



The Individual and Family Support Program

IFSP State Council

January 20, 2023, 10 a.m. -1:30 p.m.

Registration link: <https://dbhds-virginia->

[gov.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlscuGgpzMoH0HBO2OZh8VeGvXtRrUx_M](https://dbhds-virginia-gov.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJlscuGgpzMoH0HBO2OZh8VeGvXtRrUx_M)

Attendees: Heather Hines, Rhonda Gaines, Rachel Vamenta, Heather Norton, Cari Hennessy, Jennifer Rockwell (Northern), Renee Soniat (Central, CFI at VCU), Nickie Brandenburger (CFI at VCU), Sean Campbell (Central), Jen Reese (Northern, CFI at VCU), Joan Brunner (Eastern, CFI at VCU), Donna Robel (Eastern, CFI at VCU), Lisa Richard (Southwest, CFI at VCU), Jesse Monroe (Eastern), Shawn Kirk (Central), Dana Koenig (Western), Rebecca Stickler (Western, CFI at VCU), Tiffany Cobbs (Eastern), Natasha Cooper (The Arc of Virginia), Christi Stafford (Central), Steph Thull (Northern)

I. Introductions and Agenda

- a. Staff introductions and welcome
 - i. In addition to IFSP staff and Heather Norton, Cari Hennessy is a Quality Research Specialist in the Office of Quality Assurance and Healthcare Compliance. Cari is joining this meeting to help ensure that the IFSP State Plan update contains measurable goals and outcome targets.
- b. Introduction from Heather Norton
- c. Icebreaker: If you were a superhero, who would you be, or what would your superpowers be?
- d. IFSP Updates
- e. IFSP State Plan refresh discussion: This will include a short break!
- a. Wrap-up and adjourn

II. IFSP Updates

- a. DOJ Settlement Agreement (SA) update: Heather Norton
 - i. DBHDS entering 22nd Study Review period. Reviewing various services in the agency, including IFSP, quality and risk management, individual service reviews, crisis services, behavioral services, case management, community living options re: nursing access, nursing facilities, and ICF, and mortality review. The judge expects Virginia to exit the SA in Dec. 2023.
 1. Renee: Do we anticipate any impact to the IFSP program?
Heather N.: No. Regardless of whether there is oversight from an independent reviewer, the intention is for the Commonwealth to maintain everything it has done, as well as for continued monitoring. There will be a

public-facing DOJ Library where the agency will share documents proving it has met compliance.

b. IFSP-Funding: Rhonda

- i. For FY23, the budget is \$2.5 million, projecting to award 3,750 recipients (with the potential for more if applicants do not request the maximum award amount). Priority 1 opens on Jan. 23rd with a \$1,000 maximum. IFSP will begin the review process after 30 days. To define most at risk, IFSP is using the Critical Needs Score determined through CSB/SC intake so we can get away from first-come, first-served basis. For Priorities 2 and 3, the application opens on Jan. 25th with a \$500 maximum. IFSP will begin the review process after 30 days using randomized selection. Any remaining funds will go back to Priority 1 pool to address Priority 1 needs.
- ii. Covered services categories include safe living, community integration, and improved health outcomes. Individuals can apply in one or all three categories as long as they do not exceed their maximum award amount. Applicants are encouraged to provide a description of how they plan to use the funds. Non-covered items include clothing that is not related to a disability, food not related to dietary needs, installment payments for automobiles, insurance, and any items not listed in guidelines or not covered by another resource entity.
- iii. Training sessions were held this past week, with 2 trainings for support coordinators and case managers, and 1 training for families. These trainings included a background of IFSP and a demonstration of the Funding application by the DBHDS WaMS administrator.
- iv. The IFSP-Funding page on the My Life, My Community website will contain important resources such as the Program Guidelines, Frequently Asked Questions, User Guide, training video, timeline, Quick Tips document, and announcement archives at <https://tinyurl.com/mlmc-funding>.
- v. In FY22, 4,036 individuals applied for funding and were awarded \$1,000. 4,034 were successful in accessing and utilizing the funds, bringing IFSP to a 99% success rate of card activation.
 1. One thing we learned: Cards returned to the vendor due to incorrect addresses or address changes are not included in unpinned card reports, which required staff outreach and follow-through for these individuals and families.
 2. Rachel: My Life, My Community call center operators helped IFSP in contacting families to activate cards. Additional reminder that the card expiration date is not the same as the fund expiration date, so those funds should be withdrawn as soon as possible. One question IFSP received in a training session was about using the card for services that only accept cash payments; our recommendation is to make a cash withdrawal or an EFT.
- vi. Heather H: Families are used to applying right away, but we encourage everyone to take their time to apply and review our resources on the Funding page.

