

***NH Department of Health and Human Services
Plan to Close the Cliff Effect for Individuals and Families
who Receive Public Benefits Working Group
Meeting Minutes***

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

I. Call to order

Donnalee Lozeau called to order the meeting of the Cliff Effect Working Group meeting at 3:00PM on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 via Zoom on-line meeting.

II. In Attendance

- Wildolfo Arvelo
- Danielle Bishop
- Christine Brennan
- Susan Huard
- Allison Joseph
- Adam Lecain
- Donnalee Lozeau
- Gene Patnode
- Dee Pouliot
- Kim Runion
- Chris Santaniello
- Representative Mary Jane Wallner

Quorum was present

III. Minute Review/Vote

- Wildolfo Arvelo motioned to accept minutes as written
- Susan Huard seconded the motion
- Motion passed, minutes accepted

IV. Life During COVID – using the Cliff Effect lens – observations

- Allison Joseph shared examples of how she has seen the Cliff Effect and COVID intersecting.
 - The additional hazard pay or supplemental unemployment benefits caused some individuals to lose benefits. There is uncertainty of when those additional benefits will end and those individuals effected will need services again.
 - Could benefits be reinstated right away? This depends on how long they were off benefits, where they fall and what other benefits they may have.
 - Suggested the possibility of setting up a Zoom meeting with a group of parents to discuss and walk through the process. Chris S offered a meeting with the Bureau of Family Assistance.
 - There were some issues surrounding mortgage and rental assistance,
 - Group discussed and shared clarification on some of the questions surrounding this demand for rent or eviction notice requirements and how after identifying application difficulties, the process is now streamlined.
 - Information on summer food availability was not widely spread, appears that there was a decrease in options.
 - Lack of child care options is causing concerns for families
 - Recommend refer families to Child Care Aware
 - Issues surrounding remote learning. Each school district is handling it differently.
- Susan Huard discussed observations from the college system
 - Colleges have seen a 25% decrease in enrollments.
 - Some are now offering either 8 or 12-week courses to start the fall semesters.
 - Working with charitable foundations to distribute gift cards to students who need them.
 - Received grants to assist DACA students.
- Dee Pouliot discussed some housing observations
 - Waiting on funds from HUD to help support voucher to subsidize adjusting rent.

- Additional vouchers are available for those who may not be elderly, but have a disability, encourage applications’.
- Working with clients with Public Housing Vouchers and adjusting rent.

V. Grocery Store and Cliff Effect

- Donnalee Lozeau shared story of how she connected with a manager with Hannaford supermarkets. While at a press conference, the topic of Workforce came up in a discussion. The manager noted that they have found that yearly they will lose staff during November and December (Hannaford’s two busiest months) because those employees have reached the max level of income they can earn before they lose benefits. He would like to be part of these discussions. He also identified that there are careers at Hannaford. Donnalee is hopeful that potential employees could come through the Workplace Success Program.
 - Employers are aware of the issues with earnings/benefits.
 - Discussion relating to the interest of seeing which benefits those individuals would be losing. Some potential ideas to mitigate that could include things like: If it was related to child care, could Hannaford possibly support child care and this could have a positive long-term effect on their business model.

VI. Updates on Economic Analysis

- Originally, project was scheduled to be completed in July, but due to COVID, we extended timeframe through December 31, 2020.
- There is more data now to be gathered and analyzed.
 - Unemployment was not considered for initial data, due to NH’s low numbers, now the data will be included.
 - Looking now at Childcare affordability and availability across the state and determine where the gaps are and how does that interface with unemployment and business needs.
 - Expanded the scope to identify the impact of COVID on certain jobs and markets.
 - Will drill down pre and post COVID data by community. Regionally there are businesses looking for workers and are willing to pay good wages, but there is a lack of housing and child care. Once those areas are identified, we can work with the local businesses, child care centers, families, and communities.

- Might identify different partnerships.
- It was noted that that municipalities decide what types of housing is allowed. The focus of this workgroup is to develop policy recommendations; making recommendations for housing development might be an area we consider.

VII. Updates on Benefit Calculator Development

- Manhattan Strategies have begun user testing.
- Planned three additional rounds of testing through Sept/Oct. and finishing up by Nov/Dec. Release est. January 2021.
 - State and Host will have an opportunity to review after testing and prior to release.

VIII. Benefits Cliff Effect Working Group quarterly Report Development/Status

- Until the Economic Analysis is completed there is not as much work that this group can do in regards to policy change recommendations.
- Will extend out our timelines and see where we stand after we have the Economic Analysis and Benefit Calculator.
- Our quarterly report will be a quick overview of the work to date with an updated timeline graphic.
 - It was asked if the rules changed regarding the deadlines for Legislation.
 - Legislation is in drafting time right now, if this group has ideas or suggestions in Jan/Feb after the second drafting period, could ask the rules committee to suspend and bring items in for consideration.
 - It is looking like this might move onto the 2nd year of the Biennium.
- Chris Santaniello will update the timeline graphic and draft a cover letter to give a brief overview of where we are. Will send this information out to the group for review and comments.

IX. Other business

- It was asked when the time comes for policy recommendations, how will that process look? Will we have people come in to testify or give presentations? Could we put together something for our next meeting to give a better understanding and help us to see the bigger picture?
- NH Council on Systemic Inclusion (which partners with the National Collaborative for Digital Equity) works collaboratively with groups such as banks to review how they invest community reinvestments funds. For example, banks are mandated to invest in LMI communities yet even with \$3 trillion dollars being

invested to impact poverty, there continues to be high levels of poverty, identified that the investments have not had a deep impact in the community. Working to bring them to the table to help change the discussions. Bring together local entities and other local banks, business, and non-profits to discuss how banks could begin to invest funds differently, which would have more impacts within the communities. Bob McLaughlin might be a good guest speaker to meet with this group.

- Gene agreed this would be a great speaker to join in the subgroup work. Subgroups can do the boots on the groundwork to get services to our families without needing changes to legislation to implement. Gene will connect with Mr. McLaughlin.
- Christine Brennan discussed that she is hearing one of the major challenges for families/parents is they are trying to find some child care during remote learning. Schools and communities are coming together to find unique opportunities for families such as remote learning at the Boys & Girls clubs, camps, families. Also, need to make sure that Special Education services are being provided to the children.
 - Has there been any evidence that this change to remote learning would affect some students and result in them being held back?
 - A smaller statewide assessment will be done in October. This may identify gaps related to what children have achieved.
 - Seeing that children who struggled with anxiety and social issues are thriving with remote learning and those who were highly involved in sports and social aspects are struggling. There are many struggles, but we are also seeing opportunities as well.
 - Major discrepancies between districts. Some children may choose to not return to High School and may seek alternative pathways to completion.
 - Working on a learning management system that can hold content on an online platform that multiple schools can access. We are trying to be creative and innovative to respond to the situation.

X. VIII:Adjournment and Next Meeting

- Next WFATJ NH Chapter meeting scheduled for November 5th
- Next Working Group meeting will be scheduled
- Meeting adjourned

Minutes submitted by: Maureen DiTomaso