

Community Alliance of Sarasota County

www.sarasotaalliance.net

Developmental Disabilities Work Group

October 14, 2008

Meeting Summary

Members present:

Joann Gepfert	Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Irania Graterol	Goodwill Industries - Manasota
Sarah Hickey	Sarasota County School Board
Morgan Howell	Loveland Center
Andrea King	Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department
Susan Magers	Sarasota County School Board Parent Liaison
Connie Mawby	Community Haven
Mary Smith	Family Network on Disabilities
Ryan Stoyles	Community Haven
Pamela Thompson	Suncoast Center for Independent Living
Benny Weaver	Loveland Center
Laurel White	Vocational Rehabilitation
Kim Williams	The Florida Center for Child and Family Development

Guests:

Anthony Beckford	Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT)
Sarah Blanchard	Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT)
Jean Clearwater	Senior Friendship Centers
Sue Firestone	Senior Friendship Centers
Bill Little	Sarasota County Health and Human Services

Staff:

Kathleen Marie Hall	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Chip Taylor	Sarasota County Health and Human Services

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Susan Magers welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

Operating in the Sunshine

Susan Magers reported that there were several handouts in the members' packets on the current Sunshine Law for review.

Old Business

SCAT discussion

Susan Magers gave an overview on the SCAT Plus policy change that will be effective January 1, 2009. Susan welcomed SCAT representatives Tony Beckford and Sarah

Blanchard to the meeting and noted that there was a handout in the members' packets for review on the expected impact for several agencies once the policy change is implemented in Sarasota County. Tony stated that he had reviewed the handout and asked to comment on several of the points in the handout.

- Trip Charge – SCAT Plus will only charge the agencies for clients who actually ride the bus. If a client is unable to ride, the rider or the agency should always contact SCAT to cancel.
- SCAT's policy states that if an agency does not call to cancel a trip three (3) times, their service will be suspended for 90 days.
- Agency clients can choose to ride with the general populace or through SCAT Plus.
- Advance Scheduling – If a client is scheduled on an on-going basis, the agencies do not need to call every week to reschedule. These clients are automatically placed on their schedule each week as a "continuing client."

Chip Taylor reported that he and Bill Little recently met with Tony, Beverly Kent, and other officials from SCAT to discuss the proposed policy change. Chip stated that the group had a very productive meeting and reached a mutual agreement to request an extension on the policy change from the Board of County Commissioners until October 1, 2009. This delay will provide an opportunity for the agencies to collaborate with SCAT Plus to identify the best solution for the community. Once the solution has been identified and agreed upon by all parties, the work group and SCAT will request approval by the Board of County Commissioners. The County has a responsibility in particular to their disabled citizens and a commitment to the agencies that are serving them. At the same time, the County also needs to provide more generic transportation to citizens who are not in this particular category.

Work group members were appreciative of the October 2009 extension in order to prepare for the policy change. A discussion ensued on the extension along with SCAT applying for grants vs. the agencies, SCAT's budget and mitigating costs, SCAT's higher level of service, Sarasota County's fuel expense vs. Manatee County, identifying existing models vs. creating a model, lobbying in Tallahassee to implement the automobile registration surcharge, buy-in from the community agencies, and utilizing the school bus transportation system. Members felt that the group should include funders in the conversation and be thinking outside the box in creating a unified community strategy for the best model.

Tony mentioned that there are available federal grants that could be secured by the agencies, such as the "New Freedom" Grant. This grant could be utilized to offset the agencies' cost for operational/capital costs and is open to all agencies who apply.

Bill Little pointed out that there is a need to identify a collective community solution and suggested contacting an independent facilitator to attend a future meeting. This would assist in guiding the conversation on the best strategy to create the appropriate model. Susan Magers asked members to volunteer to be a point of contact for this initiative. Connie Mawby and Benny Weaver volunteered to be the point of contact.

Priority Updates (brief reports)

- Diaper Donations – Kim Williams asked to table this report to the next meeting.
- Aftercare – Susan Magers reported that the Aftercare survey questions have been developed and were forwarded to Pauline Tracy to place in a “Zoomerang” survey. The survey will be sent out to Sarasota County School District parents at the end of October. The main objective for this survey is to discover parent perspectives on where aftercare is working well and where it is not.
- Transportation – see notes above under “SCAT Discussion.”
- Respite – Mary Smith reported that there is a need to unite as one voice for respite as budget cuts are on the horizon for 2009. Mary suggested creating an educational awareness program and implementing a survey to collect data on respite.
- Advocacy – Susan Magers asked members to review a Sarasota HeraldTribune article, “Union raises questions of teacher safety” that gave a one-sided and very negative description of persons with developmental disabilities. Susan stated that this article is a good example of why there is a need for advocacy efforts to educate the community. Members felt that this article did not show a fair portrayal and should have had comments from an advocate before going to print. It was suggested that a disability awareness and education piece be implemented in the community. Sarah Hickey commented that October is Disability Awareness Month. Susan asked Sarah to report on school district disability awareness activities on a monthly basis to the work group.

By-laws Committee Report

Ryan Stoyles reported that the Ad Hoc By-Laws Committee meeting has been rescheduled to Wednesday, October 22. The committee will use the Community Alliance bylaws as a starting point to modify according to developmental disabilities. Ryan invited all members to attend the meeting.

New Business

Global Adult Services Challenges

Susan Magers reported that there is a great concern for the 18 to 30 year old age group of developmental disabilities persons. When a student exits the Sarasota County School System, many services are no longer available to them and many students are placed on waiting lists for services. Susan asked members to discuss ways to collectively identify information such as how many developmental disability students are exiting the school system in 2009, how many have exited in the last five years, and who is on waiting lists for services. Along with those numbers there is a need to identify which agencies are serving these persons, what services are needed, and whether the former students are employed or employable. Once the numbers are available, the work group could develop a plan to assist this age group. Sarah Hickey mentioned that reports were given to Pauline Tracy on the past five years for LEA profiles (how many students and what age groups).

Susan asked Kathleen Hall to provide this information at the next meeting. Susan asked members to provide their agency numbers at the next meeting (how many consumers they have over the age of 18, in what age groups, how many are employed, and if they are on waiting lists). Susan asked Kathleen to forward an email to the members to request this information.

Ryan Stoyles announced that Community Haven has received re-funding for the next five years from the Department of Education's *Projects with Industry* Program. This program is specifically for work purposes for persons with developmental disabilities.

Next Meeting

Kathleen Hall reminded the members that the next two meetings will be held on the second Monday of the month instead of the second Tuesday. The next two meeting dates will be Monday, November 10 and Monday, December 8 at 1:30 in Room 226.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Monday, November 10, 1:00 p.m., Sarasota County Health Department, Room 226