm.

In 2024, while awaiting the roster to know who to monitor, DRAZ is finalizing the investigation report for 2023 and updating its monitoring tool to ensure it captures more data, including individual behavioral plans and group home certification for staff training. DRAZ hopes to improve its ability to receive information from the group home prior to a visit and better evaluate individual files that are not complete or do not have all the required documentation, such as a person-centered plan for the individual with DD.

J.J. Rico added that both Gail and Kim meet with the state once a month to provide updates on the monitoring and investigations and to provide them with recommendations. Under the legislation, there is no enforcement arm for DRAZ to ensure recommendations are implemented. However, J.J. has followed up with DDD leaders and asked them what they've done with the recommendations and in a recent presentation to the sponsors of the legislation which led to the program, he asked that DRAZ be provided reports on what DDD and legislators are doing with the recommendations. He emphasized to state leaders that it's great to make recommendations in a report, but if the state doesn't do anything with them or nothing's improved then it's just a report. He pointed out that as a community member, as a Council, it's always good to follow up and make sure the state is reporting back on what it is doing with the recommendations and the findings because it is left to the state to improve those things that are identified as needing to be improved.

Gail highlighted several priorities for the program in 2024 and noted COMIT is preparing its first annual report. The monitoring team will expand in the year ahead; several follow-up visits will be conducted with selected group homes; the monitoring tool will be piloted and finalized; and a consultant may be contracted to develop the data reporting provided monthly to DDD.

Gail thanked the Council for suggestions on the design and implementation of the new COMIT database. She noted the team is revising its protocols and procedures for investigation as they complete each investigation, giving input on what changes can be made. The team is also considering expert trainers and a nurse consultant to enhance review of data and enhance monitoring skills.

In closing, Gail noted safety, abuse, member rights, and effectiveness of care are top issues, as are medication errors.

Kathy Levandowsky asked if COMIT is seeing more incidents in one area of the state than others, based on what has been done in 2023. Kim said most visits were in Phoenix, but they have also seen group homes in Sierra Vista, Tucson, Flagstaff and they are tracking that information.

Kathy also asked if the age of the DDD member is being tracked in order to identify behavioral plan improvements as they age. Gail said she will look at her tool to see how this information is being captured.

Kin Counts appreciated the presentation and said this was really needed. The group homes need a “wake up call because no one knows what’s going on behind the scenes”, she stated. Kin is concerned with the training of group home staff to ensure they prevent improper things from happening.

J.J. suggested if Council members would like to meet with Gail and Kim, staff will meet with any Council members and receive their feedback to ensure monitoring tools are inclusive and the monitoring and investigation teams are looking at the things that many of the Council members have brought up. Council members can contact J.J. Rico to offer input.

Melissa appreciated that idea and asked for Council members to put their names in the chat box to be contacted. Melissa also wanted to know how many times law enforcement officers are called out to the group homes for a crisis intervention and if there are crisis intervention teams that are requested specifically. She appreciated the presentation and the work they are doing and has asked them to come back to the Council for another presentation.

G. Grantee Presentations:

Communities at the Center - Center for the Future of Arizona (Evelyn Casuga & Ian Dowdy)

Evelyn Casuga is Director of Community and Economic Prosperity for the Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) at Arizona State University and Ian Dowdy is CFA’s Director of Strategic Data Initiatives. Also representing CFA in this project were Christie Tate, Director of Civic Health, and Tara Jackson, President of Arizona Town Hall.

The Council funded a research project with the Center for Future of Arizona to address the issue of low expectations for youth with disabilities in achieving post-secondary and employment outcomes. CFA conducted 8 community convenings around the state to gather a cross section of input on this topic and explore how to increase the expectations that children and youth with disabilities can and should have the supports to graduate from high school as well as have a choice of attending post-secondary school and/or securing meaningful and gainful employment. This process was meant to learn from community members what barriers they face and what can be recommended to help resolve these problems. The final report is forthcoming, and a draft has been reviewed by both Jon Meyers and Michael Leyva.

Evelyn stated the Arizona Town Hall, a partner in this project, has been around for 60 years and many Council members may be familiar with their work or have participated in the past. The Town Hall format allows for participants to be engaging, empowering, educating, and connecting individuals in Arizona and communities in Arizona on topics that matter as well. CFA complements the work of Arizona Town Hall, and CFA appreciates their collaboration on this project.

Ian Dowdy presented on the Arizona Progress Meters, which are trusted data on how Arizona is doing in the areas that matter to many Arizonans, such as education, jobs, natural resources, health and being, and a variety of other topics. There are 85 metrics that can be found at the CFA website (arizonafuture.org). The data shared in this presentation focused on jobs and education for people with disabilities, which will help the Council understand what some of the conditions are

that need additional attention, particularly for individuals with disabilities. Ian discussed the research findings as presented in a PowerPoint presentation. He stated the data discussed with the Council will bring opportunities to continue the conversation with policy makers, leaders and organizations who are interested in this topic.

Data from the Arizona Education Progress Metric show the percentage of Arizonans graduating in four years from high school, and the percentage of Arizonans aged 16 to 24 who are not in school or working. These data, from 2022, demonstrate a large disparity between the four-year graduation rate of Arizona high schoolers overall (77%) and those with disabilities, of whom only 67% are graduating in four years.

Youth data related to higher education and employment opportunities for those with a disability shows an indication of the challenges in providing employment and higher education opportunities for people with disabilities. In this age group, 23% of Arizonans who have a disability are not in school or working. The number has improved somewhat since the high of 31% in 2018. This number may be due to various factors, such as a very tight labor market, or the ability to work remotely which has opened opportunities for a lot of people; however, there is still a disparity in the data and among all Arizonans in this age group, only 12% are not working or in school.

Other data that helps to inform this conversation relates to college enrollment and college completion rates. Data from the Arizona Board of Regents shows the enrollment numbers of high school graduates who enroll the following year in a post-secondary institution, such as a two-year college four-year university, or a technical or trade school. The most recent high school graduating class for which data are available is 2022; 48% of 2022 high school graduates enrolled in some sort of post-secondary institution. Among Arizonans with a disability, however, only 21% enrolled, creating a significant disparity that indicates we are not doing a good enough job of providing opportunities for young people with disabilities wishing to pursue a post-secondary education.

Ian noted that the six-year completion rate is the percentage of the high school graduating class that completes a degree or certificate within six years. Data from the most recent class (2017) shows 30% of high school graduates completed a degree or certificate within six years. However, among students with disabilities, only 8% completed their degree/certificate within six years – a very significant difference. Policymakers should use this data to assist young individuals with disabilities to complete a degree or certificate, which would make a real improvement in their lives.

Evelyn spoke about the groups involved in community convenings and stated she was impressed with their insightfulness and willingness to participate. Further information on who attended and the communities that participated will be in the final report.

Ian wrapped up the presentation with a list of recommendations that he briefly outlined. These will also be shared in the final report: Investing in education and support around early career exploration and transition planning; how to navigate early childhood and family supports and resources to help families better understand their options; better resources in Career and Technical Education and Counseling; additional communication and access to apprenticeships; additional support from school counselors; greater need for data on programs that serve students with disabilities and how effective they are; greater coordination and accountability; better integration of services and knowledge; more effective ways to promote career recruitment and supports in the workplace for people with disabilities. Data shows that there are barriers in the workplace and often employers don't have a good understanding of what are the limitations and opportunities related to youth with disabilities.

Melissa closed out the presentation with her own thoughts, as this project was her original idea

several years ago. She stated, as a parent with two sons who are autistic, parents are constantly told the negative and that their child with a disability/IDD will not be able to achieve much in life, so they need to limit their expectations. Families set the expectation low once a child is diagnosed with a disability/IDD and many parents feel frustrated and do not know where to go for resources and support. This project is meant to change the conversation around the positive expectations that every family should have for their child with a disability/IDD and for those agencies that provide services and supports to begin to collaborate. Melissa thanks Gabriela Orozco for her assistance on this project. Many Council members stated in the chat box they liked the presentation. The staff will release the final report once it is received.

