

This is a summary of discussions at the meeting. Many points may need further clarification or discussion and do not reflect anything other than the discussions among the Advisory Group members.

**Grand Junction Regional Center Advisory Group
Meeting Summary
June 20, 2017**

Attendees:

GJRC AG Members:	Roberta Funk	Tim Hudner	David Monroe
	Michèle O'Toole	Gini Springmeyer	Tanya Skalecki
	Michael Thoma		
CDHS Representative:	Georgia Edson		
Department Personnel:	Mark Wester		

Observers	Norbert Necker	Leanne Thoma	John Hemmler
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Facilitator:	Will Singleton
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Meeting outcomes

- The Advisory Group members gave their perspectives on the May 16th presentation on employment opportunities and the May 25th tour of Denver area homes.
- Advisory Group members heard and discussed the feedback from CDHS on the options that had been provided to the Department.
- The AG discussed next steps in the process leading up to the September submittal of the CDHS plan and budget request.

Next steps

- The next meeting will be 8:00 am on Tuesday, July 18th
- Members should send their definitions of “health and safety” to Mark and Georgia
- The initial pieces of a cost analysis will be shared (as a draft/partial) at the July meeting. The Department’s potential plan and cost analysis will be reviewed at the August meeting (or other meeting as needed) to provide time for GJRC AG feedback.
- A tour of MDS Victoria Home should be organized for RNL to help them understand some of the issues related to garage design and tracks for lifting medically fragile.
- Mark Wester will check with the Department’s legislative team about providing an interim update to the Legislature. The Department is asked to provide the timeframe and steps for communicating the plan with the Legislature to the AG so that communications can continue to be coordinated.

Meeting objectives

Will reviewed the objectives for the meeting that formed the framework for the day’s agenda.

- Give reactions to the May 16 presentation on vocational services.
- Debrief on the May 25 tour of group homes.
- Engage with the Department personnel on feedback of the options.
- Discuss next steps in the process and how the AG will be involved.

Reactions to the May 16 presentation on employment

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Will asked the group to give their thoughts on the presentation and his message. Some of the main points were:

- The presentation did not seem to be applicable to the GJRC residents. It is difficult for the larger disabled community to find employment, but it is even more difficult for the residents of the GJRC because of their degree of disability.
- It may be more difficult to find employers for people with DD in Grand Junction. GJ is an area with fewer businesses than the speaker's frame of reference.
- The requirements to pay minimum wage limits the possibilities. Training can be for less pay but a competitive job must be paid for minimum wage. Once training ends and minimum wage is required, the job opportunities can end.
- The presentation seems to apply more to the broader community of handicapped people as opposed to GJRC residents. There is an expectation that the person will work for longer periods but not the 30 minutes that some GJRC residents can work. The current method is better because the clients work when they can shred paper and doing other work.
- The answer to the question "Is anyone currently taking the accommodating approach to employment?" is always "No". The presentation has been given for years but there has been no progress. Funding and capacity commitment is necessary to get this done? This is not going to happen without resources.
- An AG member said that she talked to the job developer at the Regional Center. He said:
 - Vocational Rehab wants to have GJRC staff be responsible for create employment opportunities for its clients. Vocational rehab does not have the resources to address the more severe behavioral issues.
 - Minimum wage is a major barrier because employers are seeking maximum productivity from their fully paid employees.
- There is little incentive for businesses to create opportunities; perhaps the state can help with that. But, right now, the state agencies are understaffed.

Georgia said that employers are accustomed to having the Division for Vocational Rehab provide waivers to help pay for people with disabilities. DVR has recognized that they need to help with their supports and the expectation is that GJRC clients will always need supports. The transition from paid support (from DVR) to natural employer provided supports is difficult. We need to better understand what would make a business see the benefits. It is a long process and perhaps it means starting small with one, two or three businesses.

