

**Medicaid Member Advisory Committee
Meeting**

**Department of Medical Assistance
Services**

Via WebEx Videoconferencing

December 14, 2020 Minutes

Attendees

Committee Members	DMAS Staff	Guests
Christian Campbell	Karen Kimsey, M.S.W., Director	Governor Ralph S. Northam*
Margaret Crowe	Rachel Pryor, Deputy Director of Administration	Dr. Daniel Carey, Secretary of Health and Human Resources*
Catherine Childers	Montserrat Serra (presenter)	Dr. Vanessa Walker Harris, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources*
Sandra Hermann	John Stanwix (meeting convener and facilitator)	
William (“Hamilton”) Holloway	Walter Burton (meeting organizer)	
James Murdoch, Sr.	Beth Alexander (WebEx administrator)	
Elizabeth Noriega	Jesús Pérez (Powerpoint administrator)	
Lisa Richard	Samantha Vrscak (prepared minutes)	
<i>*Denotes was not present for the full meeting</i>		

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

John Stanwix called to order this meeting of the Medicaid Member Advisory Committee (“MAC” or “Committee”) at 10:04 a.m. on Monday, December 14, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was conducted virtually via WebEx. Mr. Stanwix thanked the Committee for joining the meeting. He introduced Beth Alexander to the Committee, who gave a brief explanation to the meeting attendees on how to use WebEx to participate in the meeting. He thanked the Committee members for joining during such a busy time of the year. Mr. Stanwix then introduced the DMAS Director, Karen Kimsey.

Introduction by Karen Kimsey, M.S.W., DMAS Director

Ms. Kimsey greeted the Committee and thanked the Committee and stakeholders for participating

in the virtual MAC meeting. She expressed that this was a bittersweet meeting because this was the last meeting of the term for the first eight members of the MAC. She informed the MAC members that they were forever the foundation of the MAC, with their creation of the MAC Pact and providing valuable advice to DMAS. She also noted that the Committee successfully transitioned to a completely virtual meeting format in order to stay safe during the pandemic. Ms. Kimsey previewed the meeting's agenda. She explained that the emphasis of the meeting would be on the MAC members, specifically their reflections on their terms and suggestions for future Committee meetings. She noted that the DMAS Civil Rights Coordinator would present an overview of the draft DMAS Language and Disability Access Plan, with the opportunity of the Committee to share their thoughts. She also noted that because it was the last meeting of the MAC members' terms, DMAS had arranged for a few special guests to speak during the meeting. Ms. Kimsey thanked the Committee for their time and dedication to the Commonwealth and reiterated the importance of their contributions. Mr. Stanwix then introduced Rachel Pryor, Deputy Director of Administration.

Introduction by Rachel Pryor, DMAS Deputy Director of Administration:

Ms. Pryor thanked the Director for her support over the last two years, as well as to her team. She emphasized that working with the MAC had been a "labor of love" for herself and for her team. She elaborated that working with the MAC had been an amazing experience that resulted in positive and constructive feedback for Virginia's Medicaid program. She expressed that the MAC members have created a legacy, with the MAC to continue serve as a critical advisory board to the DMAS Director in the coming years. Ms. Pryor reiterated her appreciation for the Committee members and for their time together.

Mr. Stanwix thanked the Director and the Deputy Director for their comments. He emphasized Ms. Pryor's leadership in the development of the Committee. He then had the Committee members introduce themselves, where they reside, and who they were representing.

Following the introductions, Mr. Stanwix previewed the topics on the agenda. He noted that there would be an opportunity for public comment at the end of meeting and explained the procedure for public comment. He then segued the meeting to the scheduled presentation, noting that there would be time for questions and comments following the presentation. He introduced Montserrat Serra, DMAS Civil Rights Coordinator, for a presentation about language and disability access at DMAS.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION WITH MONTSERRAT SERRA, DMAS CIVIL RIGHTS COORDINATOR – LANGUAGE AND DISABILITY ACCESS

Ms. Serra gave a presentation about language and disability access at DMAS, and discussed the draft DMAS Language and Disability Access Plan. She explained that developing and maintaining a language and disability access plan was critical to DMAS' mission statement of improving the health and well-being of Virginians through access to high quality coverage. She reviewed the diversity of the Medicaid population, with 5% of Medicaid enrollees self-declared with limited English proficiency ("LEP"), and over 240,000 complex care members who may have communication and physical challenges that make it difficult to access to the Medicaid program.

She explained that DMAS was responsible for ensuring that LEP individuals and individuals with disabilities have meaningful access to the Medicaid program in accordance with state and federal laws that prohibit discrimination. Ms. Serra then discussed the DMAS Language and Disability Access Plan. She explained that the goal of the Plan was to ensure DMAS communicates effectively with LEP individuals and people with disabilities. Ms. Serra elaborated that the Plan considers the language and disability access needs of DMAS. The Plan defines the DMAS language and disability access compliance standards for DMAS staff, contractors, sister agencies and providers, and how to provide language and disability access with telephonic/verbal communications, paper written communications, and digital communications. Ms. Serra explained that the Plan also included five current strategic initiatives for language and disability access, which included language and disability access training, adopting quality control and new technology to improve access, Plan dissemination to DMAS staff and external stakeholders, monitoring trends of language access needs, and continued stakeholder engagement.

Comments and questions from the Committee were taken during the presentation. One member asked if meaningful access to those with disabilities includes mobility access, and if so, asked how DMAS or its programs would deny certain environmental modifications that provide meaningful access to an individual with a disability. Mr. Stanwix clarified that the Civil Rights Coordinator's focus is access to information, and that authorization requests for specific Medicaid covered services were evaluated using medical necessity criteria. Ms. Serra explained that members of the disabled population often have different communication needs, and that she evaluates and coordinates different types of accommodations. As an example, she noted that DMAS has received requests to distribute information in different formats, such as large print or braille for those that are vision impaired. A member asked if disability access applies to all areas of access for individuals with disabilities. Mr. Stanwix replied disability access applies to all areas of access, and that there were a variety of federal laws that address what DMAS is required to do when there is a need for access at any point in the Medicaid program. One member inquired how DMAS ensured that the language used in its communications was understandable to its intended audience. Ms. Serra explained that DMAS had made efforts to ensure notices were more readable, and that she worked on making documents more readable through her translation efforts. Mr. Stanwix noted that DMAS reviewed and evaluated some of its communications through readability tools with an emphasis on understandability. One member commented that plain language might be especially important for LEP individuals, and noted that there were variances in vocabulary within the same language, such as the differences in the Spanish language spoken in Latin America and in Spain. Mr. Stanwix replied that Ms. Serra and Jesús Pérez, DMAS' Spanish-language translator, review documents for understandability when they are translated. Ms. Serra noted that Mr. Pérez translates and she reviews, and together they evaluate that the vocabulary is targeted to a Latin American population because that variant of Spanish was the most commonly spoken in Virginia. Ms. Pryor thanked the Committee members for their comments, and noted that type of feedback was one of the reasons the MAC was so important to DMAS.

Ms. Kimsey then introduced Dr. Daniel Carey, Secretary of Health and Human Resources, to the MAC. She expressed that Dr. Carey's leadership helped DMAS navigate the expansion of Medicaid and through the COVID-19 pandemic, and that it was an honor to introduce him at the meeting.

**REMARKS BY GOVERNOR RALPH NORTHAM, SECRETARY DANIEL CAREY,
AND DEPUTY SECRETARY VANESSA WALKER HARRIS**

Dr. Carey greeted the Committee and thanked Director Kimsey for her comments. He explained that he would speak following Governor Northam's remarks. He expressed that it had been an honor to serve the Commonwealth and be a member of the Governor's administration over the last three years. He then introduced the 73rd Governor of Virginia, Ralph S. Northam, to the Committee.