c. Regional Councils: Rachel

- i. Regional Councils were paused since Fall 2021 due to staff departures and no staff capacity. IFSP is working with CFI to bring them back and do some initial outreach and recruitment. IFSP shared a Council application in the Dec. 2022 IFSP Digest.
- ii. IFSP would like to bring back the Coordinated Council meetings from 2021 as the format seemed to work well, there was better attendance, and there was a lot of

variety among the regions.

1. Council meeting format: Based on the calendar that was created by the previous Community Coordinator for calendar year 2021, the State Council would meet in April, June, and September with an annual kickoff in January and an all-council conference in November. Coordinated Council events happen in March, May, September, and October with the October meeting focused on Council recruitment; planning for those meetings would take place in February, April, and August. Regional Councils would hold one event in July and in December. This calendar can still be useful, and it can be modified. What feedback does the State Council have?
 - Renee: Liked the format, but felt the regional breakouts didn't leave enough time for ample discussion. Would it make sense to have a statewide session, but a local breakout? We could keep the breakout, but not have an additional speaker. Evening meetings could also be challenging for parents.
 - Sean: Agrees with Renee that regional breakouts felt rushed. Coordinating December events was very difficult, so IFSP could consider taking that out.
 - Donna: Liked the statewide meeting with the breakouts but also feels that the breakouts were rushed. Could IFSP hold 2 state meetings and 2 regional meetings instead?
Rachel: Part of the reason IFSP pivoted to this model was due to COVID safety precautions, and low attendance in the past.
 - Donna: Attendance had been low, but it also depends on the topic. Would regional meetings be virtual or in-person?

iii. Feedback on virtual vs. in-person events

1. CFI has shared that families find more flexibility in virtual events, but perhaps there could be more in-person events.
2. Heather H: Feedback is welcome via email. The Council should lead the decision on meeting format. A combination. Feedback from chat:
 - Sean: Loves the virtual option but finds value is face-to-face meetings. Allowing regions to determine the best format may be good.
 - Shawn: Agrees with Sean
 - Jennifer Rockwell: Likes virtual format for more of the state meetings and a mix of both for regional meetings
 - Christi: Favors a virtual option for in-person meetings
 - Dana: Likes the hybrid option for meetings.
3. Rebecca: Would like some flexibility and consideration to move in-person meeting locations around so that they aren't in the same area; Western is a big region. Travel can be difficult, and attendance is low.
4. Renee: Would like to "test the waters" re: different regional locations because there has been low attendance in the past. Lots of planning with low turnout.
5. Rachel: There is some debate about there always being a virtual component for meetings for logistical and health reasons.
 - Nickie: Are there already events happening through other

organizations or groups that are already well-attended? Could we reach out to those groups and co-facilitate meetings with existing audience?

Heather: Our goal is to seed the Councils by the end of February, and we can find out more from there.

- Renee: Suggests making the first meeting virtual to include others. At least one prospective councilmember who can only participate virtually.
- Shawn: What if in-person meetings were hybrid?

iv. Feedback on meeting times: What is everyone's availability?

1. Sean, Steph: Evening meetings preferred.
2. Rebecca: Lunch and evening
3. Jen Reese: Suggested the VDOE Ombudsman as a topic for future coordinated council meeting to explain what they do in terms of helping families.
4. Jesse: A mix would be helpful. Not everyone can make the same meeting times.
5. Lisa: Coordinated Council meeting time felt lengthy at 90 minutes in the evening. Is there any way to shorten that?

Rachel: We can take that into consideration. One way to solve for that is to trim the main speaker's time.

6. Rachel: Suggested December events become optional. Brought up the Southwest cookbook from December 2020 as an example of a regional activity with a final product for the community.
7. Jen Reese: Another deterrent for council members is weekday meetings. We are cutting out many people who have jobs from applying as council members. When IFSP started originally meetings were on weekends.

v. Attendance: How do we enforce attendance? Per the Council charter, anyone who misses 2 meetings without notifying IFSP is considered to have given up their seat.

