

2. Legislative Activity:

- Today, Commissioner White is in House Human Services to discuss Vermont's Developmental Disabilities Services system (joined by members of our Developmental Disabilities Services Division team).
- DAIL completed budget testimony at House Human Services, House Appropriations and Senate Appropriations. Testimony went well with interest in areas of direct care workforce, DAIL workforce and Medicaid rates.
- Pam Cota, Licensing Chief within our Division of Licensing and Protection, testified in [House Human Services on Tuesday](#) about visitation in long term care facilities which was also well received.
- Angela Smith-Dieng, DAIL Adult Services Division Director, testified in Senate Health and Welfare today about [S.206](#), an act related to planning for the care and treatment of people with cognitive impairments. Testimony was focused on Section 1 and 2 regarding the requirements for the Governor's Commission on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders (ADRD).
- Angela Smith-Dieng testified at Senate Health & Welfare [S.285](#) - An act relating to expanding the Blueprint for Health and access to home- and community-based services, specifically as it pertains to an expansion of moderate needs group services.
- Nat Piper, Business, Legislative & Community Relations Manager within our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, testified about in the House Commerce and Economic Development committee about the [barriers for older Vermonters entering the workforce](#) (Wednesday) and that went well.
- Commissioner White testified alongside Tax Department Commissioner Bolio, at House Ways and Means to testify to the importance of the governor's for a \$30,000 increase to the Social Security tax exemption which would impact over 25,000 Vermonters, improving financial security and quality of life in retirement.
- DAIL staff met with the Older Vermonters Caucus 2/9, including four representatives and many advocates and members of the public. It began with Commissioner Bolio of the Tax Department sharing information about the Governor's proposal for a \$30,000 increase to the Social Security tax exemption which would impact over 25,000 Vermonters, improving financial security and quality of life in retirement. The caucus then heard from Charlie Gurney, DAIL/VDH Aging and Substance Use Specialist, along with staff from the Vermont Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery, about substance use treatment and recovery for older adults.

3. The Vermont Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD) announced the employer award recipients for the "Spirit of the ADA" Awards. The Awards are given to employers who reflect the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act in their employment practices. Successfully meeting the following criteria qualifies employers for eligibility to be nominated: 1) Recruitment outreach and equal accessibility in the application, interviewing, and hiring procedures for people with disabilities. 2) Use of on-the-job accommodations, modifications, progressive employment methods, and/or creative

solutions for successful training and employment of people with disabilities. 3) Accessible physical structures, buildings, workstations and equipment, and services. 4) Support for the employment of a person(s) with a disability as an overall employment strategy.

The following employers were recognized for hiring and retaining employees with disabilities:

[Homegrown Scales](#) (Barre), Morgan Weiss
[Town of Waterbury](#) – Parks & Recreation, Nick Nadeau
[Vermont Fiber Mill](#) (Brandon), Deb & Ed Bratton
[Price Chopper](#)-(Morrisville), Ashley Young-Sheldon
[Elmore State Park](#) (Lake Elmore), Marc Edwards
[City of Newport](#), Laura Dolgin
[Main Street Graphics](#) (St. Albans), Douglas Corey
[Ace Hardware](#) – (St Albans), Kasey Fortin
[Hannaford](#) – (St Albans), Jennifer Benoit
[Sodexo @ NVU](#) (Johnson) Douglas “Kip” Mayo
[Springfield Medical Center](#), Lori Twombly
[Allis State Park](#) (Randolph), Leslie Porter
[Killington Resort](#) (Killington), Judy Greiger
[Andy’s Dandys](#) (Richmond), Andrew & Lucie Whiteford and Lesha Rascoe

4. COVID – FEMA was extended to April 1, 2022. This funding source affects some of the State projects supporting COVID response including the TLC Staffing Pool contract. That means we must work on alternative ways to support the extraordinary costs of staffing beyond April.
5. Good news: on January 19, Seven Days wrote an [article](#) about the lack of funding to help Vermonters who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind (D/HH/DB) pay for American Sign Language interpreters to attend non-medical recovery programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA). The article described personal stories and pointed out that insurance does not cover the interpreter costs for non-medical programs. Very limited funding is available through the Yolanda Henry Community Funds, which only covers interpreter services twice per year. This lack of funding is a barrier for many D/HH/DB Vermonters who choose to participate in AA/NA as a critical part of their recovery.

In response to the article, the Evsliin Family Foundation (EFF), based in Stowe, reached out Laura Siegel, the DAIL Director of Deaf, Hard of hearing, DeafBlind Services, with an offer to help. EFF plans to donate \$10,000 to Vancro/VTAD to provide ASL interpreters services for AA/NA meetings.

Conflict Free Case Management:

Dylan Frazer, Deputy Director of Medicaid Policy

Dylan Frazer presented the Conflict Free Case Management PowerPoint to the advisory board. To view the presentation in its entirety, please go to:

https://dail.vermont.gov/sites/dail/files/documents/HCBS_COI_Prep_TA_Contractor.pdf

In October 2021, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) determined that Vermont's HCBS, or HCBS-like, programs do not comply with conflict-of-interest requirements.

