



**Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)
District West Independent Oversight Committee (IOC)
Public Meeting Minutes Summary
Tuesday, December 10, 2024 – 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM**

This meeting is being held virtually.

Meeting called to order by **De Freedman**. The date was December 10, 2024, at 6:02 pm. The address of the meeting was Virtual, no physical address.

Attendance in Person: **None - This meeting was virtual only**

Attendance by Google Meets unless noted:

- **Diedra (De) Freedman**
- **Brad Doyle**
- **Crystal Fox**
- **Jaymie Moore**
- **Pam Dewey by phone **84**

Absent:

- **Pat Thundercloud**
- **Cynthia Macluskie**
- **Colleen McGregor**
- **Maria Blandon**

Public in Attendance:

- **Abiola Aje**

Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA)

- **Absent**

AHCCCS IOC Liaison

- **Fredreaka Graham by phone **98**

Healthcare Plan Liaison

- **Wendy Herring** (Mercy Care)
- **Dawn McReynolds** (United HealthCare)

DDD staff and Guests:

- **Christina Hedges** (DDD OIFA Administrator, Community, Advocacy, Resolution, Engagement, Support)
 - **Diane Kress** (DDD District West Quality Manager)
 - **Morgan O'Hara** (DDD Independent Oversight Committee Liaison, CARES Administration)
 - **Michelle Rademacher** (DDD Independent Oversight Committee Liaison, CARES Administration)
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District West IOC-Conference Call - 2024/12/10 17:43 MST - Transcript

Attendees

+1 480-***-**98, +1 602-***-**84, abiola aje, Brad Doyle, Christina Hedges, Christina Hedges's Presentation, crystal Fox, Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA, Diane Kress, Diedra Freedman, Jaymie Moore, Michelle Rademacher, Morgan O'Hara, Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA

Transcript

This editable transcript was computer generated and might contain errors. Liaison has edited some of the transcript for accuracy and ease of reading. [Any blue italics transcription was missed by the transcriber.](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Diedra Freedman: The session of the Independent Oversight Committee is now called to order. The date is December 10th, 2024. Time is 6:02 p.m.

DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Diedra Freedman: Do we have anyone that has to disclose a conflict of interest? If there is, the committee member needs to disclose why? Anybody have a conflict of interest, given the agenda?

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Diedra Freedman: Let's do our introductions. I'm Diedra Freedman. For now, I'm the chair. One of you people steps up and says you'll do the job. By trade, I am a certified compliance officer.

Diedra Freedman: In my previous life, I'm a retired attorney from New York. Believe it or not, I actually practiced for a decade and ran my own solo practice for six years. I'm Andy's mom. Andy was a DDD ALTCS Mercy Care member from 2003 when he was 2 years old. He was 24 months when he became a DDD ALTCS member until his death in 2021, 17 years. And, who is next on my list. Brad, you're next. You want to introduce yourself?

Brad Doyle: Yes, I'm Brad Doyle. My son, Curtis, is 38. He's been in the DDD Title 19 pretty much from the start when they first started rolling it out. I've advocated, been on numerous committees. Currently taking some time off from work to figure out what I want to do in the future when I'm all grown up like De. And other than that, that's pretty much it.



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Diedra Freedman: Okay, let me see who's next on my list. Crystal. Okay.

Crystal Fox: Hello, I'm Crystal. I'm a psychiatric nurse. My main focus is behavioral health. Retired from the Arizona State Hospital after 30 years. I have a daughter who is 22 who is a DDD member. She's also with Mercy Care and she's also with ALTCS. I think that that's about it.

Crystal Fox: I think I've run the marathon of meetings today, so I'm exhausted.

Diedra Freedman: Hey, Pam.

+1 602-*-**84:** Yes. Hi,...

+1 602-*-**84:** Good evening everyone. Pam Dewey. I am a retired nurse as well. With Dignity Health for 37 years. My background there was in neuroscience, clinical research and neuro rehab. I have a grandson who is six years old who's a DDD ALTCS member who's autistic and glad to be with you.

Jaymie Moore: Hi, good evening everyone. My name is Jaymie Moore. I am an adjunct faculty at Grand Canyon University. My specialty is literacy. I am also a private tutor. I go home to home tutoring students that have profound dyslexia, teaching them to read. And I am additionally the associate director for a group home in the west valley of Phoenix and the guardian of a gentleman that is a member of DDD that is 31 years

Diedra Freedman: Has anybody joined us? Michelle, did I miss anybody?

Michelle Rademacher: No. Everybody's here that was here when we started as far as I've noticed.

Diedra Freedman: You want to take over the rest of the introductions for me so we don't miss anybody, please?

Michelle Rademacher: That's not a problem. I'm just going to go down the list here. Christina, would you introduce yourself for us, please? Thank you.

Christina Hedges: Gladly. I'm Christina Hedges. Sorry, I have random toddler stocking stuffers at my feet and I just kick one of them and it's making some noise. So, sorry about that. I'm Christina Hedges. I am the DDD Office of Individual and Family Affairs Administrator.

Michelle Rademacher: And Diane,...

Diane Kress: Yes. Hi, good evening. Diane Kress. I am the quality assurance manager for District West.

00:05:00

Michelle Rademacher: Thank you. and Wendy and...



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Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: Good evening everyone. I'm Wendy Herring with the Office of Individual and Family Affairs for Mercy Care.

Michelle Rademacher: Morgan.

Morgan O'Hara: Good evening. Morgan O'Hara, DDD Independent Oversight Committee liaison with the CARES Administration.

Michelle Rademacher: It's a mouthful.

Michelle Rademacher: And my name is Michelle Rademacher. I am also a DDD IOC, Independent Oversight Committee liaison with the CARES administration as well.

Discussion, Review, and Possible Action on Committee Membership

Michelle Rademacher: And De, we do have Abiola present today. She is an IOC applicant. Do you want her to introduce herself now or later?

Diedra Freedman: Yeah, because we have enough people who can vote.

Diedra Freedman: Abby, if you wouldn't mind introducing yourself.

Abiola Aje: Hi. Good. Hi, my name is Abiola. I can go by Abby if that's okay with everybody. I own an agency through DDD. My agency is called Caring Minds Health Services and I'm happy to join you guys. So

Diedra Freedman: What does your agency do? You have contracts with DDD.

Abiola aje: Yes, So we currently have some services like your HCBS, enhanced group home, we have a foster for adults and children and we have transportation and some other services.

Diedra Freedman: I don't know with five of us if I can go with the agenda in any order. So I don't know what we're trying to do is, we're trying to have a mix of members. We have nine members. One of them is in management at a DDD contracting agency. It is new that an IOC has allowed someone who works for a provider agency in a decision-making capacity to be a member of the IOC. Our members did it because we felt that we needed that perspective.

Diedra Freedman: If we decide to vote Abby on, and this has nothing to do with your abilities, Abby, it has to do with the committee. Number one, we need to know, we have 15 slots. And number two, it would make, help me out with the math people. It would make two out of provider members. So that's two out of 10, would be 20%. Is my math correct? So, these are just things for the committee to consider. I don't have thoughts either way.

Diedra Freedman: Is your agency, Abby, you actually have facilities here in the West Valley?

Abiola Aje: We don't currently have a facility other than an office just for admin. That's all we have right now.



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Diedra Freedman: Do you have clients in the West Valley?

Abiola Aje: Yes. For HBCS Okay,...

