

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY DECEMBER 12, 2023, 3:00-4:30 PM CENTRAL TIME

Summary of Meeting Themes:

- Mathematica shared that 1,169 people attended HOMEtown Conversation events and presented key areas of participant feedback, including the following:
 - Provider capacity issues: This includes reimbursement rates, training, administrative burden, recruitment and retention strategies, and rural workforce shortages.
 - Challenges with the current assessment process: This includes inaccuracy and bias in the current assessment, frustration with assessment frequency, limitations of the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) tool, and concern with IQ in assessments.
 - Suggested solutions include having a universal assessment that works for all populations and improving trainings on assessments.
 - Challenges with system navigation: This includes frustration with current communications and system navigation, the lack of support from local HHS offices, and difficulty learning about non-waiver services.
 - Suggested solutions include improvements to communications, including when diagnoses are made and during the intake process for waiver services, as well as developing a “one stop shop” for systems navigation.
 - Challenges with case management: This includes high case management turnover, workforce shortages, conflict-free case management, concerns with MCOs implementing new ratios, and frustration with unresolved services issues and limited case manager knowledge of eligibility.
 - Suggested solutions include improving case manager training and ratios.
 - Challenges with the waitlist: This includes dissatisfaction with the length of the waitlist, high-need individuals not getting services soon enough, and lack of eligibility screening before waitlist placement.
 - Suggested solutions include considering need in the waitlist prioritization and having waitlist slots for both high need and low need individuals.
 - Additional concerns include unclear administrative rules, economic difficulties and underemployment for caregivers, lack of collaboration with schools, the need for an approach to support racial equity in access and worries around privatization.
- Committee members had the following feedback to the HOMEtown Conversations update:
 - Members appreciated connecting with HHS leadership at the events and expressed hope that changes will be made as soon as possible.

- Mathematica provided a waiver redesign update, describing how the redesign team used specific feedback collected through HOMEtown Conversations and the steering committee to develop an updated waiver design structure with two age-based waivers for children and adults. The committee discussed the following:
 - What are your reactions to the proposed waiver structure?
 - Members suggested having an option for individuals aged 18-22 to choose whether to stay on the child waiver or move to the adult waiver, because people exit school at different ages, and choosing the waiver that offers the right support during transition from school is important.
 - Members emphasized adequate funding is needed for services to support transitions from the child to adult waiver.
 - Members asked whether older adults on the elderly waiver, which has not had a waitlist, would now have to wait for services. Mathematica explained that this has been a repeated concern, and the waitlist prioritization team will take steps to mitigate this issue.
 - Are there particular issues related to transitioning between waivers that we should consider?
 - Members were curious whether individuals on the child waiver would be guaranteed a spot on the adult waiver. They said it is important to prevent gaps in service during transitions.
- Mathematica outlined transitioning from seven waivers with overlapping eligibility criteria to two waivers with non-overlapping eligibility criteria. Additionally, Mathematica overviewed the proposed waiver services packages for both the child and adult waivers. The committee discussed the following:
 - Members highlighted that many times individuals on the HD waiver cannot get the services they need because of limited HD waiver service offerings.
 - Members said that sometimes needed supports do not fit under the current service definitions and some case managers are not knowledgeable enough to help people navigate the system to meet their needs. Mathematica agreed that creating a person-centered service plan to help individuals live independently and maintain social connections is very important.
- Mathematica overviewed challenges associated with the CCO program, including inflexibility, difficulty in making changes to the CCO budgets, low reimbursement rates making hiring staff challenging, and the administrative burden on individuals and families.
 - Members said that while the CCO program structure is fine, there are operational challenges with implementation, including differences across MCOs.

- Mathematica presented a HOME timeline infographic showing the three primary goals of HOME, corresponding activities, estimated time frames for project work, and accomplished milestones.
- Mathematica closed the meeting by asking members for feedback and reflections on their experiences serving on the steering committee this year. Members provided the following feedback:
 - Members expressed optimism about shifting to needs-based waivers, making improvements to case management, and addressing the workforce shortage. They hope these changes will help many individuals and families to get necessary services.
 - Members felt heard and noted that their provided feedback throughout the year was incorporated into the waiver redesign.
 - Members said that meeting once a month for 90 minutes worked well.