1. Heather H.: This rule may not need to change, but we do have to think about how we can enforce that.

2. Lisa: Had a councilmember who was an asset in helping with event planning and outreach, but caregiver responsibilities prevented her from attending evening events. What flexibility can be offered for this kind of participation?

Heather H.: As soon as the pattern is noticed, ask how meetings can be rescheduled in a way that works for them. If anyone needs help with problem-solving, address it together.

Renee: Would prefer this kind of flexibility as opposed to members who attend without significant contribution.

d. IFSP General Updates: Heather

- i. Annual mailer went out to everyone on the waiver waitlist with an email address in WaMS, postal mail to everyone without a postal mail address. The mailer included a cover letter and the updated First Steps document – a tool to help anyone navigate the system. There is also a link to our FY22 Satisfaction Survey about the Funding Program and general feedback that is open until the end of January. The mailer also included Funding Program dates, and the link for people on the waitlist to complete the Choice form.

- ii. Staffing: Heather H. and Rhonda have been on the team for the past six months. Although Heather H. was hired as the Community Coordination Supervisor, she has been serving as the interim manager and has had to focus on Funding. Currently, Heather Norton is interviewing for the division director position and the new IFSP Program Manager position.

III. IFSP State Plan Refresh

- a. Heather H.: When IFSP asked for feedback about a previous State Plan revision, we received feedback that the development process felt rushed. Normally this process would take at least a full day. Cari has helped us by reviewing the Plan, DOJ recommendations and is helping us provide measurable outcomes and valid data. We will not end this meeting with those today, but we want to use this time to share what is working, what is not, and hear the Council's ideas.
- b. Prior to this meeting, IFSP asked Councilmembers to review the old State Plan goals and identify what is important to them as we update the Plan. Today, please share those priorities in a poll: Go to <http://www.menti.com> and enter the code **1553 4168**. You can also use the chat or unmute yourself and share. Once this is complete, everyone is encouraged to take a break, stay in the Zoom waiting room, and rejoin the meeting at noon. Rachel will display the priorities in a slide after the break. Responses will be deidentified unless anyone wants to expand on their response.
- c. Please see the attached slides to review the Council's feedback on priorities for the State Plan update.
- d. Goal One (IFSP-Funding): *Ensuring that the Individual and Family Support Program (IFSP) funding serves individuals with Developmental Disabilities and their families by braiding and blending resources to focus on the needs of the whole person with emphasis on prioritizing those with the greatest needs and most at risk of institutionalization*
 - i. What have we been able to accomplish? What's working? = Moving away from first-come, first-served award process; refining the annual Satisfaction Survey so questions capture important data about needs; development of the Funding Portal in WaMS to allow for a more efficient process. Continued partnership with call center operators at SeniorNavigator has helped inform and assure families.
 - ii. What have we not been able to accomplish? What's not working? What do we need to change? = No movement on emergency funding as no criteria exists; improving technology and device access to consider accessibility and language access needs during the application process and our communications in general; improving public trust and communication; share ways to maximize funding and continuous refinement of guidelines and application process; identify critical and unique needs in local communities to build supports outside of IFSP-Funding.
 - iii. Council input: How else can we work toward those goals together?
 1. "Equitable and sustainable funding application process, increase awareness of resources available to families in a single place, continue to promote My Life, My Community"
 2. "Robust set of resources and services to people in rural areas (goals 1 and 2)"
 3. Lisa: Is P1 funding open all year, or is there a specific time to apply for P1? Is leftover money able to be rolled over to P2 and P3?
Heather N.: Based on historical data, all funding will be utilized within the first 30 days. Our regulations state that P1 is supposed to be open until

Funding is exhausted; guidelines could be updated based on the number of applicants IFSP receives for FY23. The 50/50 between P1 v. P2 and P3 was a projection that could be revisited in the future.

4. Jen: Sometimes people on P1 are not necessarily the most in need – they become P1 because they have aged out of school. How can prioritization categories really reflect those most in need?

Heather N.: The CNS score helps address this point though it wouldn't necessarily escalate a score up to the 20s. This can be revisited going forward.