Diedra Freedman: The reason that I asked that is because any of your clients, just like Jaymie's clients, you can't be involved in the incident reports and the discussions regarding those clients.

+1 602-*-***84:** I'm sorry.

Diedra Freedman: So I

+1 602-*-***84:** Could you repeat what agency it is that you work with?

Abiola Aje: Caring Minds

+1 602-*-***84:** Caring Minds. Okay. Thank you.

Diedra Freedman: So, does anybody have any questions for Abby?

Diedra Freedman: Does any

Brad Doyle: I have one. What was your previous background and experience before you opened up the agency? Were you a provider? Were you a teacher? Were you a nurse? What was your previous background before you started the agency? Okay,...

00:10:00

Abiola Aje: *Okay. Number one, I will start with my sibling, she has down syndrome. When we came to the United States. I work as a caregiver in a group home. After that, I worked in assisted living as a skilled caregiver and at the same time I worked. I mean yeah I am certified as a nursing assistant also. I worked in a school, in a special department at school. So,*

Brad Doyle: That's good.

Brad Doyle: But I wanted to know that and I just want to make sure you understand what De is trying to say is that any of your clients where an incident report would be filled out all of that and also the fact that we would have now 20% of the people that are on the board, even though you have a sister with a disability and all of that. I have nothing but respect for that. But as a committee, we would have two people that are provider agencies, even though we totally respect. I figured I knew in your heart. I was sitting here looking at you, I know why she decided to do this. It's in your heart. You've got this. But because of how we make up our committee, that's probably the only thing that I just wanted to make sure I get some background on you. But we have to have certain specialties. I have a son with a disability.



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Brad Doyle: We have retired nurses. We have someone that is from the state hospital. We want to make sure we have a good mix rather than having too many of one group. I think that, did I say that about right there for you there, De? That about right?

Diedra Freedman: Yeah. Yeah.

Brad Doyle: That's and...

Diedra Freedman: And it's

Brad Doyle: By the way, I totally respect all of that. That's an amazing story about you with your sister. Amazing.

Abiola Aje: *Thank you. That's fine whatever decision you guys make,* if I don't belong here that's fine I'm passionate about that but it can be any way and I mean seeing you guys and knowing fully that this kind of a group exists, me too. So I won't take anything personal, please trust me.

Brad Doyle: That's great. Thank you so much for your answers.

Abiola Aje: You're welcome.

Diedra Freedman: Does anybody have a motion right now?

Crystal Fox: What's the motion? I mean, what's your name?

Diedra Freedman: Her name is Abby.

Abiola Aje: I don't mean. Yes. Thank you.

Motion and Vote

Crystal Fox: *I'd like to make a motion that Abby* join us on the DDD West Valley Independent Oversight Committee.

Diedra Freedman: Do we have a second?

Brad Doyle: I'll second it.

Diedra Freedman: And you guys know I can't vote as the chair. So, I don't want to put everybody on the spot. Michelle, I don't need further discussion.

Brad Doyle: Do we need further discussion, De?

Diedra Freedman: The problem is because it's a meeting we have to do a voice vote. So if I just ask all those in favor and then All those in favor

Crystal Fox: *I'm in favor.*



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Brad Doyle: /

Abiola Aje: Thank you.

+1 602-*-***84:** Hi. What?

Diedra Freedman: So, at this point, the motion fails because it's 2-2. Yes, Michelle.

Michelle Rademacher: I didn't hear. Did anybody opposed?

Diedra Freedman: Is anybody opposed? because they could either be opposed or they could abstain. And even if they abstain, it means it doesn't pass because it's not a majority. So the vote doesn't pass. On the record do I have to make everybody go on the record with their vote?

Michelle Rademacher: No, you don't. When you ask all those in favor and then anyone opposed then that provides enough on the record.

Diedra Freedman: So at this time, Abby, the committee has decided not to extend you an invitation to join us. That doesn't mean in the future as we increase our numbers and providers wouldn't make up 20% of our board, at that time, the board may decide to extend you an invitation to join us.

00:15:00

Abiola Aje: Just fine.

Diedra Freedman: And as they said, it has absolutely nothing to do with yourself, your credentials, or what you could contribute. It's just we're looking for that mix and traditionally, we have been a parent led committee. So we don't want to change the nature of the committee.

Abiola Aje: Thank you.

Diedra Freedman: There may be, because there are five committees and they all do their meetings online. There may be another committee that is looking for the voice of a provider because Jaymie is a very valued member of our committee and she has contributed a lot of insight that we don't get otherwise. So if you talk to Michelle and Morgan, there may be another committee that you may want to ask to join.

Brad Doyle: That's a good path. Keep going.

Diedra Freedman: But we appreciate you joining us and you're welcome to join us anytime.

Brad Doyle: Yes. Thank you so much.

Abiola Aje: I just want to say one more time, thank you everyone for the opportunity. It doesn't have to work all the time, but I appreciate it. Thank you so much and I wish you guys a happy holiday.

Diedra Freedman: Thank You too.



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Abiola Aje: Bye. Bye-bye.

Brad Doyle: Thanks.

Abiola Aje: Thanks. Bye.

Diedra Freedman: So, the next. I think we handled that well people. So, I don't want to put people on the spot. I don't. But we got to do what we got to do for the sake of the committee and what we think is best for the committee. ...

Brad Doyle: I think it's what you suggested about going to one of the other committees because she's probably got other clients in other areas and it's all Zoom. So, I think if Michelle could find one of the other committees I'm sure there's other committees I'm sure she could sign up with. I think that's really good.

Diedra Freedman: What would be best, Brad, is if she went to a region where she has no clients. But the reason that Jaymie does so well and...

Brad Doyle: That's what I meant. So, she can fit as a provider because I'm sure it's perfect.

Diedra Freedman: is unconflicted is because there are no major incidents at Jaime's group home. That makes sense. I don't mean to put you on the spot, Jamie, but ...

Jaymie Moore: That's quite all right. I appreciate the praise.

Diedra Freedman: I mean, it's the truth. So that's why it works is, and one of the reasons that you're on here, that we voted you on, Jaymie, is as an inspiration to other providers because you do it the right way. You provide services the way that they're supposed to be provided.

Jaymie Moore: Thank you

Changing DW IOC Monthly Meeting Day

Diedra Freedman: So, our next item on here is changing our monthly meeting. We heard from all of you and it looks like the first Wednesday of every month works for everybody. The only thing is, we'll have to get a different day for January because the first Wednesday of January is New Year's Day, but the other 11 months it works out. So, what I want us to think about is doing the second Wednesday in January and then the first Wednesday of all the other 11 months.

Diedra Freedman: The only people who will have a conflict is Morgan because she has to facilitate the District East meeting in the evening on the second Wednesday of every month. and Christina is going to have to get somebody either clone herself or get somebody from her staff to either cover us or cover the other meeting. But it'll only happen once. Wendy, is somebody else assigned for Mercy Care or is it you? It's just you.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: We'll make it work.



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Diedra Freedman: If I haven't completely insulted our friend Tyson, maybe he'll go to District East. and I don't know what's with Dawn.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: We don't know what's going on.

Christina Hedges: I just sent her a text and...

Christina Hedges: I think she forgot that it was tonight. So, she's joining right now.

Diedra Freedman: I don't know from her staff who covers District East.

00:20:00

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: Is it Yen typically, Christina? Yeah.

