

Update on Imagine Different Coalition collaboration with DHS

In October 2016, Coalition representatives met with the DHS Secretary Ted Dallas who directed the various Deputy Secretaries of DHS Offices and/or their designees to develop data reports to track trends in the use of congregate care facilities for children with disabilities, to report quarterly to the Coalition, and to collaborate with us to refine data collection methods and track results. After two of these meetings, the conversation shifted to include discussion of DHS high-level strategies for reducing both the number of children in facilities and the lengths of stay. These meetings will continue to take place every two months.

UNDERSTANDINGS FROM 4/20/17 DHS MEETING

DHS provided a description of the scope of work and additional data.

Updates on Activities by Office

OCYF

- Working with sister agencies to better connect to services
- Working with counties with higher rates of congregated care
- Working to reconcile data across Offices
- Working with OMHSAS AND ODP to monitor lengths of stay and effectiveness of discharge planning for children in RTFs and PRTFs
- Working with OMAP special needs units regarding children with physical health needs
- With OMAP, looking at improvements to medical foster care including revitalizing the model, structure of the program, supports for foster care families, and rates, and reviewing what other states are doing
- Considering 2014 recommendations about medical foster care from the stakeholder workgroup

ODP

- Submitted waiver amendments to CMS to expand age of eligibility to birth and to include autism and children from birth through age 8 who are likely to have a diagnosis of ID or autism by then.
- Hired a Transition Coordinator for Children and Adolescents tasked with identifying and working to overcome barriers preventing children who are living in congregate care from transitioning to family homes
 - Will be doing case-by-by case reviews of children living in facilities assisted by a team with regional and county-based representation
 - Will participate in bimonthly DHS/Coalition meetings
 - Steering members have met with Coordinator and provided Coalition materials, including the three *Imagine Different...Achieve Different* workbooks.

OMHSAS

- Looking at subgroups of children with disabilities within the RTF population
- Looking at the impact of high fidelity wraparound on reducing the number of children in RTFs.

OMAP

- Continuing to review all admissions to pediatric care facilities prior to admission
- Providing clinical perspective on children in medical foster care

Discussion

- While the scope of the working group is focused on children age 0-8, older children are not excluded from efforts to reduce use of congregate care. While the first priority is return home, efforts will also assure alternate families when return home is not possible.
- The Coalition expressed its continuing concern that DHS is not including children without ID or ASD in any waivers, and has not identified a source of funding for the services that these children need that are not covered by MA, including Life-Sharing, respite and home adaptations.
- The Coalition emphasized consideration of the 2014 recommendations of the Medical Foster Care stakeholder group and the need to identify best practices to support children with special health care needs in foster care.
- The Coalition emphasized the uniqueness of the family facilitator role and its potential to effect moves from congregate care and assure consideration of Lifesharing in addition to return home.
- The group identified a shared concern about the active marketing by pediatric care facility providers to hospital systems and discharge planners and the need for better information to families regarding alternatives other than facilities.
- The group identified the need for education to MCOs about Lifesharing alternatives to facilities. However, OMAP indicated that MA cannot pay for Life-Sharing.
- The Coalition identified Lifesharing as a potential interim placement for families of children being discharged from hospitals who are not yet ready for their return home.

Action Items

1. The Coalition will provide technical assistance about the facilitator role to the ODP Transition Coordinator to clarify the unique, essential characteristics of this role, and suggest how it might be implemented in PA.
2. OCYF/OMAP will share work on improvements to Medical Foster Care.
3. OMAP will analyze barriers that result in placing kids in pediatric care facilities rather than families and identify potential resources that could meet their needs.

4. DHS will provide the Coalition with connections to the Hospital Association regarding education for discharge planners.
5. DHS will explore resources for the Coalition to potentially develop an educational video for discharge planners and MCOs.

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