Analysis of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Transition-age Youth with I/DD - University of Massachusetts Boston-Institute for Community Inclusion (Jean Winsor, PhD)

Jean Winsor began her presentation by thanking her colleagues in this research, project manager Oliver Lyons, Allison Cohen Hall, and John Shepard. The presentation set out to answer four primary questions: Why was the report written? How was the study conducted? What is Arizona doing? And what areas can be improved?

Jean stated the report was written for a wide variety of reasons, with three being most important. American Community Survey data show that individuals with disabilities in Arizona and across the country are less likely to work and more likely to be poor than people without disabilities. For individuals who have cognitive disabilities, those individuals with I/DD, those statistics are even worse. In addition, when youth with I/DD receive high quality employment services during the transition period they're more likely to work as adults. If the goal is to support people with I/DD to have good economic self-sufficiency, the transition period is a key part of helping them to achieve that goal and community partners need to know how to make that part better. This is why this research is focused on Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Jean complimented director Kristen Mackey of Arizona's Vocational Rehabilitation agency for being a Council member and for being an integral part of supporting this research, providing Jean and her team access to different stakeholders across Arizona who had very diverse opinions and experiences.

Federal legislation exists to ensure that individuals with I/DD are empowered to participate as equal members of society and can earn an income through meaningful work. It includes programs and policies that support more people to work in the community, even if they are intended to be cross disability. Jean clarified what is meant by transition. Transition is really the time in a person's life when they move from school to home life to a more independent adult life. This includes planning for and pursuing secondary education and employment. It's a process that all adults have gone through; however, for youth with disabilities and I/DD, this is a period of time that often has a label attached to it or a set of time parameters. Jean emphasized this really gives us an opportunity to home in on what should be happening for youth beginning at the age of 14 and up to age 26 because true evaluation of outcomes of the transition experience include analysis of what has happened in the four years post-high school, which for many students with I/DD may extend to age 26.

The methodology included a review and analysis of Arizona's VR program services and supports for transition age youth with I/DD. ICI used a mixed methods approach, which means Jean and her team reviewed secondary data analysis from national data sets, enabling her team to compare Arizona to national statistics, as well as specific states that have some similar characteristics; her team also conducted a policy and practice document review and collected data from stakeholders and other partners that included interviews and focus groups. It also included opportunities to go out and see some of the transition programs that are operating in Arizona.

Also highlighted in the report is a literature review of the national data because this issue is being studied across the country and is not unique to Arizona. The literature review demonstrated that the barriers to employment, or a key impact for individuals with I/DD, is a lack of collaboration between key players at state agencies such as the Department of Education, state Vocational Rehabilitation, and state Developmental Disabilities agencies.

The bad news, according to Jean, is that research shows all these types of factors are prevalent in Arizona, but the good news is that there are many documented solutions to addressing these barriers. She stressed to the Council members that they should not come away with a sense of dread but really a sense of excitement and hope for what can be accomplished next and the tools and the resources that already exist. The challenge is how to scale those up so that they impact more individuals with I/DD in a positive way.

The report noted the three state agencies responsible for transition services and interagency collaboration in Arizona: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services (ESS), as well as local school districts that are also a key partner in implementation. At the state level, the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) is the umbrella agency for VR and DDD and this can have an impact on VR's ability to make certain types of changes that need further executive approval. VR does not operate with autonomy and therefore does not have final authority to make changes.

Another point clarified in the report is how the transition period can occur over more than 10 years in an individual's life and there must be benchmarks or timeframes regarding what activities should be occurring within those periods. The report breaks down the 10-year transition period into three shorter periods. The first period is awareness building for employment and community living. The second period of the transition process for individuals with I/DD is about goal formation/formal career planning - job development and planning for post-secondary education. And the third period involves the school exit, followed by employment or post-secondary education.

Jean discussed what is working and not working within each of those transition periods. She emphasized the importance of having stability within key staff positions in a state agency and pointed out that Kristen Mackey and her senior executive staff demonstrate that stability. Also, VR's pre-employment transition services include high quality practices. The services offered in Arizona were analyzed and compared with other national studies. Another effective element is that youth with I/DD are encouraged to participate in employment transition services, as is the fact that youth with I/DD can access services multiple times beginning at the age of 14 and through the age of 22 or school exit. However, the barrier Jean and her team heard about during the research is that many schools encourage students to exit at the age of 18 once they've completed all their required credit hours, regardless of whether or not they have developed the skills necessary for post-school success. This means for youth with I/DD that leave, they may miss out on up to four additional years of services and support benefits that can make a difference in their success transitioning from school to work or school to post-secondary education.