Governor Northam addressed the Committee and thanked the members for their service and input on behalf of the Commonwealth. He acknowledged the difficulty of the past year for many Virginians, with the first case of COVID-19 reported in Virginia in early March. He expressed hope for the future with the planned vaccination rollout. He noted that while there was still a lot to learn about COVID-19, Virginia had come a long way with testing, contact tracing, and the availability of personal protective equipment. Governor Northam then shifted his focus to the importance of the Medicaid program. He explained that, as a pediatric neurologist, he had witnessed firsthand the devastating impact that a child's diagnosis can have on the child's family, emotionally and financially. He elaborated that the Medicaid program helps individuals' lives and their families by offering financial assistance, and that the need for Medicaid was tremendous. He commended DMAS for the work on Medicaid expansion and the enrollment of over 400,000 additional people. He remarked that those newly enrolled individuals can now see a medical provider when they are ill, and not have to choose between putting food on the table and receiving treatment. Governor Northam informed the Committee that they will receive a certificate of recognition for their hard work. He thanked the Committee and wished everyone a happy holiday season and to stay safe.

Dr. Carey thanked the Governor for his comments. He informed the Committee members that their work has been critical in developing Medicaid policies and practices during their tenures. He explained that the MAC, with its diversity of experience, have helped ensure that DMAS' policies and practices are meeting the needs of those served by the Medicaid program. He commended the Committee members for their act of public service, acknowledging the disruption of their schedules and the distances they traveled to each meeting prior to the pandemic. Dr. Carey provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic within the Commonwealth. He lamented that the coronavirus was spreading and on the rise in the Commonwealth, likely exacerbated by people gathering indoors and the cold weather. He noted that while Virginia had the 7th lowest infection rate in the nation, there were pockets with a high infection rate, particularly in Southwest Virginia. He explained that the first round of vaccinations were expected to arrive in Virginia later in the week and would be distributed to front line health workers. He elaborated that the vaccine rollout would be in phases, with the biggest challenge to get the general population and at least 75% of Virginians vaccinated, which would likely take months to achieve based on estimates from the Centers for Disease Control ("CDC") and the federal government. He described the vaccine distribution strategy to the Committee, noting that Virginia prioritized equity, with outreach events, and that community leaders would be among those first vaccinated when supply allows. Dr. Carey stressed the importance of following key prevention strategies such as practicing physical distancing, hand hygiene, wearing a mask, and staying home, in order to mitigate the infection rate. He wished the Committee members a safe and happy holiday, and reiterated his thanks for their participation and guidance to ensure DMAS' policies make sense from the perspective of those receiving services

and those whose loved ones receive services. He then introduced Dr. Vanessa Walker Harris, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources.

Dr. Walker Harris greeted the Committee, and thanked the members for their service to DMAS and to the Commonwealth of Virginia. She noted that Virginia was one of two states with a Member Advisory Committee, and is thus uniquely positioned to hear from Medicaid members and family of Medicaid members with complex needs. She echoed the Governor and the Secretary's sentiments that the Medicaid program improved based on the Committee's voices and input. Dr. Walker Harris reiterated her appreciation for the Committee's efforts, and noted that the certificate was a heartfelt expression of gratitude. She encouraged the Committee members to keep in touch if they have questions or issues with which her office could assist. She wished the Committee a safe and happy holiday, and thanked the members again for their hard work.

Ms. Kimsey thanked the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary for their remarks. She informed the Committee that Dr. Carey and Dr. Walker Harris had been steadfast supporters of the MAC and the work they had accomplished, and wanted to share their appreciation for the MAC members' service.

REFLECTIONS ON COMMITTEE TERMS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE COMMITTEE IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Stanwix asked the Committee members to reflect on their terms and to provide any suggestions for improvements for future MAC members.

All of the MAC members expressed their enjoyment of being on the Committee and their appreciation for the opportunity to be heard. Several MAC members appreciated being able to share their unique perspectives from living in more rural parts of Virginia and Southwest Virginia, as those parts of the state may not always be adequately represented in advisory groups. Many of the members expressed appreciation for being able to learn more about DMAS and the people who are behind many of the different programs and services at DMAS. Several members noted that being on the Committee helped change their perspective of the Medicaid program because of the presentations and DMAS' responsiveness to Committee member feedback and suggestions. Members appreciated the relationships and rapport they were able to develop during in-person meetings, which eased the transition into virtual meetings.