Christina Hedges: Might be Ian.

Diedra Freedman: So, she doesn't have a conflict. So, you're the only one with a conflict with Wendy. And it's just for next month. You're on mute, my friend.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: We'll make it work. Or I'll just go to one meeting, other meeting. I'll just keep going back and forth and back and forth. I can do it like an octopus.

Diedra Freedman: Your whole staff over there at Mercy Care is great.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: It'll work. One meeting's fine.

Diedra Freedman: So, I mean, if we have to give you up, we will, but we would rather have you.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: It's all good. We'll make it work. No problem. Going.

Motion and Vote

Diedra Freedman: So, does anybody have a motion? Because I'm not allowed to make motions. Is there any discussion anybody wants to have about changing our meeting day to the first Wednesday of every month?

Crystal Fox: January 8th.

Brad Doyle: I'd like to make a motion that the meeting date be changed to the first Wednesday of every month at 6 PM with the exception of the January meeting...

Brad Doyle: which would be moved to the following Wednesday

Jaymie Moore: I can second that.



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Diedra Freedman: All in favor?

Brad Doyle: I

Jaymie Moore: /

Crystal Fox: /

Diedra Freedman: Did I hear from Pam? I got three out of five. So, we're there.

+1 602-*-**84:** *I can't tell if I'm on mute or not. Yes, I agree. Perfect.*

Diedra Freedman: So the next meeting is January 8th and then after that it will be the first Wednesday of every month at 6 p.m.

Brad Doyle: at 6 p.m. correct?

Diedra Freedman: The time stays the same because 6:00 p.m. works best for Crystal and for Jaymie and...

Brad Doyle: That's good.

Diedra Freedman: anybody else who's rushing from work to try to get home with traffic. So you'll have to make a change, Michelle, on or I don't know if you do the web page, you'll have to change the web page.

Michelle Rademacher: So, what happens is Larry will get with his team to literally change the web page, but I input all the meeting information, so we'll be good.

Diedra Freedman: Great. And just so you guys know, I talked with Michelle and I made sure that her schedule doesn't conflict and we tried to minimize it for the staff as best we could. So, we're trying to accommodate everyone. Do we have Dawn with us yet? Did Dawn jump on?

Christina Hedges: She texted me again and her computer is struggling to connect to Wi-Fi. So, she's working on it, but not yet.

Diedra Freedman: Okay. ...

Introducing the OIFA Alliance and Our Members

Diedra Freedman: The next thing on our agenda is in introducing the OIFA Alliance members and then the AHCCCS and UCONN focus groups. I'm going to take this opportunity while we're waiting for Dawn to jump on to talk about the last two decades of my experience with the OIFA staff. I have never told a parent to contact the OIFA staff and then had the parent contact me and tell me that I wasted their time. And as you guys know, I operate on a need to know only basis.



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Diedra Freedman: I'm very conscious, especially being a compliance officer, I'm very conscious of HIPPA, and I only want to know what I need to know in the moment. And then when I don't need to know it anymore, I want to be completely out of the picture. So, I connect people with resources and then, if they don't get what they need, then I step back in and make some more connections and step out again. So it's been wonderful for my experience in the last two decades with the OIFA staff, but I don't know if everybody understands what OIFA is and what OIFA does. And I don't want to miss Dawn.

AHCCCS & UCONN Focus Groups

Diedra Freedman: So, Christina, if you could tell us about the AHCCCS UCONN focus groups and then we'll go back and we'll have you and Wendy and Dawn talk about the OIFA Alliance and maybe share your personal stories with us if you're comfortable and in what you do in your positions.

00:25:00

Christina Hedges: for sure I am actually going to defer to Wendy for UCONN because I was not part of that for some reason. So, it's slowly trickling down to me as well, but Wendy was involved from the get-go. So,

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: Yes. I'm going to read what I received about the UCONN experience from a cheat sheet because that's what I'm going to do. So, as part of an effort to improve children's behavioral health services in Arizona, AHCCCS has partnered with the University of Connecticut, which sidebar, I struggle with in a basketball way, but that's my own thing, with their school of social work, they are terrific by the way, very bright folks. Their School of Social Work to gather information about caregiver experience with receiving behavioral health services.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: and the work to reform and make change with the behavioral health services in the great state of Arizona which is such a nice opportunity for families to have their voice heard. So we are partnering with them in 90 minute meetings all virtual for let's see where's my other cheat. I have two cheat sheets here, folks. Be patient with me. From December, there's a meeting tonight from December all the way to February. And each meeting has I want to say a different flavor, but that I'm just going to go with it of themes. So, for example, tonight are families that reside in Maricopa and Puma County.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: There's only going to be 12 families present and the UCONN folks are going to ask five questions to get their feedback. Each person that participates gets paid for their time, about 90 minutes.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: There are categories of for example foster and kinship, and families whose children receive DDD services, Parents whose children receive high needs case management, families with adopted children, juvenile justice, it's very specific to a group so those people that participate can feel supported with what they share. There is and there should continue to be information coming out hopefully through the OIFA AHCCCS newsletter on Fridays. It may come to you through a provider.



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Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: I shared it with Michelle. I don't know if we can provide it here or forward it to the members would be terrific, but I think it's a really nice opportunity for our voices to be heard with change to the children's behavioral health system. Do you have anything you want to add to that, Christina?

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: I know that some of it's newer to you and...

Christina Hedges: No, I think you did a really good job covering it.

Diedra Freedman: The one main thing, Wendy, that you left out, and maybe I'm incorrect, but it's my understanding that there will be no AHCCCS staff present in those focus groups.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: okay, thank you for that, De. That is correct. So, I think. We talked about and let me tell you why I kind of paused. I believe there will be OIFA staff there. So if we hear themes or trends or whatnot that we can bring it back to health plan, but we really wanted to be mindful for people to have that space that they could share openly and not feel I'm not saying this would happen, but that they would not share their full story in that moment. So that's a great point, but I don't think that there is going to be AHCCCS staff there.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: But I'm just looking at my cheat sheet, but that would make sense.

Diedra Freedman: All right.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And it does say that participation is confidential and voluntary and the services won't be impacted in any way now or in the future. So there wouldn't be retaliation, all those things that people might feel if they share their story.

Introducing the OIFA Alliance and Our Members

Diedra Freedman: So, does anybody have any questions about the UCONN focus group? Okay, Christina, if you and Wendy want to take it over and explain to us what OIFA is and share what you do in your jobs for your employers and if you want to share some of your personal story.

00:30:00

Diedra Freedman: I just think that you both have very powerful personal stories as does Dawn.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: Yeah, for sure.

Diedra Freedman: If, here she is.

Christina Hedges: That was amazing.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: She has joined. Look at that. You're a Dawn magician.



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Diedra Freedman: Dawn, we're at the part where the three of you are explaining exactly what OIFA is, what you do within your organizations to serve your members and how you work with administration. And then if you could share, cuz I think all three of you have very powerful personal stories. Anything that you're comfortable with of your personal story that helps you do your job and how the three of you put up with me who's been a pain in your ass for the last 20 years and people like me who bring things to your attention. The floor is all yours. I'm going to turn off my mike.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Hi everybody.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: I feel like I think that we privately voted and we elected Dawn to go first.

