

Notes from DDA Listening Session #2: Hagerstown, Maryland

October 23, 2014

Self-advocate Session

This session was one of a series in each of the four regions of the State. There were separate listening sessions for self-advocates, families and providers in each region. Across all of the meetings, a number of themes emerged. These included the following:

- *A desire for more frequent and understandable communication with DDA (both in writing and in person)*
- *A need for improved Resource Coordination (emphasizing the skills and activities that are important to the individuals and families served)*
- *A concern that the system lacks trust at all levels, and a strong desire to build partnerships (between the state and self-advocates, families, advocates and providers)*
- *A need for improved consistency and staff capacity at DDA*

The feedback at each of these sessions was thoughtful and impassioned, shining a light on the need to work together to improve the system for individuals and families.

In each session, the facilitators asked the following questions:

What things are going well?

What are challenges/barriers and/or things you would like to change?

If changes are made to the system, what are things that should be kept?

The notes below reflect the feedback from the session participants. In some sessions, the comments mainly reflect areas where improvements are needed.

Areas for Improvement:		
	Supported employment 4 hour requirement hard to work with when it comes to medical appointments. If you do not get full four hours in – you have to go home.	
	Transportation – sometimes late, sometimes early.	
	Lack of options for individuals that sign or have complex needs.	
	Respite homes – getting clogged because there are no other options.	
	We need good providers that specialize in supporting people with challenging needs as providers are discharging them and they have nowhere to go.	
	Respite – again cannot find providers who can relieve families. Only option residential.	
	Little is known about how many days a year is required to	

Areas for Improvement:		
	keep a service.	
	People want to be able to volunteer during the day.	
	Want choice in staff.	
	Constant staff turnover – there is no explanation, they are just gone.	
	If agencies could pay more, maybe staff would stay longer, but burnout and no pay forces them to go.	
	There are limits to what people can get paid to provide in new directions.	
	Ratios do not always meet a person's needs.	
	There is a need for more help with communication and adaptive equipment for people who cannot speak. This is a focus in school, but not in the adult world.	
	System spins its wheels and there is nowhere to go for people with high behavioral needs.	
	Cannot get information about new directions.	
	Find volunteering is easier than actually someone helping to get them a job.	
	Got no support with self-direction, got budget and it was a handoff – had to stop the process.	

Notes:

General discussion and/or information not included in specific comments: