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Providing Services to Persons
With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



**COMMUNITY OPTIONS, INC.
LOCAL SERVICE AREA
PLAN UPDATE**

APRIL 13, 2021

LOCAL SERVICE AREA PLAN UPDATE

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Community Options, Inc. is to assure the provision of services and supports to people for the six counties of Region 10 who meet the definition of having a developmental disability. These services and supports are designed to enable the people served to:

1. Uncover and develop the unique gifts each has, so as to be able to more fully contribute to their family, their community, and society at large.
2. Establish and develop meaningful relationships throughout their community.
3. Enhance their capacity to make choices and learn from the consequences of their choices.
4. Enjoy life to the fullest.

AGENCY VALUES

Community Options believes that:

- Everyone has something to contribute.
- Everyone needs meaningful relationships.
- People deserve the dignity of making choices.
- Life is meant to be enjoyed.

AGENCY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Provided quality Case Management/Service Coordination and a broad array of services and supports to over 400 area citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities and, in some cases, their families.
- Re-designated as a Community Centered Board (CCB).
- Developed and successfully implemented strategies related to the COVID-19 pandemic that were highly effective in keeping the people we support and our staff healthy and safe.
- Continued Case Management Redesign efforts with HCPF, Alliance, and other CCBs to bring Colorado into compliance with Conflict Free Case Management requirements, and began facilitating a series of meetings with the Delta and Montrose County SEPs related to the future provision of Case Management services.
- Continued a leadership role with HCPF officials and other rural/frontier CCBs regarding the attrition of HCB-DD enrollments in rural areas that is impacting statewide access to services. Developed and submitted a proposal to HCPF to allocate new HCB-DD waiting list enrollments based on each service area's percentage of state population. That proposal was approved by CMS and implemented by HCPF effective July 1, 2020. Unfortunately however, there were not sufficient new enrollments allocated by the General Assembly for the new process to be triggered.
- Continued efforts to bring Colorado and Community Options into compliance with the HCBS Final Settings Rules.
- Continued providing Person Centered Thinking training to an ever-increasing number of employees and community partners.
- Continued efforts to expand the provider choices available for people receiving services and their families, including the addition of Touch of Care, MLS Senior Service, Roots LLC, and Over the Rainbow Behavioral Services. There are now over 30 Program Approved Service Agencies with program approval in our area, but very few of them actually provide any services. In addition to Community Options and those mentioned above, those service agencies actually providing services in our area are Mosaic, Six Points, Ariel Clinical Services, Behavioral Services of the Rockies, and a wide array of EI and CES providers and independent contractors.
- Continued positive relationship and partnering with the Arc of West Central Colorado.
- Participated in the virtual Alliance Summit

- Participated in regular virtual meetings with Senator Coram and Representative Catlin providing legislative updates.
- Maintained positive working relationships with local offices of the Division for Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Departments of Health and Human Services, Mid-Western Colorado Mental Health Center, the Arc, local school districts and BOCES, hospitals and medical providers, law enforcement, and transportation providers.
- Maintained positive relationships with Joint Budget Committee (JBC) members and other legislators, as well as local elected officials.
- Submitted successful applications and grant requests for a broad array of COVID-related funding, including a PPP loan.
- Worked successfully with HCPF, the JBC, and the General Assembly to secure additional short-term funding to stabilize programs and operations utilizing under expenditures related to COVID occupancy and other restrictions.
- Continued membership in the Alliance Government Relations Advisory Committee of Excellence (GRACE) providing leadership on legislative issues, as well as membership and leadership in several other committees.
- Held a highly successful virtual 48th Annual Meeting with an informative Keynote Address by State Representative and Joint Budget Committee member Julie McCluskie, and a recorded performance by the unified musical/dance group “Joyful Sounds”.
- Participated as a featured presenter in a virtual Town Hall focused on disability-related issues with Senator Michael Bennet.
- Successfully completed all Deliverables required by our contract with HCPF.
- Updated and revised HRC processes to meet new requirements, responsibilities, and oversight.
- Continued efforts to effectively capture available revenues, including implementation of new funding methodology related Targeted Case Management (TCM) and CCB functions, and Medicaid and insurance reimbursements for EI services, as well as the new State General Fund allocation and billing methodology implemented in FY 21.
- Continued to post all required information on our website and meet all other transparency requirements related to SB-038.
- Continued successful fund-raising activities including obtaining a second grant award through the Colorado Dept. of Transportation that enabled us to purchase two more new vans to help replace some of our aging fleet.
- Following the decision to close Community Options’ Glencoe Group Home, facilitated the process to transition the residents into other residential placements.
- Continued efforts of our Public Relations/Fund Raising Committee of the Board of Directors, including a successful campaign to raise sufficient funds to cover the local match component of our CDOT grant.
- Formed an Executive Search Committee of the Board of Directors and initiated efforts to recruit a replacement for retiring Executive Director Tom Turner.
- Participated in regular Community Needs Forums related to community response to the COVID-19 pandemic facilitated by Montrose County Commissioner Sue Hansen.
- Facilitated a successful mail-in Satisfaction Survey/Public Forum questionnaire process through which we acquired input from 71 people.
- Continued a monthly column in the *Montrose Daily Press* highlighting our agency and promoting awareness of issues related to persons with disabilities, and also had several other feature articles related to our agency and services.
- This year for the first time, sponsored a spot on public radio KVNF.

