

Community First Choice (CFC) Committee

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Meeting Summary

Present: Cathy Ludlum, Heather Ferguson-Hull, MaryAnn Langton, Melissa Morton, Sheldon Toubman, Michael Slitt, Tom Fiorentino, Christine Weston, Randell Wilson, Cynthia Carter, Adrianne Ramirez, Mary Caruso, Brenda Stenglein

1. The meeting was called to order by Tom, Chair at 11:00am.
2. Tom had a question on the July minutes, under the Introduction of Randall Wilson, bullet #4. He asked what that meant.
 - Christine responded that if any committee member wanted to raise something about the program, RJ would be the point of contact for escalation.
 - Tom requested to amend the minutes to say escalation/contact.

Melissa asked for a change under the PCA agreement wage changes. These will need to be clarified so the minutes will be delayed until next meeting.

3. DSS Updates

Update on FI Transaction - Christine

- The agenda was drafted before GTI sent out a letter to PCAs regarding non-payments. There are contractual discussions going on between DSS, legal and GTI over these actions so Christine is unable to present a full report out of what happened.
 - There is a significant submission of grievances because of this letter.
 - 1199 was notified of this.
 - The Dept. is trying to rectify all payments that were not made over last weekend.
 - There is no expectation that this weekend is going to have any sort of disruption like this.
- DSS is still working though issues with our ability to get proper PAs in the system for claims to be adjudicated correctly and for care plans to be memorialized correctly.
- DSS is still dealing with issues of the bad data transfer from the last FI.
- DSS also holds harmless the PCA and its members while it figures out problems with the program.
- A blast from a new text messaging system will be sent to people with Medicaid eligibility issues, asking them to get their renewals in.
- There have been provider credentialing complexities with GTI.
 - Still defining what it means to be a waiver provider.
 - Providers are concerned about the accountability that GTI is asking of them that allied never did.

- DSS has a lot of ideas on how to improve processes and supports to the PCAs and employers through the portal that GTI has but is waiting to get the program information and data solid.

Comments

- Sheldon thought it was outrageous for GTI to send out letters saying payment was going to be terminated and then they said it was DSS making them make these payments and they won't be reimbursed. They also said they had to put out \$4M and was owed this from DSS. Then they said it was all taken care of. Sheldon wants to know if it has really been resolved.
- Sheldon also noted that they had no clue about due process. You can't terminate services without 10 days advance written notice explaining why and have hearing rights. GTI claimed they don't have to comply because the claims were not authorized by Medicaid. He is concerned about their lawlessness here.
 - DSS was appalled by GTI's actions, they contacted GTI to retract statement and they did not. Christine has confidence that this will not happen again.
- Tom shared that GTI seems to make the wait to bring on new employees extended unnecessarily. The background check and application happen sequentially rather than at the same time.
- Tom also mentioned the calls to GTI seem to be an hour wait.
 - Christine said that reports on wait times have not been provided.
 - She also is requesting data on when a person asks to be called back how long it takes for that call back.
 - GTI has fully staffed the Waterbury Office and are training at the Southington office so they should have many team members answering calls.
- MaryAnn shared that people with disabilities are really frustrated and she is glad that DSS is taking an active role.

PCA Agency Based Timeline - Christine

- There is a significant system change that must be done to EVV and the Medicaid claiming system for DSS to implement agency based PCAs.
- This will take a few months coupled with the mass adjustment of every waiver which needs to be amended to remove agency based PCAs which will have to go through the Committee of Cognizance Appropriations.
- This must go to CMS which could also be a couple of months.
- DSS is looking at mid-2025 for agency based PCAs in the Community First Choice program.
- The system changes were not authorized or started when this came into legislation.

Clarification on 24-hour plans of care

- Sheldon mentioned that he was hearing from clients that DSS or the access agencies were saying that people can't get more than 23 or 23.5 hours per day of services. After researching this, he said there is no question that 24-hour services are covered where medically necessary under CFC. They must be under federal law. He wants to know what this is all about.
 - Christine replied that the guidance that she received, like the CHN authorizations for people with complex care, does not go up to 24 hours. They stop at 23 or 23.5. In 2014, CFC was modelled by that authorization. If the care plan calls for it and it's medically necessary, DSS can review it.

- Sheldon also shared that the access agencies are sharing all kinds of things that are not true. For example, a mom was told that DSS would never approve 24-hour care, without establishing medical need.
 - Christine replied that CFC needs some stability and guidance. She is putting an emphasis on quality. She said there needs to be consistent policy and procedures which she is working on.

4. Other Business

- Mary Caruso shared that she has had some horrible experiences with the program where she felt could have been avoided with communication and respect. She has been working on ways that consumers, employers and representatives know their rights. She has a document that Christine and RJ can weigh in on.
 - Tom asked Mary to share this with the group for comments. He would like it placed somewhere where people can see it and use it.
- Sheldon said that he has spoken to several people who have had their hours reduced by DSS recently.
- People have described hearings that were held by telephone with a slew of DSS people, including a lawyer for DSS. The person could not tell what was going on or who was saying what. (notes are generalized to remove member specific information)
 - DSS legal team responded.
 - Mary Caruso countered the response from DSS legal
 - Sheldon shared that some members are unable to get to a hearing office and are not told that they can have an in-home hearing.
 - DSS practice is to offer in-home hearings and that is handled during scheduling with the hearing officer

5. The meeting was called to adjourn by Tom, Chair at 11.55pm.

Next meeting: **VIRTUAL November 13th, 2024, at 11:00am.**