- Vermont must ensure direct service provision is independent from:
 - evaluations of eligibility,
 - needs assessments, and
 - person-centered plan development.
- Vermont's five HCBS programs are:
 - Choices for Care Program.
 - Brain Injury Program.
 - Developmental Disabilities Services Program.
 - Community Rehabilitation and Treatment Program.
 - Intensive Home- and Community- Based Services Program.

The project is moving into step three of the plan for Vermont to become compliant with the CMS conflict of interest requirements. Step three consists of preparing for a Technical Assistance (TA) contractor by developing and issuing a request for proposals for the TA contractor to facilitate the conflict-of-interest plan scope of work.

The stakeholder engagement process is robust, comprehensive, and inclusive. Stakeholder engagement will be ongoing through planning development, and implementation.

- **Stakeholder engagement campaign: Begins January 1, 2023**
- **Formal public comment:** Stakeholders will have the opportunity to provide formal public comment before any significant changes are made to eligibility processes or reimbursement for services.
- **Public comments can be made here:** AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov – please put “Conflict of Interest” or “HCBS COI” in the email subject line.

Program Director Updates:

Laura Siegel, Director of D/HH/DB Services

Laura Siegel reported to the advisory board the activities she has been working on in her role as the Director of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind services. These activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Created a State Employee Accessibility Training that is available on the state's training system to all Agency of Human Service's employees.
- The Vermont Department of Health healthcare group met on February 7th. The goal was to strategize how to have CEUs available to medical providers for training on best practices with D/HOH/DB patients.
- The healthcare group met on February 7th. Our goal was to strategize how to set things up such as whether we can have CEUs in place to recruit medical providers to attend and learn how to ensure best practices with D/HOH/DB patients. We are trying to explore the best approach with outreach to educate clinicians.

- In collaboration with the Department of Human Services, provided a COVID vaccination clinic for D/HH/DB communities on January 22 at the Double Tree Hotel in Burlington.
- Vermont Language Access Task Force has been created to establish better standards for both spoken and sign language interpreters. Recently, the Language Access Bill (S.147) was re-introduced for this legislative session. The purpose of the bill is to ensure that local and state agencies become more proactive with creating content in multiple languages such as Dari, Arabic, Spanish, and hopefully ASL.
- Hearing Aid Coverage – Under Act 74, Vermont Department of Financial Regulation is investigating what the cost to the state would be to require commercial insurance to cover hearing aids.

To view the DAIL Services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind web page visit:
<https://dail.vermont.gov/services/programs/deaf-hard-hearing-deafblind>.

**D/HH/DB Advisory Council Annual Legislative Report:
 Spenser Weppler, Chair, and Will Pendlebury, Vice Chair**

Spenser Weppler gave an overview of the advisory’s role in informing the Governor’s office and the Legislature in what services are needed for the D/HH/DB communities. The following is an excerpt from the DAIL D/HH/DB council page:

As outlined in Bill S-66 and Act 107 of 2016, the Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind (D/HH/DB) Advisory Council was established in the spring of 2016 and is required to submit an annual report to the Legislature and Governor’s Office with updates and any recommendations. The Council is made up of members that bring a unique blend of experience and knowledge from the professional, community and family perspective. The Council is guided by its mission statement as follows:

The mission of The Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Advisory Council is to improve the lives of all Vermonters who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or DeafBlind by recommending policy that promotes diversity, equality, awareness and access.

The role of the Council is to continue to make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor’s office in order to shape quality improvement initiatives and policy implementation for those individuals who are D/HH/DB and are in need of services and resources in Vermont for which there is a current lack of.

Spenser also shared the annual report that the advisory council is required to present to the Legislature. To read the report in it’s entirety, you can find it on the DAIL website:
<https://dail.vermont.gov/resources/boards/deaf-hard-hearing-deafblind-council>.

**DAIL BAA and SFY23 Budget Walk-Through:
 Monica White, DAIL Commissioner and Bill Kelly, DAIL Finance Director**

In January, Commissioner White, Deputy Commissioner Tierney-Ward and Financial Director, Bill Kelly met with House and Senate Appropriations to testify on any SFY22 Budget Adjustments to the DAIL budget.

Also in January, Monica White, Bill Kelly, and Megan Tierney-Ward presented the DAIL budget in testimony to the House Appropriations, Senate Appropriations, and the House of Human Services. Monica White and Bill Kelly reviewed the summary line by line with explanations for the amounts, answering any questions that the advisory board had.

To review all the budget testimony that was presented to the legislature please visit the DAIL website: <https://dail.vermont.gov/resources/legislative/legislative-testimony>.

Advisory Board challenges, opportunities, and updates:

DAIL Advisory Board members

Ruby Baker – COVE created a new position and has hired an Elder Victim Advocate who will handle a caseload of approximately 15-20 elders.

Jane Catton- The Burlington Aging Council serves several surrounding communities and was created by the Mayor of Burlington. The council makes recommendations to the city that align with the Older Vermonter’s Caucus mission.

For people who are interested in attending the Older Vermonter’s Caucus, please contact Ruby at COVE.

Move to adjourn: Ruby Baker

Seconded: Jane Catton

Meeting was adjourned – 12:17