- For the 15th consecutive year, co-hosted a successful and well-attended fund-raising event, Mountainfilm on Tour, in collaboration with the Uncompahgre Valley Alliance. For the first time, this event was held virtually online.
- Continued efforts to examine and modify service models in an effort to identify efficiencies and cost-effective strategies to promote long-term viability.
- Continued collaborative relationships with the Montrose High School National Honor Society and Key Clubs, the All Saints Episcopal Church, a therapy dog group, and a wide variety of community volunteers, and will hopefully re-initiate these activities when it is safe and prudent to do so.
- Continued publication of an informative quarterly agency newsletter.
- Continued efforts focused on work safety and risk management that resulted in maintaining our Cost Containment Certificate.
- Continued efforts to update and enhance technologies and systems capacities, transportation capacities, and facility upkeep and maintenance as revenues have allowed.
- Maintained all necessary information to continue participation on the ColoradoGives.org website, enhancing our visibility and transparency and allowing us to continue participation in Colorado Gives Day. We also continued participation in Telluride Gives Day.

IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF ELIGIBLE PERSONS

- **Need:** The world and our work have changed dramatically over the past year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. So the over-riding need is for the people we support and our staff to stay safe and healthy. **Plan to Address:** The details of the plan were submitted to HCPF in our Business Continuity Plan. In order to implement that plan and on-going revisions, we attended an endless array of HCPF and CDPH&E webinars, underwent successful CDPH&E Infection Control Surveys, and continued the work of our COVID Preparation and Response (CPR) Team that meets at least weekly to address new information, new issues and new concerns. The Team includes Case Management, Residential and Day Program staff, Nursing, HR, Business Office, and CCB Administrative representation, and is chaired and facilitated by our Safety Advisor.

Assuming that the world gets back to something at least resembling our previous “normal”, the following needs of people eligible for services in our area present themselves:

- **Need:** To finally address the ever-growing waiting list of people needing and wanting HCB-DD services. **Plan to Address:** The collaborative effort led by Alliance to End the Wait had gained significant momentum prior to the COVID pandemic that tanked the economy. We will resume those efforts in future, hopefully better times.
- **Need:** To address the shrinking service capacity and availability related to the on-going attrition of HCB-DD enrollments. **Plan to Address:** We will continue in a leadership role in working with HCPF and other rural/frontier CCBs and service agencies to develop strategies to stabilize service capacity and availability in those areas.
- **Need:** To continue providing and developing a wide array of quality services and supports in accordance with people’s needs and choices, and with our mission and values. **Plan to Address:** We will continue working with both internal and external provider agencies to encourage growth and development of quality services and supports. This includes continued efforts at recruitment and retention of residential and day program staff, therapy providers, host home providers, and respite providers, all of which are needed.

