

**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, November 18, 2020

I. Call to order

Donnalee Lozeau called to order the meeting of the Cliff Effect Working Group meeting at 2:30PM on Wednesday, November 18, 2020 via Zoom on-line meeting.

II. In Attendance- Quorum Present

- Wildolfo Arvelo
- Danielle Bishop
- Christine Brennan
- Lisa English
- Anna Hamel
- Susan Huard
- Allison Joseph
- Christina Lachance
- Rich Lavers
- Adam LeCain
- Donnalee Lozeau
- Gene Patnode
- Dee Pouliot
- Senator Cindy Rosenwald
- Kim Runion
- Representative Mary Jane Wallner

III. Minute Review/Vote

- Susan Huard motioned to accept minutes with a corrected spelling
- Rich Lavers seconded the motion
- Motion passed, minutes accepted

IV. Updates from the November 5, 2020 Whole Families Chapter Meeting

- NH Chapter Charter was finalized and adopted at the last meeting (Gene will send copies of the charter to members of this group)
- Discussed refreshing the DHHS Integration Team which will provide support to the NH Chapter subgroups
- The four subgroups (Transportation, Workforce, Childcare, and Housing) gave updates on their work to date. Most subgroups are scheduled to meet monthly
 - Christina Lachance gave updates on the childcare subgroup. Committee plans to make recommendations regarding the Child Development Plan.
 - Representative Wallner noted that childcare was already facing a crisis before the pandemic regarding lack of workforce, now it is an even larger issue and hopes that this will be addressed
 - Susan Huard noted that there are available scholarship dollars to support early childhood students and some community colleges are doing more condensed programs, yet enrollment is down by up to 12%. Some of the reasons for drop in enrollment were due to childcare issues or being essential workers.
 - Christine Brennan Deputy Commissioner, DOE is working with Public Health and school nurses. Many schools are closing or going full remote until mid-January 2021. NH was one of the only states to administer a statewide interim test to monitor children's learning levels and make sure children have the foundational skills they need.
 - There have been some changes to rules and childcare facilities are now accepting school aged children.
 - Anna Hamel (parent) was asked how her family has been doing. She is concerned that her younger children are falling behind because she and her husband work and while remote learning they are being assisted by the older children, but it is difficult.
 - KUDOS Anna was promoted to manager! Congratulations.
 - Concerns raised that TANF is not providing waivers to relax the employment requirements on participants. BES is in contact with families to ensure they are making small forward motions
- Next NH Chapter meeting scheduled for February 3, 2021

V. Updates on the Economic Analysis

- Rich Lavers gave an overview of the development of the Economic Analysis
 - ESI group has requested additional data to compare pre-COVID data and data from the height of the pandemic and are looking more deeply into specific areas
 - It is expected there will be a draft report out before Thanksgiving. Once completed ESI group will be asked to present to this group at a future meeting- anticipated to be January.

VI. Updates on Benefit Calculator Development

- The second round of testing has been completed and they are on track to have the calculator completed in January 2021
- SNHS is redesigning their website this will ensure that it can manage the cliff calculator. The calculator will be obvious and easily accessible for use.
- Work from the economic analysis will be helpful and informative on how the cliff calculator gets used and what recommendations this workgroup will be able to develop.

VII. Review of HB 4 Deliverables and plan to meet expectations

- Quarterly reports are expected until June 2021
- Last report submitted in September 2020. Next report is due December 30, 2020.
 - Rich noted that the economic analysis report should be able to be distributed to this group in early December, but do not want to rush ESI to do a presentation prior to the holidays. This group will also have a Q&A session regarding the report. Rich will connect with Chris Santaniello to see when the presentation will be scheduled, anticipated to be January.
 - Need time to drill down into the data we will get from the economic analysis and benefit calculator to identify the cliffs.
 - Lisa English is reviewing the regulations which effect benefit cliffs
 - Integration Team is working through any DHHS hurdles
 - Donnalee will connect with Chris Santaniello regarding the draft December report likely it will be similar to September with any updates if needed. We will have a quick meeting in December to review and vote on the report for submission.