When a youth is in a funded VR program and local school districts administer transition to work (TSW) programs, those employment transitions services are automatic. Jean and her team came across some school districts that have their own local TSW programs that do not use VR funds, but if youth with I/DD are in TSW and it is funded through VR and the school district, the youth with I/DD is automatically connected to those employment transition services without need for additional application.

The research demonstrates that connecting youth to pre-employment transition services at 16 years of age or earlier is a barrier that can be improved upon. Jean and her team found examples of youth that were not connected until 18 years of age or their senior year in high school. For youth with I/DD, an extended length of time to participate in transition services can bring multiple opportunities to engage in and learn the same information on a deeper level on and with some repetition that can make a difference. The team also found some inconsistencies and challenges related to how pre-employment transition services are requested. And the limited number of providers in the state proved to be a universal concern throughout the research.

Another barrier to address is the intended outcomes of pre-employment transition services that are delivered by the providers. Without an objective measure of that, the research team could not evaluate the impact of one provider's type of employment transition services against another's. When providers were asked how they measured their outcomes, the typical response was if the provider gets more referrals from a school district for their services, then they think that means that they've been successful. Jean emphasized that is not necessarily a connection to an individual receiving pre-employment transition services.

In the next phase of transition - career exploration, goal formation, formal career planning, job development, and secondary education planning - Arizona VR is doing a great job with contracted TSW programs. Another new piece in the TSW programs, one that wasn't required but for which providers could use project funds, was paying youth for their work while they were enrolled in TSW and earning minimum wage or higher. As an example, Jean and her research team spoke to a program that had opted to do this and stated it made a significant difference for the youth in the ownership of not only their TSW experience, but also in the ways in which they were thinking and envisioning their lives and having their own money to manage. It was incredibly meaningful for youth to be able to set up their own bank account that was separate from their parents.

Providing youth an opportunity to control their own money is a best practice approach. They are more likely to be self-determined and they are more likely to have a sense of what's next and set the next goal for themselves beyond their current job. The other highlight mentioned by Jean is the TSW curriculum itself. Arizona has a strong curriculum, and it represents a wide range of evidence-based and best practices that encompass transition person-centered planning, career exploration, and job development. Jean stated this really represents what the gold standard should be and what should be expected not just in Arizona, but across the country, in terms of transition services for youth with I/DD. The curriculum shows there is flexibility within the TSW model to meet the individual's needs and harness the community's resources to the maximum extent possible.

Areas that can be improved, as identified by this research, are:

- Awareness of TSW program locations and determining the outcomes to measure. Currently, there is no available listing of where TSW programs are located, or what the outcomes are for each program. Part of the concern is there are 236 public school districts alone, not counting charter schools and special education organizations, in Arizona and only 24 of those have TSW programs. A strategic plan should be developed to determine how this can be scaled up across the state.
- Earlier connection to VR Employment Services, like those offered earlier with TSW, rather than beginning services at age 18 or prior to leaving school. Research shows the later start does not allow enough time to ensure that youth with I/DD have a seamless last day of school/first day of adulthood transition. Best practice shows better outcomes for youth with I/DD that begin transition services early, preferably at age 14.
- Countering a lack of knowledge about supported employment, especially emphasizing a broad cross-cultural understanding that supported employment has no prerequisites, no

cutoff for who's eligible for services, and no one is too disabled or has too high support needs for supported employment. Those services and supports can be provided over the long term, throughout the time they are employed, as long as the individual needs them. What bore out in the research is in Arizona, there is just not a consistent culture of knowledge of this across the state.