- **Need:** To continue efforts to develop and diversify community employment and volunteer opportunities and meaningful day activities, and to come into compliance with the HCBS Settings Rules. **Plan to Address:** We will continue working with both internal and external provider agencies to encourage growth and development of quality services and supports.
- **Need:** To continue developing a broad range of leisure, social, experiential, educational, recreational, and exercise activities, both in our facilities and in community settings in accordance with the HCBS Settings Rules. **Plan to Address:** We will continue working with both internal and external provider agencies to encourage growth and development of quality services and supports, particularly with regards to expanding access to Supported Community Connection services.
- **Need:** To increase the availability of mental health services for the people we support. **Plan to Address:** To continue working with local mental health agencies and on a broader systemic level to assure that people with IDD have access to necessary mental health services and interventions.
- **Need:** To assist people engaged in sub-minimum wage employment in transitioning to competitive employment, volunteerism, or other services. **Plan to Address:** To continue to be involved in the drafting, passage and implementation of SB 21-039, and other strategies to decrease utilization of sub-minimum wage employment.
- **Need:** To continue developing collaborative relationships with community partners such as the local high schools, service clubs, advocacy organizations, Colorado Mesa University, local city and county governments, and the local business community, as well as efforts aimed at public awareness and education. **Plan to Address:** We will continue to seek opportunities to engage in collaborative efforts with all of these entities, and will also continue writing a monthly column about our agency and people with IDD in the *Montrose Daily Press*.
- **Need:** To continue efforts to maintain, upgrade, and replace aging vehicles, facilities, and infrastructure as is financially feasible. **Plan to Address:** Within our agency, we will continue our fund-raising efforts, continue to write grants, and seek other sources of funding in order to support the infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of the people we serve.

LOCAL ISSUES IMPACTING THE DESIGNATED SERVICE AREA

The reality is that the vast majority of issues impacting our designated service area are not local issues, but rather systemic, external issues over which we have little control, and that have major impacts on the people we serve and their families, the CCB, service providers, and employees. As stated previously, all of these issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, which remains the over-riding issue and has implications for each of the following.

- **Issue:** The continued financial viability of the CCB/CMA and primary service provider in this six-county area. **Plan to Address:** To continue working with HCPF, the JBC, and the General Assembly on the many systemic funding issues. On an internal basis, we continued working with our lenders to restructure debt; relinquished our Class B Home Care Agency license to decrease FTE, administrative requirements, and services for which the rates do not support the services; continued to write grants and seek other fund-raising opportunities; implemented a partially self-funded health insurance plan that uses a “cutting-edge” Reference Based Pricing model to help contain mandated health insurance costs; and continued to examine service models for other possible efficiencies or other opportunities to decrease expenses.

- **Issue:** As stated previously, to finally address the ever-growing waiting list of people needing and wanting HCB-DD services. **Plan to Address:** The collaborative effort led by Alliance to End the Wait had gained significant momentum prior to the COVID pandemic that tanked the economy. We will resume those efforts in future, hopefully better times.
- **Issue:** The need for the state to develop and implement an efficient, effective, and equitable allocation methodology for HCB-DD enrollments that maintains statewide access to services and addresses the attrition of enrollments in rural communities throughout the state. **Plan to Address:** To continue in a leadership role with HCPF and other rural CCBs and, if necessary, the General Assembly to develop allocation methodologies that stabilize statewide access to services.
- **Issue:** The need for the state to address compliance with federal Conflict Free Case Management requirements in a way that minimizes the impact on people receiving services and their families, Case Management Agencies, Direct Service Providers, and employees, especially given the complexities and lack of service capacity in rural/frontier areas of the state, and which provides choice and respects those choices. **Plan to Address:** To continue to be actively involved with HCPF and the General Assembly to better understand the implications of a rural exception and CCB Designation; to actively participate in the drafting and passage of HB 21-1187, and participate in the promulgation of rules and regulations related to the implementation of CFCM that will minimize the impact on people receiving services, their families, and our agency.
- **Issue:** The lack of service capacity in our rural area that has been exacerbated by inadequate rates and the new requirements that providers become Medicaid providers and implement Electronic Visit Verification, many of whom are unwilling to do so. **Plan to Address:** To continue encouraging service providers to expand the scope of their services, and continue working with HCPF and the JBC to increase rates to where they actually cover the cost of providing services.
- **Issue:** The ever-increasing complexity and volume of work expected of our agency and staff, including the new billing requirements in the Early Intervention program, which has dramatically complicated that program. This situation is also exacerbated by years of inadequate administrative funding that does not allow us to increase FTE to deal with these additional requirements, but rather, we keep piling additional demands onto already overworked employees. **Plan to Address:** To continue working with our state partners at HCPF, CDPH&E, and DHS to seek administrative relief, avenues to simplify our service system, and funding to cover the costs of these ever-increasing responsibilities.
- **Issue:** The overly-aggressive SPALS and service caps that have been imposed in SLS and Day Services have significantly decreased the amount of services that people are able to receive, and also contribute to reversions in the DD allocation. The cap in the number of Day Program units has led to a reduction of one day/week of service, placing major hardships on many families and HH providers, and driving significant unfunded expenses onto residential service providers. **Plan to Address:** To continue to work with HCPF to modify and/or remove these service limitations in future Waiver amendments.
- **Issue:** The collapse of salary structures due to increases in the Minimum wage and stagnant rates that have led to a pay increase of \$4+/hour over the past 5 years for DSPs, while there has been no funding available to increase the wages of mid and upper management staff. **Plan to Address:** To continue working with HCPF and the JBC to increase rates to where they actually cover the cost of providing services.