- e. Goal Two (Support model): *Creating a robust and holistic state-level family support program model that furthers the goal of a continued residence of an individual with developmental disabilities in his/her own home or the family home*

- i. What have we been able to accomplish? What's working? = Creating a uniform assessment process to categorize the needs of individuals – VCU has been collecting that data; education at Provider and support coordinator roundtables about all components of IFSP; usage of My Life, My Community
- ii. What have we not been able to accomplish? What's not working? What do we need to change? = IFSP could add questions to the Funding application to learn more about needs; the Satisfaction Survey could be linked to the Funding application; restarting Regional Council efforts; tracking outcome of My Life, My Community site visits
- iii. Council input: How else can we work toward those goals together?

1. "Robust set of resources and services to people in rural areas (goals 1 and 2)"
2. "More coordinated care options and case management opportunities for those on the waitlist"
3. Sean: "Create links between organizations and state agencies: Seems there is a lot of great things done in silos, promote collaboration"
4. "Family supports and outreach: This is best done on a very local level"
5. "Providing easily understandable housing options for people with disabilities that would like to live on their own while they are waiting for a waiver"
6. Jennifer Rockwell: More support for individuals in crisis, such as families caring for individuals with aggression, self-injury, and other severe behaviors." Limited resources for families with and without waivers (Goals 1, 2, 4?). Based on her parenting and professional experiences, she is seeing that resources could also be shared with people in her field or with other professionals in contact with these families.

Heather N.: We consistently hear that people don't know where to find or access information. Where should that information about resources and the system live? The system is complex and sometimes they receive too much information at the same time.

Jennifer Rockwell: Parents are overwhelmed. Developmental pediatricians and other professionals involved with the diagnosis of a disability should have this information.

Christi: "There also isn't a lot of good info out there clarifying the difference between CCC+ waiver and the DD waivers." This could be emphasized more on My Life, My Community and on other resources.

Jesse: Suggested schools as another place to share information about resources.

Heather H.: IFSP will work on a plan to disseminate the First Steps document to schools.

Christi: Suggested outreach the special educators and school system social workers.

Sean: Named resources from The Arc of Virginia, Autism Society – could we reach the Va-LEND program to get more outreach done within the medical system? There have been improvements over the last 15 years, but more work could be done. Noted that “nobody wants to take the lead” from a state agency side; parents tend to talk to other parents, which could also affect the accuracy and consistency of the information families get.

Heather H.: Some of this was discussed at the Virginia Board’s Information Access Summit in November that was attended by different agencies, the DD Council, self-advocates, family members, CILs, and other stakeholders. As materials are developed, how can we get input from self-advocates and family members with lived experience? The Nov. 2022 Digest shared information about the Summit: <https://conta.cc/3iGLVK0>

Sean: How can we foster collaboration between state agencies? Sometimes it feels like agencies compete for funding, volunteers, and other resources.

- f. Goal Three (Communications): *Enhancing the knowledge of families, individuals with DD, and community agencies about the Individual and Family Support Program through effective, coordinated, and comprehensive outreach*
- i. What have we been able to accomplish? What’s working? = Annual notification to everyone on the waitlist (annual mailer); annual update to First Steps document; yearly outreach to developmental pediatricians; Communications plan; promoting My Life, My Community website as a one-stop shop.
 - ii. What have we not been able to accomplish? What’s not working? What do we need to change? = Identifying the best way to evaluate and share the data we get from our surveys and partner reports, especially re: Peer Mentoring because it’s a newer program. Staff constraints have impacted the team’s capacity to be more active on social, update content on My Life, My Community, network, and other communications work.
 - iii. Council input: How else can we work toward those goals together?
 1. “Transparency and the flow of information from DBHDS to state council members and to community members-increase publicity, consistency, and clarity of IFSP functions, services and events to community members”
Rachel: Is this comment on the transparency referring to the process of how we share information, or the information itself? Additionally, a comment at a previous meeting touched on rebuilding public trust: the team also understands that education on the program is needed within the agency.
 2. Jen Reese (chat): “A welcome to the waiver short video for statewide release may be a good thing that can be done and put out there. July 1 - 1100 people will come off the waitlist and get a waiver”
 3. Jennifer Rockwell: Is there a distribution list of stakeholder contacts? Is that part of the Communications Plan? This could be useful for outreach toward clinical psychologists. Reach will vary by need, disability, and geographical area.
Heather H.: How can Regional Councils be part of that information-sharing?