Several Committee members had recommendations for improvements for future meetings. Committee members suggested more time for questions and talking built into the agenda. One member recommended having time for discussion and highlights from the previous meetings in case there are further questions on a given subject. Another member suggested distributing the meeting materials from the last two years of MAC meetings to future members, so that the next term could see the MAC's progress. Members had mixed opinions on the virtual meetings; while the members liked the interaction from in-person meetings, a few members also appreciated not having to travel long distances with the virtual meetings. One member suggested a Committee reunion in the future, to which the other members expressed interest.

**REVIEW AND VOTE TO APPROVE MINUTES FROM MEETING ON
OCTOBER 26, 2020 AND 2020 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

Each of the MAC members received a copy of the October 26, 2020, meeting draft minutes, and the draft minutes were also posted on the Committee's webpage on DMAS' website, as well as on the Virginia Town Hall website. Mr. Stanwix explained the process for making a motion to accept or propose changes to the draft minutes.

MAC member James Murdoch, Sr., moved to accept the minutes from the October 26, 2020, meeting. MAC member Sandra Hermann seconded the motion to accept the minutes. The Committee then voted to approve the minutes with a unanimous vote.

Mr. Stanwix then directed the Committee's attention to the draft 2020 Committee Annual Report. Mr. Stanwix explained that the Annual Report provided a history on the development of the MAC and a summary of each meeting. He noted that the Annual Report highlighted the transition from in-person to virtual meetings. He also noted that the draft Annual Report had a placeholder for the December 14, 2020 meeting, and informed the Committee that the meeting would be summarized in a similar fashion. He explained that DMAS wanted the Committee to have the opportunity to make comments or questions, or could move to adopt the draft Annual Report.

MAC member James Murdoch, Sr., moved to adopt the 2020 Committee Annual Report. MAC member Sandra Hermann seconded the motion to adopt the 2020 Committee Annual Report. The Committee then voted to approve the 2020 Committee Annual Report with a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Stanwix reiterated that the MAC meeting was a public meeting and notice was posted on Virginia Town Hall. He informed that anyone from the public wishing to comment at that time must use the WebEx platform.

Dr. Pete Liggett, Chief Experience Officer at the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, commented on how impressed he was with what Virginia achieved with its MAC. He noted that he previously spoke with Mr. Stanwix and Mr. Burton about South Carolina starting its own Medicaid Advisory Council, and South Carolina hoped to launch its Council in January 2021. He expressed his appreciation for the advice and providing him the opportunity to observe the meeting, and wished everyone a happy holiday.

Kannan Srinivasan, Vice Chair, Virginia Board of Medical Assistance Services (BMAS), thanked the members of the MAC for all their amazing work. He wished everyone a safe and happy holiday.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Stanwix asked the Committee if there were any comments prior to the adjournment of the meeting. One member requested an exchange of contact information for the MAC members in

order to keep the conversation going. Mr. Stanwix replied that he could reach out to the members to gauge their interest in exchanging contact information. Another member asked if the new MAC members had been chosen yet. Mr. Stanwix explained that the new MAC members had not yet been chosen, but DMAS was reviewing applications from across the Commonwealth. He then transitioned the meeting to Ms. Kimsey for her closing remarks.

Ms. Kimsey thanked the MAC members for serving on the Committee, and expressed that it had been a privilege and honor to work with the MAC. She stated that she looked forward to staying in touch, and commented that the members may be able to give advice to future Committee members. She thanked DMAS staff, meeting participants, and members of the public for listening, and wished everyone a healthy holiday season.

Ms. Pryor thanked the Committee for their collaboration and invaluable guidance over the last two years. She remarked that the MAC had exceeded her expectations and was a great first term. She expressed interest in maintaining contact with the Committee members, and reiterated her appreciation for the MAC.

Mr. Stanwix informed the Committee that, as a token of appreciation, DMAS would also send a certificate of recognition to the Committee members. He emphasized his thanks for the MAC members' time, commitment, and feedback to DMAS. He noted that while the Committee members would no longer serve on the Committee, they would always be welcome at future MAC meetings and lines of communication from DMAS were always open.

Mr. Stanwix adjourned the meeting at 11:57 a.m.