Christina Hedges: I was just going to say, Dawn, I feel like has been the OIFA queen for the longest. So maybe we'll let Dawn kind of cover OIFA in general and then we can each kind of chat about our own OIFAs. Sorry, Dawn, to put you on the spot.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: It's okay.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Can you guys hear me? Okay, so I have to apologize. I had to start my computer up twice trying to connect and I was running late. First, a disclaimer. What you see behind me is my jewelry. I'm a silver smith and so I'm packing my whole house. I just purchased a home today and so, everything's blowing up. Thank you. And the reason that this is a pivotal moment for me to share and please just wave at me if my audio starts going wacky because it looks like my video's a little bit disjointed.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: so yeah OIFA, the Office of Individual and Family Affairs really is my life and why I say that is we are individuals that have some sort of lived experience, whether it be family members, supporting our loved ones through the public mental health system and every other system or individuals who have been there and received services. And so for me, I am both. And I am an individual that grew up in the inner city of Detroit and a very violent dysfunctional home along with a violent dysfunctional city.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: I was born and raised in the east side of Detroit. So what I didn't know after finding the love of my life and being married for 20 plus years, and finding myself going through a divorce from him, what I didn't know is that I had 40 plus years of extreme anxiety and fear. And just kind of pushed down. And when I went through the divorce, I had a breakdown. I lost everything.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: My friend Kathy Basher who later became my mentor in the Office of Individual and Family Affairs she was looking for me and apparently I texted her and told her that I was on a mountain enjoying a bonfire and so she came looking for me and found me on a side of a mountain enjoying a bonfire there. And this is, after many, many months of not telling anybody that through the divorce, I lost my housing. I had a small storage unit and I was sleeping in my car at the state fairgrounds in Phoenix at 18th Avenue and VanBuran.



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Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: We used to go to the gym right there and the owner of the gym would let us eat breakfast and take a shower there. And then I would walk across the street to the Department of Health Services. And I would join Olmstead meetings and other meetings talking about where millions of dollars are going to go for the homeless and for the populations that are struggling.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And no one ever knew that I was actually sleeping in my car. And so when the divorce and everything happened, Kathy found me, she rushed me to a psychiatric hospital in Northern Arizona called Wind Haven. I woke up about 4 days after I guess I was entered in there somehow. I don't really remember any of my first initial time there.

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Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: What all I remember is that I was not able to speak. And so for a lot of you who don't know me, my daughter is a very unique adult today. In two months she'll be 37 years old and she's also profoundly deaf and we utilize sign language as her main mode of communication. And so, my brain broke and just reverted to the form of communication that made, I guess, the most sense to me, which was sign language. It literally took me over 30 days, a lot of medications, and a lot of peer support to get me to a place where I was able to verbally communicate again.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And hence I started my journey in Arizona through the behavioral health system. Although I believe I was always a peer, always afraid, always in isolation. And so I went through that healing journey very broken here in Arizona. I was a member. I was the individual that we fight for day in and day out. My daughter was not yet in Arizona. She was living in Michigan when all this occurred. And so I was mistreated, I was accused of missing appointments when I never had an appointment.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: I had to fight my way just to get off of medications that I didn't need, to get medications that I did need. I have been a fighter since I was a foot tall. And so I had to fight my way through this whole system. And Nicole happened to be in Michigan with her grandmother helping to take care of her grandmother at the time for a few months when all this occurred. And so I got her back here once I joined the housing program in Arizona which was a voucher program. And so I was able to get her back here with me and then her fight began.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And so Kathy brought me into the office of Individual and Family Affairs because in Michigan I worked for the Office of Consumer Affairs which is sort of our counterpart nationally. And so Kathy began to mentor me and I saw myself and every family member and every individual that needed help. And total today, I've worked 36 years in the behavior health field and I still see myself or my daughter and individuals that we serve.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And the reason that in Arizona OIFA is so special is because we actually create that bridge from our own personal knowledge from individuals that are outside of working in the insurance company with us and sometimes in there with us. I've had people that I work with, to the leadership in the health plans.



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Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: For my role in my health plan I have worked very very hard for the last several years to earn trust and respect. And so when I send a concern up through my executive leadership that comes to me, I vet that concern.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: I call the provider. I find out what's going on because I have to be a person that let's say my CEO emails me and asks me a question, I have to know the answer so that I'm not sending false information. and so OIFA really creates that bridge between everyone that we serve and the entity in which we serve in. And we bring along hidden parts of ourselves to every individual that we serve.

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Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And we bring those stories because we know when we sit with a family member who has been struggling to get services, we know what that feels like and we can connect that quick with that family member. We bypass the psychological barriers that are created by a frustrating system. And we do that because we've really been there. So, we're not going to say we know everything or we could provide all the answers, but what we are going to say is we really understand where you're at right now and we're going to try to help as best we can.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And so just in my last wrapping up comments, part of OIFA is being able as fearful and as much as we're judged being in the health plan and let me tell you this isn't an easy seat to sit in because we're often put in very very difficult situations. But as much of all of that, it is very scary to share your most intimate private experiences. But we're trained to do that. We're trained to do that because people need to know that we're like them and we understand and we're there to help them. De.

Diedra Freedman: Dawn be before you move on and...

Diedra Freedman: and Christina and Wendy share what they are comfortable sharing. Speaking of trained, if you could just talk to us about the training program you've developed at United. Thanks.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Yep. Sure.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Okay. Yeah. So I almost say on every meeting wherever I am, remember United has credentialed peer and family support training. A lot of people are like, "Yay, we don't really know what that is." But the reason I speak to that is because in our Arizona system, Medicaid funds people who want to work in behavioral health and bring that lived experience component to an agency to help support those that agency serves.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And so there is a 40hour clock hour training that's required by AHCCCS for these individuals to go through this training, get a certificate and then are enabled to work in the behavior health system. The reason I keep talking, if you're wondering why I'm focused on only, speaking about the behavioral health system, that does not disqualify all individuals in all systems. But for the Medicaid system to pay for that training and the individuals have to be in Medicaid.



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Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And this training takes an individual who most individuals don't really even understand the system and it takes individuals who are un-knowledgeable about the Arizona public behavioral health system and takes them through the journey of understanding each level of the system and what their role could look like in that system. And then we naturally extrapolate their gifts, their talents, their understanding. And we partner with them to enhance what they do so that when they can go out and find even a part-time job, to just help others, if that's just their motivation, then they have all the system pieces. It's a jumping off point.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Agencies are then therefore responsible to equip those individuals with that structure within that agency to serve others. So peer and family supports throughout Arizona that are credentialed and we're one of the only states that Medicaid actually pays for that by the way, but those that are credentialed are equipped to be able to utilize that credential. It's a state recognized credential to remove barriers to care, to be able to support those individuals, families who need help and get in those homes, really find those community resources, walk along that health care journey with them as long as it takes.

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Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: And so our training at United is unique in a sense but there are 42 providers scattered throughout Arizona that can certify peer supports and there are six that can credential family supports. We happen to offer both of those for free as an insurance company just as a benefit because I'm OIFA and I'm there at United, so that's going to happen. But these agencies offer this all the time. Did that help De? Okay.

Diedra Freedman: Yeah. the one thing that I want to make sure, and you please correct me if I'm wrong,...

Diedra Freedman: but it's not just available to United Healthcare Community Plan members. It's available to anybody.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Yes,...