Like Sean said, it will mean more coming from another family member, someone that other parents will relate to. We can start using the tools we have like My Life, My Community and the First Steps guide at all levels to be most effective. How can we involve individuals and families while we get resources developed?

Rachel: IFSP did start a stakeholder committee to help improve the development of public materials and collect input. One priority that was identified was how to develop companion pieces to existing documents for specific target audiences (e.g., self-advocates).

- g. Goal Four (Individual & family input): *Administering a transparent and effective Family and Individual Support Program that seeks to incorporate the input of individuals with disabilities and families to ensure access to supports to all Virginians regardless of their waitlist status.*
 - i. What have we been able to accomplish? What's working? = Prioritizing the membership of self-advocates on the State Council
 - ii. What have we not been able to accomplish? What's not working? What do we need to change? = Continue efforts on bringing back the Regional Councils
 - iii. Council input: How else can we work toward those goals together?
 - 1. Some of this was addressed in Goal Two discussion.
- h. Final comments:
 - i. Sean: As a parent, it is important that the program retains consistent staff. Relationship-building is challenging with turnover.
Heather H.: IFSP is committed to making sure our State Plan is realistic and measurable. The State Plan is a living document, so as the team develops and grows, so will the State Plan; outcome targets need to be achievable.
 - ii. Christi: There is a lot of confusion about the CCC Plus program at all levels and service coordinators don't seem to be clear on what it is and how to share it with families. There can be a lag between the time someone is assigned a waiver slot and when they start receiving services.
Heather H.: The lag can happen due to service provider shortages or other reasons. IFSP could do some education around this area, along with what we're doing to educate support coordinators so they can connect families with other supports (family and peer mentoring, and My Life, My Community).
 - i. Next steps: Heather N. will take the lead on helping structure the plan, and Cari will assist to ensure that targets are measurable and achievable. IFSP hopes to present a revised draft to the State Council next week, and will send an email asking for feedback.

IV. Wrap-up

- a. Reminder: Funding Program launches next week. Again, all Funding resources will be posted to <https://tinyurl.com/mlmc-funding>.
- b. Regional Councils: IFSP's goal is to complete interviews, selection, and appointments at the end of February. The Council is encouraged to contact IFSP staff if they have questions or want to share information with anyone interested in joining.
- c. Any questions or feedback about anything discussed (State Plan, Regional Councils, meeting format, stakeholder outreach) can go to IFSPCommunity@dbhds.virginia.gov.
- d. Next meeting: March 2023.

Share your priorities for the IFSP State Plan refresh!

Make a funding application process that is equitable and sustainable; increase awareness of resources available to families in a single consolidated place; continue to promote mylifemycommunity

- Transparency in the flow of information from DBHDS to state council members and to community members- increase publicity, consistency, and clarity of IFSP functions, services, and events to community members and communit

recruiting and retaining IFSP staff! this helps with the implementation.

Education for those with CCC plus waiver to understand what is available for them with AT and EM and how to access those instead of just depending on IFSP funds to secure something they need.

1. Sharing resources with individuals. In the plan as "Increase awareness of supports." Expand to many professionals and community members. #3?

Focus on creating a robust set of resources and services to people in rural areas. Fits with goal 1 and 2

more coordinated care options and case management opportunities for those on the waitlist

3 making sure that families have a way to get the information needed to help them in their daily lives4 when you let families know let council members know as well1 glad we are using the sytem that we went to allow everyone to receive their service

create links between organizations and state agencies. seems there is a lot of great things done in silos. promote collaboration.

Share your priorities for the IFSP State Plan refresh!

Family supports and outreach-I know this is available, but goes back to #1. However, I feel this is best done on a very local level. Again, not sure #2 and #3?

Providing easily understandable housing options for people with disabilities that would like to live on their own while they are waiting for a waiver. Goal 2

More support for individuals in crisis, such as families caring for individuals with aggression, self-injury, and other severe behaviors. There are very limited resources for these families on the waiver and on the wait list. #1,, #2, and #4?

Goes with Number 1: Ensuring that people with disabilities and their families have access to and know about all of the available services they can get through IFSP Funding.Something that is centered around Goal Number 4 but not sure what to say.

Possibly reaching out to csbs and see what case managers are seeing is the most need from families when they are out in the wait list or providing a survey to them to fill out when they are found eligible. 4

Need to connect with solid resources