Some of the issues that need to be addressed are clear:

- Minimum wage
 - Behavioral problems in the workplace
 - Short duration of work on a daily basis and how that fits into the rest of the GJRC operations
- If the AG chose to work on this issue, perhaps it can look at how successful efforts in other parts of the country have addressed these issues to see what can be drawn from for a GJ solution. Go through a process to identify case studies that could be used as models for developing employment opportunities in Grand Junction. .

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May 25th group home tour

DRCO organized a tour of three homes in the Denver area: a home at the Wheat Ridge Regional Center and two Imagine! homes. Will asked participants of the tour to share their feedback.

Comments included:

- The floor plans for the Imagine! homes had some important differences. In the first home, the bedroom halls were narrow, which means that only one wheel chair can go down the hallway at a time. The floor plan also has the bathrooms at the end of the halls, meaning that it would be difficult for staff to assist people that need help. The dead end hallway is also where an aggressor can position himself or herself to trap others. This type of floor plan should be avoided.
- The second home also changed the access and orientation from the common areas to the office so that it had better sight lines and accessibility for clients.
- The smart home had some good technological features. It allowed residents to access their activities on a personalized screen. The staff had a beacon system that prompted them to maintain active treatment. There were sinks and stoves that went up and down for clients to be able to access.
- The floor plan at the 105th Avenue Wheat Ridge Regional Center home was very similar to what is used at the GJ homes, except that it only had one common area. Some of the homes in GJ are better because they allow space for someone to go off and have a separate activity.
- The bedrooms in the homes seemed small. One of the AG's children at the GJRC needs to have a larger room because she has a recliner that she likes to use and she lives in her room. She does not socialize with the other residents.
- The technology is nice, but it is unclear how some of that would apply for someone who might destroy items. The money for the technology might be better spent in other ways. Skype could be a great thing if it could work.
- There needs to be room for clients to get out of their wheelchairs or bed.
- More storage is needed for wheelchairs and back up wheelchairs and other essential items.
- The perspective of direct care staff is important.
- Hardening of the houses and including multiple gathering areas reflects an understanding of what is needed. Many of the elements are not flashy but they are informed by actual experiences and expertise.
- Although the second Imagine! home was lovely, access was difficult because there was only a ramp at the front door and ramp at the side. Two back doors that should have been accessible precluded wheelchair from going into the back yard because of rocks.
- When you arrive, there is facial recognition that modifies the environment and their rooms.
- There needs to be outdoor place for people to spend time.
- An AG member had heard that the existing GJ group homes were the first-builds in their single-family neighborhoods. This may be what is needed for new homes in GJ. Neighborhoods would be built around the homes – before HOA rules prohibit needed practices.
- Parking was an issue in some of the homes. Often there are multiple cars – staff and visitors – in addition to the vans.

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- Parking and storage were universally expressed as a need.

A tour was also arranged for some AG members of Grand Junction homes on June 19th. This included two homes on campus (Meyer South and Spruce) as well as Eastbrook and the home at 29-1/4 Road. The AG members commented that the tours were useful and it was good to speak to the residents.

One AG member asked to know more about the work of RNL, how far along they are in planning the homes and how direct care staff and others can be included in the planning.

Response to GJRC AG Options Packet

Mark Wester briefed the Advisory Group on the considerations that the Department has been giving to the options presented in May and to the bases for a campus transition plan. The discussion followed the three main points that can be found in the document attached in as an appendix.

[1. Explore unifying GJRC under ICF/ IDD Licensure](#)

Explanation of what CDHS has done with the paper: Mark Wester and Georgia Edson reviewed the report and met with Tony Gherardini and Reggie Bicha to review the options in the paper. Mark produced a response to the AG options paper, giving an explanation on how the Department plans to proceed. The response was handed out to the group and is an attachment at the end of this summary.

Converting to ICF licensure: The Department is exploring converting all GJRC group homes to ICF licensure. Converting to a new licensure is a complicated process that involves other state departments (CDPHE, HCPF) and can involve extra federal scrutiny. There will be inter-departmental meetings in July to talk through the mechanics of the changeover.

Converting to ICF makes operational and programmatic sense because of the role that the Department plays as the provider of last resort. Through ICF, the Department is able to provide “under one roof” access to wide variety of supports including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and other services that can be difficult to access in the community. “Under one roof” also provides a fully integrated, team approach. If you look at the nature and severity of individuals who are referred to the regional centers, it makes sense to have an integrated team model.

It is a challenge to operate the regional center under two licenses. Having both ICF and HCBS adds complexity to the recruiting of staff. It also makes sense because of the nature of the services that are provided on the Western Slope and the economies that come from unified services. Converting all to ICF allows all of the costs to be spread across the other homes. This will help normalize the per diem costs and bring them in line with the other regional centers.

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ICF care can be as non-institutional and person centered as any HCBS regional center home. Due process and informed consent will be maintained.

2. Transition ASAP to a “Hub” for Administrative and Day/Vocational Services

Five staff focus groups were created to define needs. These included:

- Facilities
- Health services
- Residential
- Day services
- Administration

Each of the focus groups developed an explanation of what they have now and what would be good to have. This information has been forwarded to RNL and rolled up into the Department deliberations. Input from the focus groups also informed the decision to move forward with the approach to non-residential services.

It makes sense to have day, vocational and administrative services closely aligned and adjacent to each other. A basis for converting to day programming first allows the transition to be phased; day programming first and then residential. This would minimize the disruption. This was an important development for the process and it shows the value of the Advisory Group. This point came from the Advisory Group and informed the adoption of this step by the Department. Sharing the Allen Garage idea shifted the thinking in the Department to do administration and day services first.

To find a location, the state architect has a real estate contractor that will look at leasing property. The real estate agent will look at administrative offices that can be near to or adjacent to day services. This process is starting now so that the transition can happen as soon as possible. Information on specific real estate opportunities – like the Allen Garage – has been forwarded on to the state’s real estate agent.

Timeline: The timeline shows that the move would be complete by October. This might mean getting a supplemental appropriation for a specific lease.

3. Investigate Multiple Housing Scenarios

The Office of Community Access and Independence is doing cost analyses of different housing scenarios, which includes the costs of land purchase, construction, and sustained operating costs. Amortized savings associated with lower operating costs is an important way to justify capital investment in new construction. OCAI is not committed to any particular scenario other than the limit of six people per home, room for 24 people and normalizing costs.

The development of any scenario needs to accommodate housing for 22 – 24 individuals. This is also a strategic opportunity to implement a standard of no more than 6 people to a home

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across the GJRC. Some of the homes may be licensed for eight people but six people; with each having a bedroom is a goal and opportunity of this process.

In considering the various scenarios, the December and May AG reports brought out a few different ways to provide housing. These include:

- Four six-bedroom homes
- Five or six four-bedroom homes
- Utilizing 29 Road as a interim step or selling it immediately
- Putting houses together, paired or very close to each other (such as on the same street)

Having a comparative analysis of the capital requirements and operational sustainability will inform the Department's supplemental request. The analysis should be complete by the beginning of August in time to do the supplemental request

Once the analysis is complete, the scenarios will be taken to Reggie Bicha to determine the plan. While the Department hopes to have the support of the Advisory Group, leadership recognizes that the responsibility to make the decision is the Department's.

Questions and comments:

Q: Will the AG have a chance to provide feedback and provide input on the plan?

A: That will be part of the process. It might be necessary to share a draft or initial thinking with the AG. The cost analysis could come in very close to each other but there might be one or two scenarios that will be clear leaders.

Comment: Health and safety should be on par with operational sustainability but it is not mentioned in the considerations document.

Response: Health and safety is a constant and primary concern across the whole Department. Homes and how they are staffed are oriented towards health and safety.

Q: What is the operational definition of health and safety?

A: Each individual that is served is experiencing the best possible health for their condition and they are getting proper medical support to maximize their health. Supports are also focused on minimizing risk and maximizing safety, even though it is not possible to prevent any eventuality.

Comment: Freedom is part of the consideration of safety. Homes in neighborhoods do not allow the residents to move around freely and be safe. The community on campus is very important for the residents.

