HOUSING AND HEALTH SERVICES COORDINATION COUNCIL
POLICY & BARRIERS COMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL

Meeting Minutes
April 30, 2010 2:00pm

Call to Order, Roll Call
Council Coordinator Ashley Schweickart called meeting to order at 2:03pm and asked each person present to introduce himself/herself.

Committee Members Present:
Jonas Schwartz
Jean Langendorf
Paige McGilloway
Marc Gold
Jim Hanophy
Felix Briones

Committee Members Absent:
Paula Margeson
Michael Goodwin

TDHCA Staff Present:
Ashley Schweickart
Marshall Mitchell

Approval of Meeting Minutes
Council Coordinator asked for any changes regarding the April 15th meeting minutes. There being none, a motion was made and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Discussion of Biennial Plan Recommendations
Council Coordinator Ashley Schweickart discussed current staff work, including the creation of drafts of the Preamble and Chapter 3 of the Biennial Plan. Drafts were currently under review by Chair Jonas Schwartz and would then be sent to the entire Committee.

The Committee then began their discussion regarding Chapter 5 of the Biennial Plan – "Identifying Barriers." The three subheadings under discussion included: Regulatory Limitations, Administrative Limitations, and Funding Limitations.

Regulatory Limitations
- Committee discussed the financial and functional eligibility restrictions for qualifying for Medicaid's long term services and supports. Also discussed how persons with mental illness or substance abuse disorders cannot access Medicaid services.
- Also discussed how becoming employed many times pushes persons with disabilities out of eligibility for services due to strict financial requirements. Many times these individuals will make enough to not qualify for Medicaid supports but won't make enough to be able to afford those supports in the private marketplace.

- Committee then discussed how different federal eligibility requirements make it difficult for local organizations to understand and reconcile them. For example, the US Dept. of Health and Human Services uses the poverty level to determine eligibility and need, while the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development uses area median income.
- Committee also discussed how housing funding from the federal government is fragmented, with no one statewide entity controlling all funding. Due to this, state service agencies find it difficult to coordinate and collaborate on programs.
- Committee discussed barriers to persons with a criminal background receiving housing, due to HUD regulations which prohibit it.
- Committee then discussed that in order to qualify for Medicaid, an individual must have little income and less than $10,000 in resources, which then makes them unable to qualify for many housing programs, which serve those at 60% or 80% AMI. By spending down one's savings, individuals are limited from applying for homeownership. Also, with Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), a bank will match what a client puts into savings, but they don't count benefits.

Administrative Limitations
- Committee discussed the time limitations of support services funding, where there is a gap between short-term and long-term services, especially with less general revenue currently allocated for services than there used to be.
- Committee discussed the barrier of coordination between agencies as to the administration of their programs, specifically regarding the disconnect in when housing funding is released and when services funding is released. Additionally, Committee discussed how every agency requires that they be the "payer of last resort," which makes it very difficult to blend several state funding sources.
- Committee also discussed the issue of no commonality between state agency application processes. No standardization of forms.

Funding Limitations
- Committee next discussed how the percentage of funding offered to cover administrative costs for housing programs doesn't cover the cost to the provider to run the program. This makes them unpopular. This is a HUD regulation for the HOME program. Additionally, the state government does not supplement administrative funding.
- Committee also discussed how this economy makes it harder for housing providers to find matching funds for programs that require a local match (ie - Section 811). Also the cutbacks to many federal housing programs (ie – Section 811, Section 8) has left little production of affordable properties and voucher waiting lists that are either closed or years and years long.
- Committee also discussed the TBRA program's limited time frame for assistance (2 years) as a barrier and the need for some type of renewal or extension option.
- Committee then discussed how community based programming funding is optional under the state's Medicaid plan, while funding for institutions is entitled. Additionally, with limited flexibility in Medicaid funding and limited general revenue for services, there are no options for filling in the gaps and meeting unmet need.

Miscellaneous Limitations
- Pushback from private developers, who don't want to get themselves involved in service-enriched housing if it has extra regulations and just because it is a change, and developers don't like change.

- Lack of availability of transportation near affordable housing is a barrier; developers want to build where land is cheap (exurban and rural areas) but clashes with the ability for persons with disabilities to occupy units if they don't have transportation options.
- Barrier for consumers and local provider in knowing what service-enriched housing means; misconceptions arise and we have to ensure that the public can catch onto this concept.

Discussion of Staff Research Assignments

Staff will research the eligibility and financial requirements of all relevant programs of all state agencies represented on the Council and figure out if the criteria are compatible or competing and the impact of those circumstances. Staff will try to do a side-by-side comparison.

Jean Langendorf stated she would send staff information on HUD guidance regarding accepting those with criminal history. She also will send information on homeownership for persons with disabilities.

Jonas Schwartz stated he would talk with the HHSC eligibility staff to see if they have information about what overlaps exist amongst the various agencies under the HHSC umbrella.

Finally, staff will write-up a draft of Chapter 5 of the plan for further review.

Discussion of Next Steps for Committee

Committee's next conference call is on Thursday, May 13th at 10:30am. It was decided that the topic for discussion will be reviewing staff work on draft chapters.

Adjourned

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:25pm.