Regarding school exit to employment and/or post-secondary education, Arizona VR has a senior level staff member, whose primary responsibility is to support state and local level collaboration between VR and DDD. It is not common in many states to have a person supporting individuals across the lifespan to adulthood. Having a point person to talk about how the transition period needs to look like and the movement from VR to adult long-term services and supports is an important piece and a strength that Arizona has. Also, VR and DDD established quarterly meetings to focus on those barriers to employment for people who are dual clients. Finally, State education policy and practice guidelines require a post-school goal for youth with disabilities to be in place before graduation. VR staff work with state and local transition staff to help each other understand how those goals could be better and what high-quality services and supports consist of.

Efforts that can be improved within the school exit area include:

- Interagency transition planning. Many people interviewed for the study expressed confusion and lack of clarity regarding what should happen during transition, especially for individuals who have greater support needs and are likely going to become adult DDD clients. There is An Arizona Community of Practice on Transition interagency training guide, but the state should consider an addendum covering individuals who have more significant needs transitioning to adult services and those individuals with dual I/DD and behavioral support needs.
- Interagency activities to develop and implement individual integrated employment goals. Particular focus should be at the individual level. This is an interagency activity yet many study participants reported a severe lack of collaborative, individualized planning during the final year of public education.
- Youth and Family knowledge about active engagement with multiple agencies. This lack of understanding hinders their ability to be involved in advocating for themselves throughout the process.

Several overarching issues require further attention, but Jean emphasized one in particular: Limited awareness about the purpose of VR's engagement in transition. One study respondent called VR the best kept secret in Arizona. That statement was consistent with the lack of common understanding of what the transition from school to work should look like for any person or group; there was no consensus among those participating in the study. The team encountered many different beliefs, many of which were myths or outdated information.

The report contains a total of more than 40 recommendations; Appendix E provides an implementation guide for the next 18 months for collaborative actions that can be taken between the Department of Education and the Division of Developmental Disabilities, but there are also actions and activities that Arizona Employment First can help to move forward.

Jean addressed how the Council can support the findings and continue engaging with Arizona Employment First. Jean strongly recommends to the ADDPC that in her experience, state DD Councils that work to promote and educate policymakers and other stakeholders about each incremental improvement in employment services and outcomes will help to keep those types of coalitions together over the long term. State agencies often are pulled in many different directions and DD Councils can provide a strong backbone to be able to help folks work collaboratively and

to keep an eye on the prize, which is better employment outcomes and higher quality employment services and outcomes for transition age youth with I/DD.

Transition services are not just one agency's responsibility, but require interagency effort. The Council may consider funding additional research projects to look at the role of ADE/ESS and DDD in the transition from school to work similar to this VR report. The DD Network also should consider how to educate partners on why Arizona should lower the transition age to 14. Arizona state law states transition planning for youth with I/DD starts in the schools at the age of 16, even though youth with I/DD can engage in VR services for pre-employment transition services at 14 years of age.

Mary Slaughter asked if during their research, researchers explored the topic of where youth with I/DD will live if they are earning an income. Did Jean and her team interview CILs? Jean stated that was not the intent of the research. But educators were aware of this topic and felt many parents were not ready to have the conversation about how to let go, let their child with I/DD begin to learn independent living skills, and begin pre-employment transition services. Jean also stated that she is aware that Arizona has done a lot of work around alternatives to guardianship and to educate families on other options, such as Supported Decision-Making.

Melissa thanked Jean for her presentation and stated the report will be posted for the Council to review and begin to think about how the recommendations can be implemented. She stated that the Council has a role to play in this area and a lot of work still needs to be done. Melissa also thanked Kristen Mackey and her team at VR for participating in this research.

H. Announcements:

J.J. Rico stated that the Arizona Center for Disability Law is now formally known as Disability Rights Arizona.

Jon stated he forgot to thank the Council members who took time to be a part of the interview committee for the Communications Director: Melissa Van Hook, Meaghan Cox, and Kathy Levandowsky.

Jon also stated that First Place AZ is holding a listening session at the ADDPC office on January 24, from 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM, for autistic individuals and families to review a newly-developed personal relationships and sex education curriculum. Contact Jon for more information.

Kristen Mackey and Janna Murrell asked Jon to share any information on this event. Jon will send a flyer to the Council members.

I. Call to the Public:

None

J. Adjourn:

Chairperson Melissa Van Hook adjourned the meeting at 12:27 PM.