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: you're so And I'm sorry if I made it sound that way. Everywhere OIFA is. Wendy and Christina as they talk about it, anybody can reach out to an OIFA throughout all eight of the health plans and either some of them train or so or they'll get you connected to a training and it's from border to border. It's throughout Arizona regardless of health plan affiliation. regardless of where you're getting or your family is getting services, as long as they touch behavioral health, in other words, as long as they are in that system in some way, that's the criteria.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: There's other stuff, too, but I'm going to go on mute because I can't wait to hear Wendy and Christina's stories.



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Diedra Freedman: Yeah, Wendy and Christina, if you would talk about how we've kind of informally bastardized the system. So, even though the system is designed to help behavioral health, we kind of lean on you guys for the total package, especially Christina with the HCBS services. We just kind of don't broadcast that because federally the money is supposed to come from behavioral health and it's supposed to be involved in behavioral health. And I don't know how our AHCCCS friends feel about that, but the rest of us feel like it's much better to ask for forgiveness than permission. And as long as you guys are willing to help us kind of on the QT, we're going to keep pushing. So sorry about

Christina Hedges: No, I think you bring up a really good point with that, De. I guess originally I was just the behavioral health advocate supervisor. When I originally moved into that role, the advocates that I were supervising were very kind of, for lack of a better term, hellbent on saying this is not a behavioral health issue. We're not going to assist. And I came right in and said, "I have been that parent that is on the other side that has nobody, that doesn't know who to turn to, that is waiting for that email that's going to give me the answers that I'm looking for." So, if somebody is reaching out for help, it's not behavioral health, we're still going to help them.

Christina Hedges: And if you think about it, we try to really view people as a whole person. And literally anything can turn into a behavioral health crisis at any point if we don't jump on it quick enough. So that's just kind of been my mantra that if we can help, we'll do it. And if we can't help, we'll at least point you to the right person that Wendy, do you want to go next? Do you want me to go because I'm already talking? Do you want me to go because I'm already talking?

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: Just keep going. You're brilliant.

Christina Hedges: Okay, so within the DDD OIFA, as you all know, OIFA prior to a few months ago, was this kind of massive, I'm going to call it everything but the kitchen sink that DDD had. You couldn't find where something would fit nicely in a functional area at DDD, might as well throw it in OIFA.

Christina Hedges: So we did our restructuring and now were CARES but OIFA still lives within CARES and the OIFA within DDD includes behavioral health advocacy which is what it includes at all of the other MCOs, but we also have all of our amazing IOC liaisons, but we also have Joan's position which is our general advocate. So, we ensure that we are kind of covering that whole gamut of advocacy that when anything comes in and we can assist, we're going to do that. And like I said if we aren't the people that can do that, we will point you to people outside of the division as well. There are some things that do get sticky that we don't get involved in like guardianship and whatnot, but we're always willing to kind of offer resources.

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Christina Hedges: Like Raising Special Kids, check out that place that are able to help as well. so I guess I can chat a little bit about myself unless there's anything else you want me to cover on OIFA De?



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Diedra Freedman: Just a little bit about the alliance and how you work hand in hand with all the other OIFAs. So that I said, I've been knocking on the OIFA door for the last two decades and if there are health plan issues involved, not only do I email you, Christina, when it's a DDD member, but I also email Wendy or I email Dawn.

Diedra Freedman: And on the last one, we kind of needed AHCCCS to get off the dime. Even though it wasn't a health issue. And so I emailed the AHCCCS OIFA administrator knowing that she couldn't do anything because of the constrictions, but at least procedurally it made sense. So nobody's nose was out of joint. She was aware of the situation and just maybe AHCCCS would be inspired, given the example of what the rest of you do, to maybe expand their OIFA office and take care of these things because as Christina said anything can become a behavioral health crisis. So you all seem to have a great relationship.

Diedra Freedman: Colleen McGregor, who sits on our committee, isn't available on Tuesdays, which is one of the reasons we moved the meetings to Wednesdays. So, she'll be joining us, but she's a really strong member of your alliance. So, if you could just talk a little bit about the alliance.

Christina Hedges: Yeah. So, like De was saying, the alliance is made up of all of the ACC or AHCCCS Complete Care Plan OIFAs as well as the DCS OIFA, and the AHCCCS OIFA. United and Mercy Care kind of fall in the ACC plan as well as the DDD plan. So they're there. So Dawn, you might need to help me out because there was just some conversion. So there's Arizona Complete, United, Mercy Care,...

Christina Hedges: Molina, Blue Cross, Blue Shield,...

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Go ahead.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Keep Yep.

Christina Hedges: Banner, DCS, DDD, and AHCCCS. Thank you,...

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Correct. Good job.

Christina Hedges: It's been a whirlwind of a day at my house.

Christina Hedges: So yeah, like De was saying, we all work very closely together. That's kind of the unique thing about the alliance that if some sort of struggle or issue comes in and it's not sent to the right health plan, we're able to really quickly reach out to the other and ask for their assistance. And as you all know, everyone in OIFA has lived experience, so they know what it's like to not have somebody helping them. So the response and I guess quickness that OIFA jumps on things is pretty impressive. How often do we meet? We meet as a group as an alliance about once a month. The and the administrators meet more often.

Christina Hedges: So I believe we meet with AHCCCS about twice a month. And then we meet as the OIFA Advisory Council, which is open to the public on what Tuesday is it? Hold on. Not the first Tuesday. So, for some reason they're not on my calendar at all anymore, which does not make any sense.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: It's a third Tuesday.



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Christina Hedges: The third Tuesday. Thank you, Dawn. So, we meet on the third Tuesday. And that's where we get updates just kind of directly from AHCCCS. We hear from the community as a whole. We hear from family-run organizations. We hear from the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition, the Northern Arizona Peer and Family Coalition.

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Christina Hedges: the OIFA alliance also is kind of the governing or oversight for peer support utilization or peer support services and family support services. So there's two AHCCCS policies that outline the requirements for those to become credentialed in those services or in providing those services. And then we work really closely together to ensure that those policies reflect what we feel are necessary and ensure they're in alignment with best practices, especially for peer support. We really kind of scrutinize what SAMA puts out often and make sure that we are in alignment with that. Is there anything that I'm missing? Dawn or Wendy?

Christina Hedges: Can you think of?

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: No, you got it. I think the collaborative approach, which is different for most insurance companies.

Christina Hedges: Yeah, I mean it's pretty much just exactly what it sounds like. We are an alliance and we don't really engage in any of this competitiveness between this company does this and this company does that. We're really ensuring we can do what's best to support Arizona as a whole. One thing that I forgot to mention is that I can't even remember when we did it. It must have been about two years ago, we held the OIFA summit and we held one in Northern Arizona, Central Arizona, and one in Southern Arizona and also one virtually.

Christina Hedges: And we had staff from all of the OIFAs coming together to go out into the community and engage with community members to gather their input on what they felt could be better in the system specifically related to peer support and family support, but also just better in the behavioral health system as a whole. And then we were able to use all of that information that we got from the community to create the OIFA strategic plan which is on AHCCCS's website. And then each MCO or other OIFA, I guess, every OIFA has their own strategic plan that is in alignment with AHCCCS's strategic plan. So that's OIFA alliance in a nutshell. We have a really pretty hold on, I found the slide. A really pretty, let me share my screen because we've got a pretty little logo.

Christina Hedges: This is our nice pretty little OIFA Alliance logo. We're hoping to eventually have a website that will have all of our information on it and other stuff as well. So, okay. I don't know how to stop sharing my screen. I guess I can talk about myself a little bit. So unlike Dawn, my story also started when I was young. However, I grew up the child of two doctors. My mom was an ER physician and my dad was a psychiatrist.



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Christina Hedges: He was the medical director of one of the behavioral health hospitals down here in Tucson and also ran a private practice. So I grew up spending a lot of time in the emergency room just hanging out and also just hanging out at my dad's private practice. But when I was 10 years old, my dad was riding his bike and was hit by a car and was killed. So at that point in time, I kind of switched roles and went from hanging out at his practice from just being his kid and hanging out there to actually being a patient. I started going to therapy there and getting medication management from some of his colleagues.

Christina Hedges: So while I never was part of the public behavioral health system, I definitely have that lived experience as well and was able to kind of see both sides of the coin, and I became very familiar and kind of in tune with what depression is, what anxiety is. And I've been on my anti-depressants since I was 10 years old. And I truly can credit being here to learning about that and taking an active role in my own treatment relatively early. But then if we fast forward a bit to I think around 2017, my wife and I decided to become foster parents. We both had worked at our fair share of behavioral health agencies and I had been with the Division for about a year.

Christina Hedges: When we got our first placement, we got a little boy named Danny. He was 15 months when he came to live with us. And at 15 months, he weighed 17 lbs. And this was after 3 days in the hospital. His 15 months couldn't sit up on his own, could barely hold his head up. He was pretty significantly delayed in every single aspect of his life. We got him hooked up with AzEIP and DDD as quickly as we could. He started making kind of immense strides. However, he was diagnosed with PTSD before he was age two. And now here we are about 6 years later and we still don't know the extent of the trauma that he experienced.

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Christina Hedges: But it's something that's going to affect him for the rest of his life. He's the most amazing little guy in the entire world. He's got some challenges. But he outwardly presents like he is the sweetest kid in the entire world. He can make friends with anybody instantaneously, but it's all a protective mechanism. There's maybe I can count on one hand the people who have seen him truly get emotional and it's because he doesn't feel safe around people. So we are on this kind of journey of trying specialized therapy after specialized trauma therapy. Of course none of which are covered by his AHCCCS or his private insurance.

Christina Hedges: But that's just kind of where we've landed in our journey. There is one therapist in all of Arizona that specializes in this type of modality that we're working on for his complex trauma. So that's Danny. Then I also have my little baby Ray who is also 8 years old. They're 7 months apart. Danny is seven months older and he will let you know that any chance he gets that he is the big brother. My son, Rey was born at 34 weeks with neonatal abstinence syndrome which essentially means that he was born withdrawing from the substances that his biological mom was using at the time.



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Christina Hedges: And because of that he was instantly enrolled in AzEIP and DDD as well. So by the time he was two he had done occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, gotten case management and some parent child relationship therapy with his bio mom. Then when he was three, after quite an uphill battle, we were able to get an autism diagnosis and ADHD diagnosis and we started his ABA journey right when the world shut down for COVID. So, we literally would sit around our dining room table with his BCBA, board certified behavior analyst on our laptop in front of us and we would do ABA sessions as a family at dinner.

Christina Hedges: And obviously ABA is kind of a very contentious topic for many reasons, but it was something that my wife and I spent hours upon hours researching and we were always incredibly vocal with his team that our goal was never to extinguish any of his autistic traits or what made him him. However, by age three, he had already had some pretty significant aggression and some pretty dangerous behaviors that if we didn't get a handle on, I'm not sure where we would be today if that was not the case. He graduated from ABA. He is literally the smartest cookie that I've ever met in my entire life.

Christina Hedges: Disney is like his everything. In fact, a few days ago he was like, "Mom, I think we missed Mickey Mouse's birthday." And sure enough, we looked it up and Mickey Mouse's birthday is in November, but that's something that I'm not sure anybody actually knows. But I didn't even know Mickey Mouse had a birthday, but evidently he does and my son knows it. However, he does, is also the type of guy that does not want to learn anything from anybody. He does not want to follow directions. He does not want to follow instructions, but he can teach himself whatever he wants to learn. He taught himself how to read. We still have days where he is too anxious to leave the house...

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Christina Hedges: too, nervous to go to school and we have school refusals often, but we're trucking along. And then I also have a 20-year-old daughter who we adopted when she was sixteen. Raising a teenager who you did not spend the first 16 years raising is wild. I'm just not sure there's words for it. We have had our own struggles with her as well and her mental health. However, she's not as open and willing for me to share as my little boys are. They love to tell you that they have ADHD and will tell you all about their therapies and their special education and they're the type of kid that if they could help another kid, they'd do it.

Christina Hedges: So, I think that's all I got. Does anybody have any questions? I'm kind of an open book, but I also ramble. So,

Diedra Freedman: No, I really appreciate each of you sharing your stories.

Diedra Freedman: It's difficult, but I want the IOC to understand why you are our people. And I'm going to say this now that Dawn is on the line. I already expressed my condolences to Dawn on Wednesday morning when the United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson was shot and killed, was assassinated actually is the proper word.



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Diedra Freedman: We all have issues with systems, including government agencies and insurance companies. There are policies that we may disagree with but those companies in those agencies are made up of people like yourselves who care. And especially at this time when we're all reminded what we should be thankful for.

Diedra Freedman: I just cannot express how appalled I am of the comments that have come out and I hope that none of you are ever afraid to come to our meetings and to share your stories with us because either you are afraid of being vulnerable because of public response or you're afraid, which I know as a mom it's even worse.

Diedra Freedman: You fear for yourself is your fear for your children. So, I hope that you understand and we always make you feel safe here and that you understand how much I personally enjoy and appreciate working with you for the last 20 years. And will until I decide it's retirement time, which right now Frank says is another three years, but Michelle and I had talked about this topic before Brian Thompson was killed and I just think that it's so appropriate that we talk about OIFAs because I deal with insurance companies all the time as a consultant with the Honoris group.

Diedra Freedman: We do healthcare consulting and we're frustrated constantly, but we have these relationships that we've built with people like you who work for insurance companies, whose hearts bleed as much as our hearts bleed for people who aren't getting the supports and services. So I just think that it's very appropriate today that everybody learn because this is a public meeting there's recording of the meeting and so it's shared with the public and again on behalf of this OIFA on behalf of my husband Frank and myself and those of us at aHonoris group we're very sorry for the loss of Brian Thompson to his family, his friends, his colleagues...

Diedra Freedman: colleagues and to the rest of the health care industry. And we have no idea what the future ramifications are, but I'm hoping that relationships like the ones that we've built will at least not have that happen here. But obviously, we know the world can be a scary place. So, hey, Wendy.

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Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: This really has impacted our whole leadership team in severe ways. So, thank you so much for your kind words.

Christina Hedges: Take it away, Wendy.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: It looks like it's my turn. I mean, I got it. So, this sharing thing is a little bit newer to me, so I'm really lucky. So, I'm just going to start out with a little anecdote. So, I became a certified family support partner through United Healthcare. And one of the gifts that I got was this coffee mug. And so, Dawn and I had this joke that there was going to be a time that I was going to be representing Mercy Care, in some kind of meeting drinking out of my coffee mug and it would just be kind of funny that here's this Mercy Care gal drinking out of her United Coffee Cup. I'm like, "Dawn, that'll never happen." Well, it did.



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Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: and it's sitting on my desk and I love my mug and all the OIFAs truly do get along brilliantly and really share with ideas and we warmline folks over to each other all the time. So that was just my little thing and it was a great training by the way and I always like to say I was the valedictorian.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: So that's and it was really a terrific journey. So, I'm going to do this a little bit backwards and talk about my experience and what brought me here and then talk about my lived experience. So, I've always been in a helping field. My personal motto is to do one good deed a day. So, I'm really lucky to be in OIFA. I really didn't even know what OIFA was, but I'll get to that in a second. So, I started my career in food stamps in 1994. I was pregnant with my special needs son who I'm going to talk about in a second. I was at food stamps, it was great and I loved it. And then I had him and I took some time off and then got divorced and found that I needed to work for real. So, I always had a fun part-time job, but that didn't really count.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: I really needed to amp it up. So, I got a job with the Division and I was a support coordinator for about two years where they magically gave me all the children that lived with autism because my son lived with autism. So, I might as well have 60 members that lived with autism. So, that was interesting. So, I was kind of OIFAing at that time when I didn't really even know it. And so when that ran its course, I went over to work as a life skills provider with Florence Crittenton, which is, some of you might know, a behavioral health residential treatment provider and then worked mostly with women and girls and I taught life skills.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And then I like to say one of the best days in my career was when Stephen Sheets, who was my supervisor, but is now the CEO of Southwest Behavioral and Health, rescued me from Life Skills, which by the way, Florence Crittenton, I know this is being recorded. I loved my work there, but my calling was to be a high case manager. And so I became a high needs case manager at a health home in Phoenix for about two years and then became a supervisor and worked mostly with high needs working with foster children. I was the liaison for that agency at the time. And did a lot of work with high needs and foster care. And so I did that for about 16 years.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And I always, and I'm not trying to toot my horn, but I'm gonna toot a little bit. I wanted to spread a little Wendy a little bit further than what I was doing with the health home. And so I did a little, moved into training and I trained CASA, which is appointed special advocates with some training and trained and onboarded folks at my health home, but that still wasn't enough. And so I found out about this OIFA thing, which I never knew about. So, how is that possible? Because I felt like I kind of knew everything because I was such a helper. And let me tell you, I love my employee of 16 years, but when that position became available, I said, "Holy buckets, I got to jump on this role screams Wendy." So, why does it scream Wendy? I am going to move over into my personal, lived experience.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: and really kind of, even today I've had the longest best day of OIFAing. So I'll share what that looks like a little bit too. So I have two sons. One is 28 and he was diagnosed with autism at three. I literally can remember exactly what I was wearing on that day because I was pregnant with my second son. I remember I was wearing an orange shirt and biker shorts and I couldn't see my feet.



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Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: That's how pregnant I was. And I can't forget it's probably a trauma space for me to be honest. and it felt icky too also and again I'm getting emotional and he's 28. I mean you just don't forget those moments, right?

01:15:00

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: So, we just went into high gear. What can we do for this fellow who's stemming and not talking and I loved Christina when he talked about taking away your son's special things. I mean, he still stems to this day and he's 61 and it's his thing. He was doing it at the autism, at the Apple store which he loves to go to. Just standing in the corner listening to music, doing his thing and they all know him in there. It's kind of so we advocated hard for occupational therapy, which I believed saved his life through sensory integration, and I still practice some of that with him to this day. Had terrific speech therapist, but we had to fight tooth and nail to get those therapies because there was always a long wait.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And we really worked hard to bring those therapies home and practice what we learned and had to fight to get him into special programs in the Scottsdale Unified School District. That was rough. My ex is an attorney, and I'll never forget when we were sitting trying to get him services through his IEP, the OT had said to him, "Don't ever not threaten to use your skills and you don't, use your skill. Use what you know. And so, I'll never forget when he said, "Don't make me use my attorney skills in this moment." And of course, then we started to get people from the district at our IEPs and it was kind of ugly, but too bad.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: Learning how to advocate. By the way, I was also very soft-spoken. I know for a lot of you this is shocking, but I was a little bit scared to share my voice. And through my journey with my son, I found my voice, found my advocacy and I could just move mountains. I mean, and nobody was going to stop me. So, that was really awesome. We fought through high school and I felt like I was always fighting for something and it's pretty exhausting. I'm sure a lot of us on this call are exhausted from fighting for our kids and he'll always be my kid even though he's 28. But he is employed at Fry now for about six years. Again, he would love to work at Apple. He's very smart.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And we're working to try to get him into a space where he'd feel comfortable leaving. He cannot understand that he can interview while still working. You need to look for a job while you have a job. So, that's been difficult. But he also loves Disneyland. We're going there at the end of January and we're super stoked. Me and my sister, we're having an auntie's trip with my son. So, that's really exciting. But it's been a struggle and it continues to be rough. He struggles with making friendships and that's his biggest thing. He just wants some friends. So, that's heartbreaking, but we're working on it. I think we are at our 22nd support coordinator. I don't know.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: I'd have to check his file, but that's a lot of support for a 28-year-old, but he meets a new person every year. So, he has, my other son who is going to be 25, which again I can't even get over, does struggle with some anxiety and depression. So, by the time he had those struggles, I was ready to get in there and fight for him. So, we have and I don't know why I keep using the word fight.



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Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: I guess it's just there. His 504 was really difficult at the Scottsdale Unified School District. They didn't want to give him a 504. He struggled with anxiety over all sorts of things which was causing him some delay with his education. But he was a straight A student so they didn't want to give him those considerations and they almost voted not to give it to him. But then I got hysterical and used my own advocacy and wouldn't you know, he was granted a 504 and that whole system was very odd. I still don't get it to this day, but that 504 followed him to college, which was a blessing, especially during COVID. And then he continues to struggle, but has allowed me to support him in any way that he needs. And I've kind of changed my parenting a little bit using motivational interviewing with him instead of helicopter parenting, which has been very difficult.

01:20:00

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: So to say that all of that has lead me to OIFA would be an understatement. So with my professional experience being able to bring that into support families literally on a daily basis to help them understand the child and family team process, how out of home process works, how trauma might affect a child. I don't wear a clinical hat, but I can get people to do that. But utilizing my background and robust experience has come in helpful. I had a dad say to me today, "What you did was the best Christmas gift that I could ever receive."

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And it was the littlest thing to me. But when you hear that sigh of relief, when you're on the phone with somebody and they just feel so supported because you can say, I don't necessarily understand, but I can only imagine I've been there because of just something so simple. And that happened at least four times today. And it was a really long day, but it was such a good day that I was able to OIFA with so many people. And then the mere fact that I get to come and sit at a desk and do this for a job is one of the coolest things ever. and I've only been here for a year and I hope to be here for many years to come and I feel so lucky to do what I do.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And at Mercy Care we're doing so many cool things and partnering with our PED's care team. I'm doing a presentation to kind of get them involved in how OIFA could assist and help them. I actually am the OIFA representative for CHP. They didn't have one at the time and I was already OIFAing the DCS population. So that's my role right now. And so we work hand in hand with the CHP resource gal, Marta and we're developing some programs with her.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And so that's been a really terrific opportunity. And I don't know what else to say. I think that I've said a lot of good stuff. Do you have any questions for me? And I knew Dawn, I was going to be in trouble. But everybody's story is so unique to them. and I'm not not in trouble, Dawn. Not really. But you know what? You have such a unique and beautiful story. I And you're so eloquent when you talk about it. You're laughing. But anyway,...