VIII. 8 months...COVID and those we serve, share promising practices, lesson's learned, and how to incorporate them into our work

- Susan Huard – COVID had a positive impact on relationships between faculty, staff, and students. Also, celebrate the availability and impact of mental health services via telehealth.
- Dee – HUD made 75 vouchers available and allowed us to adopt different waivers to keep processes going. Staff is embracing technology in ways we had not seen before.
- Rich – relationships have been solidified with NH Employment Security and multiple entities. The collaborations are having very positive results. COVID pushed us to embrace technology and provide services previously not considered (i.e. virtual job fairs). Concerns surrounding CARES act programs due to expire for estimated 19K individuals collecting benefits.
- Anna – as a parent it is hard to see any positive aspects. There is just not enough time in the day to accomplish everything. Having more hours at work because others staff is on leave. Rest of her time is spent trying to be a teacher. It is hard to find time to relax, and just be a mom.
- Kim – Given us an opportunity to re-examine how we are doing business and what we could do differently. Technology has been a blessing for many, although there are struggles. We are using the opportunity to partner with NOW and WIOA programs to target credentialing programs that have a good return on investing and increases the income of participants. We are now focused on finding the right training programs, how to market them, and connect participants with financial assistance.
- Christine Brennan – We are seeing that changes in school settings are beneficial for some students. Some struggled with in-school placement and now are doing better that they are at home. High-school students are also benefiting with extra sleep. Technology has been very good for some aspects of education. We are utilizing a mobile classroom that looks at different job opportunities and allows students to visualize their futures and pathway. Utilizing Youth Apprentice models along with community colleges.
- Lisa – Importance of relationships. Important to carry these forward as we break down silos. Looking at how can we build on the momentum this team built and keep relationships moving in a completely different economic environment than when we began this group. How to incorporate everything we have learned (good and bad) going forward. Very concerned of the December 30th cliff. Keeping eye on DC and if additional aid will come and what the implementation will look like.

- Gene – Use of technology. Employers have been great to participate with our programs. Uptick in Sector Partnership Initiative (SPI) partnerships. Many initiatives have utilized technology to get participants in front of employers and partners. Will continue down that path.
- Rep. Wallner – Interested in watching NH Legislature, which was already behind the eight ball with technology, and how we have been able to continue to meet, pass legislation etc. Supreme Court just allowed the larger (400-person) group to meet remotely.
- Christina – COVID brought expedited issues and brought things to the forefront, which we have thought of for many years. People are more open minded on tackling our work. New ways of working offers opportunities.
 - Kudos again given to Anna. She is the embodiment of our silver lining
- Senator Rosenwald – Concern that cigarette tax revenue up 20% vs plan for the first 4 months of the fiscal year. This correlates strongly with stress, anxiety, addictive behaviors. It has exasperated these issues. Those nearing the cliff and having some issues, concerned they are being compounded during this pandemic.
- Danielle – We have been very busy. Seeing new entrepreneurs jumping into businesses, they are seeing opportunities based on demand and need due to this pandemic. Trying to keep up with employers and whatever we can do to help them.
- Adam – Appreciate all the technology changes, it is allowing different and interesting ways to manage workloads.
- Will – If we did not have video meetings, we would not have seen each other in so long. Threads carry over from different meetings. Collaboration between public and private sectors. Non-profits, education, government, business, are all talking to each other about challenges and are coming out of our silos, this is positive movement. Opportunity to engage in Work around Diversity Equity and Inclusion. Encouraged by the resiliency of this state.
 - Anna thank you for the work you do on the front lines, it is appreciated
- Donnalee – ability to look at projects differently. Had COVID not happened, these opportunities would not have been so quickly obtainable. Learning more about how/when the Feds will allow braiding of funding and then will share with our state partners like DHHS to get buy in. Working on getting individuals banking and automobiles. Working differently with our staff and our programs to use IT in new ways to allow business continuity. We are not only a provider we are a large employer.

IX. Action Items, Adjournment, and Next Meeting

- Draft quarterly report- send to group
- Schedule a short December meeting for group to review and vote
- Finalize report and distribute to group
- Schedule the Manhattan Strategies presentation in January 2021
- Meeting adjourned

Minutes submitted by: Maureen DiTomaso