



Charlottesville Region Autism Action Group

Notes from the June 23, 2021 CRAAG Meeting

Many thanks to the 22 family members, 10 professionals, and one young adult with ASD who attended the morning Zoom meeting. The following organizations were represented: The Arc of the Piedmont, CA Human Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services, Faison Center, and Region Ten CSB.

Reports from the Work Groups as of June 23rd

24/7 Supports

Greg Hagen (parent) and Matt Osborne (professional – Faison Center in Richmond) lead this group. At the initial meeting on June 2nd, 14 to 16 participants were in attendance.

- The group discussed these issues:
 - Caregiver concerns
 - An overview of waiver services, BI, FIS and CL
 - Challenging issues
 - Issues to address
- Two additional ad hoc groups were identified: 1) to generate ideas related to UVA's proposed donation of land to support the local affordable housing initiative, and 2) to develop cost models.
- Since the meeting, one person identified a spreadsheet to run models and another identified a non-Facebook communication tool that all the Work Groups could use.
- At the July meeting, Matt Osborne will give an overview of how to use in-home supports with FIS and CL waivers.

Maximizing Independence

MaryAnna Dunn (parent) and Amy Berry (professional – Region Ten CSB) lead this group. At the initial meeting held on June 9th, the group looked at housing solutions for adults with ASD who need intermittent supports rather than 24/7 supports.

- The group identified four main goals:

- Encouraging social groups.
- Developing a similar program to Our Stomping Ground (OSG).
- Exploring alternative programs for those without waivers.
- Matching seasoned CRAAG members with newer members to bring them up to date on CRAAG history and actions so the newcomers are familiar with CRAAG's work before they attend the meetings.

Preparing for Life After High School

Maureen Strazzullo (parent) and Zara Strickler (professional – Region Ten CSB) lead this group. At the initial meeting held on May 27th, the focus was defined as 18 - 22 year age range and their families.

- The group identified three main goals:
 - Creating a [checklist](#) of the most important next steps to guide a young adult through the transition from high school to adulthood.
 - Reaching out to new members from diverse backgrounds and experiences who are raising young adults with developmental disabilities.
 - Collaborating and supporting each other and other families who are working through all the steps that will assure a successful transition of their child into adulthood.

Common Issues to All Work Groups

- High staff turnover/low staff reimbursement rates.
- Families not knowing about waivers; what services are available through the waivers; lack of awareness of waiver application process; and the need to apply early because the lists are long and slow moving.
- Big ideas: 1) Parent-driven initiative similar to Our Stomping Ground in Charlottesville; 2) Engage UVA to discuss innovative autism/DD housing and services solutions consistent the University's commitment to support the development of 1,000 to 1,500 affordable housing units over the next decade on land owned by the University and the University Foundation.

CRAAG's 2021 Housing Options, Supports and Services Survey Report

UVA STAR team is assisting CRAAG on an in-depth analysis of the survey conducted earlier this year. A formal report will be published by September 1st and previewed at the **August 25th CRAAG Meeting**.

Provider Updates

Faison Center and Our Stomping Ground (OSG - formerly City Center NOVA) explained the differences between their organizations.

- **Matt Osborne of Faison Center** explained that the Residence is a modern apartment building with 45-units (1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom). Residents can choose their apartment, their roommate, and their service provider at the Faison Residence. The Faison Center provides Supported Living and Independent Living Support services at the Faison Residence. The program has at least three live-in staff who are available to provide 24/7 support, although a bulk of the services are provided during the day. The supports focus on improving quality of life and helping individuals maximize their potential. The Faison Center has a fleet of vehicles to help individuals access their community, though the goal is to help individuals develop greater independence with accessing their community. Individuals are able to use the Housing Choice Voucher and SRAP at the Faison Residence. The Faison Center is a licensed Medicaid Waiver provider, and most individuals in the program have a DD Waiver.
- A representative from **Our Stomping Ground (OSG)**, a Northern Virginia inclusive housing organization, explained that they work with developers to house adults with DD in apartments with LITCH (Low Income Tax Credit Housing) set-asides. They currently have two such communities, Gilliam Place and Queens Court, in Arlington, and two more in development. Before OSG, when developers had LITCH set-aside apartments, they went unfilled. Individuals in the communities are responsible for their own supports and service providers. OSG: 1) places individuals, and 2) does community programming, creating activities (e.g. community walks, a reading group, a drum circle) which are open to all. Their neighbors support the individuals with disabilities. The program works for those on the DD Wait List, Building Independence waivers, or a roommate with a FIS or CL waiver in a shared model situation. They also could be in an affordable unit (not LITCH set-asides for those with disabilities). OSG has a three year goal of having four communities with set-asides and affordable units and 8 to 9 individuals with disabilities per building.

Marie Fraticelli, Housing Coordinator of Region 1 DBHDS Housing, clarified that at this point, there are no LITCH set-asides in Charlottesville like what OSG in NOVA taps into. The LITCH set-asides in Greene County and Staunton have mostly been unused.

John Santoski, Executive Director of The Arc of the Piedmont, spoke about these topics.

- Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds are available for one-time expenditures to support individuals with disabilities. Money must be spent by 2024-25.
- Out of 436 waiver slots recently assigned, only 57% have accessed services. There was a lack of services during Covid, and many people are on the waiting list without services.
- There is a critical need to increase the reimbursement rate for the supported living service in order for this percentage to go up.
- The Arc of Piedmont has a 45% turnover of staff which is better than the national average of >60%.
- The current statewide pay is \$10.36/hour for personal aides. The ARC's current wage is \$13.00/hour.
- He encouraged disability groups to collaborate and advocate for increasing reimbursement rates. Need to talk to legislators, and collaborate with each other. This topic generated many comments from the group.
- The Vanguard Project in Virginia Beach is under fire for having too many individuals with disabilities living in close proximity. Though this makes sense as staffing is easier, there is heightened scrutiny for the project which may be considered an "institution."

Becky Bowers-Lanier, lobbyist for CA Human Services, discussed the critical need for advocacy around rates and significant provider capacity issues. The discussion included: 1) the suggestion that CRAAG consider holding a local town hall this fall with key legislators serving our area; 2) the merits of virtual vs. in-person interactions with legislators; and 3) the importance of parents and providers coordinating their efforts.

The next general CRAAG meeting is **August 25th from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

August 9, 2021