

INARF Member Forum Round Table Discussions Summary

On February 25, 2022 INARF held a Member Forum, focused on making FSSA policy makers available to INARF members for round table discussions. Attendees from the state included incoming FSSA Chief-of-Staff Kim Opsahl and incoming DDRS Director Kelly Mitchell along with BRS Directors and Deputies. Below is a summary of the key points made in the round table discussions to the INARF membership.

Group One: Group One included incoming FSSA Chief-of-Staff Kim Opsahl and incoming DDRS Director Kelly Mitchell; below are the key points from the discussions with INARF members.

- **Home-and Community-Based Services Spend Plan, Phase II:** The discussion focused on how to best spend the dollars associated with the HCBS Enhanced FMAP. FSSA released its Phase II plan on February 24, and Kim and Kelly discussed their priorities, including the Stabilization Grants, planned programs focused on 14(c), and innovation grants.
- **Innovation Grants:** This program will be granted-funded opportunities for innovative approaches to community support, with a focus on employment. Kim and Kelly indicated they are seeking proposals that are “things agencies always wanted to do, but never had the resources.” They indicated the grant application will allow for flexibility, but will also include a framework so respondents will have guardrails to guide application development.
- **14(c) Pilots and Grant Opportunities:** FSSA will provide pre-and-post Transition Grant Opportunities to support voluntary conversion, innovative pre-vocational supports and improved competitive employment outcomes. Kim and Kelly reported that these grant opportunities, along with a learning collaborative opportunity, will include access to consultants to assist agency boards in planning for the future of 14(c) programs. As with the innovation grants, FSSA will seek respondents who are considering creative approaches to ensure that individuals who may transition away from a 14(c) environment, will have the opportunity for community employment.

Group Two: Group Two included incoming First Steps Director Christina Commons, and Assistant First Steps Director Jessica Tomasino; below are the key points from the discussions with INARF members.

- **EI Hub Implementation:** The latest phase of implementation for the EI Hub launched in December with the Case Management functions. SPOE Staff are being trained on the Case Management system. Provider and Agency service logging, which launched last March, is up and running, allowing providers and agencies to get paid faster with 85% of the service logs being entered within one day of service.
- **ARP and Guided Routine Based Intervention:** First Steps is utilizing American Rescue Plan (ARP) dollars to invest in a service delivery model of coaching called Guided Routine Based

Intervention (GRBI). Partnering with Indiana University and Florida State University, the program trains personnel on how to coach parents to assist with their child's therapies. The first cohort started in January 2022. The goal for the program is to have 400 providers trained as coaches in the first three years.

- **Provider and Agency Shortages:** First Steps is continuing to struggle to recruit and retain therapy providers, as well as agencies to provide First Steps services. They are working with colleges and universities around the State, talking with their program students to encourage them to consider First Steps after graduation. If agencies are interested in becoming First Steps providers, they can contact [Christina Commons](#) to learn more.

Group Three: Group Three included the Director of BQIS, Jessica Harlan-York, and Quality Assurance Manager, Kim Cauley; below are the key points from the discussion with INARF Members.

- **Quality On-Site Provider Review (QOPR)** - This process includes an on-site review and evaluation of the quality of services being delivered to individuals receiving waivers. Jessica and Kim reported that following a 1-year pilot, led by Liberty, the COPR process has begun and to date approximately 65 visits have occurred encompassing primarily residential programs with some day programs.
 - The primary purpose is to ensure individuals with disabilities are living their best lives.
 - The Review is meant to be a collaborative experience resulting in indicators of met/not-met (vs. pass or fail).
 - Positive findings include the use of LifeCourse Framework tools in trainings and philosophies; respect exhibited between staff and individuals supported; a willingness to change when recommendations are offered; and an overall good experience.
 - Opportunities for enhancement include clarification in the role of the guardian; understanding access to money for the individual supported – where/what is available and how to use; further understanding of the HCBS Rule; and the breakdown of the “blame game” within the team.
 - Efforts to improve the opportunities listed above include the following trainings in development:
 - Best Practices of Behavioral Supports Services / with IN-ABC
 - Guardianship – Dos and Don't's / with Melissa Keys
 - Avoiding Over-Supporting Through Natural Supports

Group Four: Group Four included Director of BDDS, Cathy Robinson, Holly Wimsatt and John VanWicklin; below are the key points from the discussion with INARF Members.

- **IT System Consolidation Project:** The FSSA team explained how the outdated Insight system and various other legacy computer systems are a burden on providers and staff. The new system will be easily accessed, web based, and much more user friendly for all who use it.
- **Case Management Transition:** The transition has gone very well and according to plan. One take away that has been noticed already is a more uniform method of providing case management. Expectations of the newly awarded CMCOs have aligned processes so that discrepancies

between providers are not as pervasive. Only 150 people were manually assigned by FSSA, and they are tracking and surveying recipients to make sure that satisfaction levels are high.

- **Day Service Closures and Reopening:** BDDS is tracking closures as they come in. These are self-reported, so regional data would not be very accurate. Some providers are also not alerting the State to re-openings. BDDS is contacting closed providers to inquire about when they may re-open, and what can be done to help support them so that they can return to providing services. Employment issues seem to be the driving factor for most closures.

Group Five: Group Five included BRS Director Theresa Koleszar and BRS Director of Operations Jeff Russell; below are the key points from the discussions with INARF members.

- **VR Funding Request Change:** FSSA's request to increase both VR base rates and milestone payments has been approved by the State Budget Agency. BRS' goal is for the formal announcement to go out by mid-March with an early April implementation date. Authorizations extending to April and May will be reissued to reflect the rate and milestone change. Thirteen (13) additional VR staff were also included in the funding request to increase BRS capacity which could expedite its movement out of order of selection.
- **Phase II of Funding Request:** BRS recently released an RFP which included an evaluation of rate incentive approaches to determine how VR agencies across the nation incentivize different employment outcomes. The RFP will hopefully be awarded soon and the one-year contract begins in July 2022. Once the evaluation is complete, VR intends to implement changes based on that evaluation.
- **Order of Selection:**
 - There is currently 2,726 individuals on the waitlist.
 - About 550 people per year were added to the waitlist in the last four (4) years.
 - Only about 10% of eligible individuals are currently going on the waitlist.
 - VR is releasing 382 off the waitlist the week of 2/28/2022 and plans to have at least three (3) waitlist releases each year.
 - VR staff retention has improved considerably in the past few years. Turnover was 56% a few years ago and it is currently less than 10%.
 - VR will be collaborating with WorkOne centers to help support people deferred through VR who need low level support for job searches.