Comment: When the plan is presented to the Legislature, it may be necessary to explicitly say that a more expensive approach is necessary because it better addresses health and safety. It should be an explicit priority rather than assumed.

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Response: The AG could define what it means by health and safety. Health and safety is one of the things that can mean different things to different people and can be used to reflect a wide range of motivations.

Comment: We need to have clear communications between the Department and the AG. The CDC questioned the capital costs and the issue could not be addressed because neither the Department nor the Advisory Group members were prepared.

Response: In March 2016, CDHS developed a fiscal note for the GJRC transition. It utilized high-level concepts, which brought a \$12 million estimate. The AG's report was generally aligned with the fiscal note. The feedback from the CDC showed how important showing amortization and cost savings over time. The analysis needs to be able to address any questions that might come up when the plan is being reviewed by CDC/JBC.

Timeline for getting a dialogue with the GJRC AG

The AG discussed the timeline for the AG to give its perspective in the analysis that will go into the supplemental request to the CDC. Part of the complication is how long it takes to get the information up and through the Department's communications process with the Legislature. With this in mind, the group discussed some elements of a process to continue the iterative dialogue on the plan development. These include:

- Use the scheduled July 18 GJRC AG meeting to review initial analysis.
- Be flexible about the time and location of potential additional meetings in August – such as an extra meeting in Eagle.
- Utilize the August 15 GJRC AG meeting as the deadline for a more formalized response to the Department.

This allows time for the Department to communicate the plan to the Legislature (CDC) on September 18th. This includes two weeks to go through the clearance process and one week to go through clearance at the Governor's office.

There was a brief discussion on what might happen if the facilitator was not able to continue planning and facilitating the meetings. The discussion centered on maintaining the existing schedule.

Utilizing 29 Road as an interim step

Concern about meeting the deadline that is in the bill is one of the drivers of potentially using the existing property on 29 Road. Upgrading and updating the house would be faster than building new and could be an important component of meeting the deadline. Because of the traffic on the road, the Department will need to consider the type of person that was housed there. There is a request into the Department of Transportation on when the full connection between I-70 and Highway 50 will be made.

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As with the other aspects of the plan, the approach needs to be justified. 29 Road is a resource that the Department has that can be utilized. Either way, the plan needs to justify how all-available resources are being used to meet the deadline.

Comment: 29 Road is dangerous now. It may get worse in the future but it is easily defensible to not use 29 Road based on current conditions.

Q: How should the group go about defining health and safety?

A: The definitions can be sent to Mark and/or Georgia

Comment: Even if 29 Road were used for medically fragile clients, it poses operational problems. After a visit to look at the property, for parking, staff would have to park offsite and walk down to the group home in order to accommodate the van. This is because you cannot back out onto 29 Road anymore because it is too busy. This is what was done in the past. This means that the van has to have room to turn around.

There is now a 5-acre solar panel field next to the home. If behaviorally complex clients went into the field and caused damage, it could be very expensive.

RNL would like to see the Victoria Home from MDS. Drive through garage and tracking through along the ceiling for moving medically fragile people.

Also look at a split home or duplex design.

Response: We are already talking to RNL about this issue; staff needs to be able to park the van in the garage. Also talked to RNL about the duplex design. We are also talking about the space around the home. What is the usable space that is open, free, and accessible for clients.

Comment: While the GJRC campus is to be closed, the Bill does not change the campus concept and it does not necessarily need to be changed. There is a movement back to a centralized campus setting. Many studies have been done regarding campus settings, such as an abstract of a study by David Cheng who states being in a campus community is closely associated with feelings of being cared about, treated in a caring way, accepted and valued.

Communications with the Legislature

On an interim update: Picking up on a question from an AG member at the beginning of the meeting, the group discussed providing an update to the CDC/JBC this summer. Providing an update in August could help prepare committee members for the September plan presentation. Mark said that he would check with the Department's legislative team.