- **Issue:** High turnover that impacts continuity of care, and the need for rates that actually cover the cost of providing services and that would allow the CCB and service agencies to recruit and retain quality employees and contractors. This has been exacerbated by the increases in the Minimum Wage and the fact that we have some of the highest health insurance costs in the nation, both of which have dramatically increased payroll expense, with minimal corresponding increase in rates/revenues. **Plan to Address:** To continue working with HCPF and the JBC to increase rates, and to continue to explore other avenues to improve recruitment and retention including improved staff training.
- **Issue:** High retirement-related turnover among the upper and middle management of both CCB and Program staff at Community Options. **Plan to Address:** Succession planning and recruitment efforts are underway.

PROCESS TO SOLICIT LOCAL INPUT

Constituency and other input into this Plan Update was obtained through the following sources:

1. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, we were unable to hold our usual large Public Forum meetings. Therefore, Satisfaction Survey/Public Input questionnaires were mailed to 221 parents/guardians/family members, providers, allied human service agencies, elected officials, school districts, law enforcement agencies, etc, and also distributed to people receiving services and Community Options employees and contractors. Input was obtained from 71 people, including 45 adults involved in HCB-DD and SLS services, 15 parents/guardians/family members, and 11 Community Options employees/contractors.
2. A Semi-Annual Monitoring Review process was utilized whereby we review the following for trends and concerns: Incident Report tracking; Complaint Logs; Human Rights Committee recommendations; Allegations of Mistreatment, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation; Critical Incidents; Comprehensive Life Reviews; On-site Programmatic Monitoring; Personal Needs Audits; and Satisfaction Survey results. Additionally, information submitted for all required Contract Deliverables was analyzed and utilized.

AVAILABILITY OF THIS PLAN UPDATE DOCUMENT

A copy of our Plan Update and the attached documents will be posted on our website, and copies will be made available free of charge to staff, the Board of Directors, Family Support Council, Human Rights Committee, elected officials, allied human service agencies, and anyone else who indicates an interest.

Attachment:

Sample Satisfaction Survey/Public Input questionnaire

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Dear Friend of Community Options,

March 1, 2021

WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

The Board of Directors and staff of Community Options, Inc. are developing our Annual Service Area Plan Update and CCB Designation Application for submission to the State of Colorado. As a part of this process, for many years we have scheduled two open Public Forums to gather input about the services and supports provided by this agency. Given the unprecedented year that we have all experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic however, this year we are again going to forego those large public meetings and simply ask for written input from parents/guardians/family members, people receiving services, staff and contractors, advocacy organizations, elected officials; allied human service agencies; and interested citizens. Additionally, since our response to the COVID pandemic has dominated everything we have done over the past year, we are tailoring these questions accordingly.

_____ Name (optional)

I represent the following: ___ Parent/guardian/family member; ___ Community Options employee or contractor; ___ Person Receiving Services; ___ Interested citizen; ___ Other (please specify) _____

1. What actions did Community Options take that helped you or the people we serve through this pandemic?
2. What else could Community Options have done to better assist you or the people we serve through this pandemic?
3. Do you feel like you received adequate information/communication about Community Options' response to the pandemic? What could we have done better?
4. Do you feel like Community Options has done an adequate job of keeping the people we serve and our staff healthy and safe during this pandemic? What could we have done better?
5. Overall, are you satisfied with how Community Options has handled this pandemic? What could we have done better?
6. What would you like to see services look like when this pandemic is finally over?
7. Other issues/ideas/ concerns:

If you need more space, feel free to also write on the back of this letter, and please return it to me by March 19th at the mailing address above. Thank you for your interest and input!

Very Sincerely,

Tom Turner
Executive Director

Serving Delta, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Montrose, Ouray, and San Miguel Counties