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Communications of the plan: The group discussed how to have “no surprises” on the plan that is submitted to the CDC/JBC. While there may be rules about confidentiality for the specifics of a supplemental request, the elements of a plan should be well understood. This includes the recommendations that are going to be put forward to the CDC/JBC. Everyone should be able to have a developed point of view on the Department’s recommendations well in advance of them being presented to the CDC/JBC.

Public comment

- Q: What is included in the cost analysis? Was the analysis of staying on a portion of campus ever done?
- A: The analysis is being done on the housing scenarios – the different approaches to providing housing. Construction costs are standard, but how housing is approached could be the variable. The Department clarified in April that staying on campus would not be an option because of feedback from the Legislature but there is an analysis being done on clustering in a new location. RNL is doing their analysis that was originally asked for in December.
- Q: Is facilities and housekeeping being transitioned by October?
- A: We need to check with the acting director of the Office of Administrative Solutions.
- Comment: There is some confusion among staff. A new housekeeper position is being denied because the clients are supposed to be off of campus. The Department may need to look into how to allow for operations to continue as transition occurs.
- Comment: Related to tours of different homes in Denver and Grand Junction, the visits have shown that the effort is establishing “mini-institutions.” “Homelike setting” is a goal that has not been achieved. While it is better than it used to be, staff is better trained, and the atmosphere is more conducive to being homelike, the effort still has a long way to go. Even as the homes are smaller, the results remain institutional. A number of things could be done:
- The homes need to be larger to make the environment safer and more comfortable. There was a moment when all of the residents on the tour were all together, security and safety would have been a problem – even with full staff.
 - Outside of some of the homes, there were no sidewalks. Clients could not get out without going into the street.
 - It was good to see that some previous clients were surviving past transitions.

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Appendix

Response to the Advisory Group’s Options Packet

The Colorado Department of Human Services appreciates the Advisory Group’s continued engagement and the options presented in the Options Packet dated May 20, 2017. Your commitment and investment in helping the the Colorado Department of Human Services determine a sustainable and person-centered approach to vacating the Grand Junction Campus, according to Senate Bill 16-178, is greatly appreciated.

The Department would like to provide feedback on the options presented and describe next steps in the planning process to accomplish the charge of Senate Bill 16-178. The considerations previously provided to the Advisory Group in April will continue to inform and influence the interpretation of the Advisory Groups options.

1. Explore unifying GJRC under ICF/ IDD Licensure: The Department is actively taking steps to explore conversion of the HCBS homes at the Grand Junction Regional Centers to ICF/IDD licensed homes. The process involves multiple Departments, external stakeholders and physical plant requirements.
2. Transition ASAP to a “Hub” for Administrative and Day/Vocational Services: The Department has started to define and identify suitable space to lease for centrally locating leadership and ancillary staff members. This location will best function close to or adjacent to day/vocational services provided to those supported by the Grand Junction Regional Center.

Grand Junction staff members from across the campus participated in five focus groups based on areas of operation including facilities, health services, residential, day services and administration. These focus groups determined needs and ideas for each area. This important process gave the GJRC and department visibility into the day to day operations of GJRC and informed the planning process.

Once an administrative location is identified, take steps to move as soon as possible. Please see the estimated timeline, provided below.

Timeline

Review and identification of needed Space from AG’s focus group’s work	June 2017
Engage the State Real Estate Company to search for potential property locations	July 2017
Identification of top options	July 2017
Selection of the property	August 2017
Build out infrastructure, IT, Office configurations etc.	August-September 2017
Move Complete	October 1, 2017

3. Investigate Multiple Housing Scenarios: The Department is reviewing multiple housing scenarios including those in described in the Advisory Group’s report. These housing scenarios are being analyzed for their capital efficiency (Acquisition Costs), operational sustainability (Per Diem Costs) and alignment with Senate Bill 16-178. The goal is to determine the best balance of cost effectiveness and person-centered residential options over the next 20 to 30 years. This analysis is expected to be complete by August 1, 2017. The Department will provide further information to the advisory group when this analysis is finished.