Diedra Freedman: [What's the? We, as IOC members, and obviously we're](#) all advocates.

Diedra Freedman: I know that it doesn't matter what your process is. I'm going to email you guys anyway. But



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Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: And De, you know what, here's what I wanted also to say essentially we like to say there's no wrong door.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: So, I got an email from a member who is with United, and I find that out because I've looked them up in AHCCCS or whatever I've done to figure that out. We've partnered so beautifully together with all the different members of the OIFA teams. Libby from United just sent a beautiful email and we just had a giggle.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: First of all, I love Libby. She's terrific. But we've had some great communication. So, we support each other so well. Send any question to any of us. There's no wrong door and we'll get you to where you need to be. We're a lucky crew.

01:25:00

Diedra Freedman: *Anybody have any questions? I just appreciate the fact that you've come and you've shared your personal stories. And that you were comfortable doing so and I* asked Michelle to tell you, "We only wanted you to share what you were comfortable sharing." But I think it gives us an idea and again because the record is public, it gives anybody who listens the idea of why OIFAs are so important and the work that you guys do because you do amazing work. And just for the record, before Christina was the OIFA director, Leah Gibbs was the OIFA director and as I mentioned in an email last week on another subject, every time I've contacted Christina, I've never had a parent come back to me with a complaint. So, I can only assume that the matters were handled. But it's the same thing when Leah was the OIFA administrator. I never had anybody come back and tell me that there was a problem. And just for the record here, that email concerns DDD issues, but health plan issues, it's the same thing. I've never had a parent when I've asked them to reach out to United or to Mercy Care. I've never had them come back and say to me, "Why did you waste my time? Nothing happened."

Diedra Freedman: And I always tell them if you don't get an answer, let me know and I'll use my channels. And I also tell them if you're not comfortable doing it, send me an email and I'll forward it. And the one thing that I do have to say about Mercy Care, is when these issues come up, a lot of them are systemic issues. They just happen to be happening to that person at the time. And I learned very quickly with my emails to Mercy Care to say, I'm just bringing this to your attention because it's a systemic issue, but this is not a Mercy Care member. This is somebody else's member. So, there's nothing you can do about this individual person.

Diedra Freedman: It's just a systemic issue you need to be aware of because I would get contacted immediately by Mercy Care administration saying who is this? How can we help? And you can't. And that kind of was the problem with the emails. Last week at DDD, we got the same response from leadership. Who is this? Can we step in? And the answer was no. The mom said that if she has any questions after reading the policy, she'll contact Christina. She's comfortable doing that. So, just stand down, but fix this for everybody else so it doesn't happen again. So, does anybody have any questions for these wonderful ladies or we ready to move on with our agenda?



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+1 602-*-***84:** No questions. I just want to say thank you to all for sharing and it helps me understand the services and who's doing what. Great. Thank you.

Brad Doyle: The same here. One thing I try to always communicate when I'm advocating is what my emotions were when my son was four and I had grievances and administrative law judge hearings. I try to tell the parents, put yourself in the support coordinator's shoes or for that matter the health care provider shoes. They need more information. Don't look at an appeal or a grievance as an adversarial. It's informational.

Brad Doyle: Just give them more information and then if that's not enough, get them more and more information because they're just a gatekeeper. That's all. That it took me a while to get there, but what De brought up, it's important for us, whether it's DDD, AHCCCS, Arizona Long-Term Care Services, United Healthcare, any of them, the message that I always tell the parents is they're the gatekeepers and you just have to find the key.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: That is so on point.

Christina Hedges: Yeah.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: It's so on point. And then we just use ourselves at OIFA. It's like, " give me about two hours. I'm going to do some footwork for you. Let's get it done." And you just hear this sigh of relief. It's such a cool role. I appreciate that, Brad.

Brad Doyle: Cuz you guys are definitely not in it for the money.

Discussion and Review of Incident Reports and Behavior Plans

01:30:00

Diedra Freedman: We did the review of possible committee membership. Does anybody have any discussion or review of incident reports and behavior plans?

Brad Doyle: No, not

Discussion, Review, and Possible Action regarding any policy issues of concern to IOC Members including requests for education presentations

DDD and AHCCCS Policy Notification Review and Discussion



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Diedra Freedman: Any discussion on any policy issues? Anybody have any requests for education presentations? for our next meeting. And no policy notification, review, and discussion.

DDD Staff updates

Diedra Freedman: Hey Michelle, you ready for our DDD staff updates?

Michelle Rademacher: Sure. We'll cycle back around to Christina if she's okay with that.

Christina Hedges: Yeah, sorry. I don't know if you can hear my dogs in the background. That's all I can hear, but I actually don't have many updates right now. I think the biggest updates are we are currently doing interviews to backfill the advocate position that was vacated when Tammy took my position. so when that position is filled, there will be five behavioral health advocates. There's some other interviews going on within CARES to ensure that we're fully staffed. Other than that I mean I don't think I have anything else. I gave you most of my exciting updates about two weeks ago. So I don't think I've got anything else.

Diedra Freedman: and your, Christina, your fearless leader from CARES,...

Christina Hedges: Gosh.

Diedra Freedman: Leah, she unfortunately didn't join us tonight.

Christina Hedges: I asked her if she would and I think she had a big day. They actually did a flag ceremony for her at the Capitol. So, I think she wanted to go home and spend some time with her family.

Diedra Freedman: What do you mean a flag ceremony?

Christina Hedges: They Michelle, were you there? I unfortunately missed it because my water main broke, but

Michelle Rademacher: Yeah, I saw the video. They actually hoisted a flag at the state capital on behalf of Leah Gibbs and her state service. Yeah.

Diedra Freedman: So then when they took it down at night, I assume they gave it to her.

Christina Hedges: Yeah, she got to take it home. It was pretty cool. And her family was there and I think the entire leadership team was there. So, it was really cool. Yeah, we saw the video of it. So,

Diedra Freedman: That's great. She has my contact information, so if she ever wants to be in contact with me again, she can, but she probably doesn't want to know my name after she retires. But we appreciate Leah's service. There's nothing negative as far as I'm personally concerned that anybody can say about Leah and the time that she spent with DDD. I wish she was not retiring from a selfish standpoint, but from a Leah standpoint, this is a well-earned retirement, and I only wish the best for her, and I hope that she enjoys a long retirement as most enjoyable as it can be because if she never advocate advocates another minute,



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Diedra Freedman: she's already given us more than five or ten lifetimes. So, I just kudos to her and we send her our congratulations and our love.

Christina Hedges: Very well said. I think most of us are still pretending that it's not actually happening and hoping that she's going to tell us it's an April Fool's joke, but I unfortunately don't think that's going to happen. So,

Diedra Freedman: I hope she and her husband go on some nice cruise with her family or whatever her version of an amazing experience is. So who's next?

01:35:00

Michelle Rademacher: Diane, you have an update, pretty please.

Diane Kress: That's hard to follow. Yeah. I mean, I am very touched with just this call itself. It's just really again to feel the power just alone within just this small group. Again, you guys have spoken enough. It's just amazing. So that's all I could say. So I apologize. I don't have much of an update. Again, looks like we have two open positions for our registered nurse investigators at this time, I don't know if for last month for November, we had 801 IRs that were reported. And then for now, trending for December, we've got 280. And I know what was it, not too long ago which was thankfully a long time ago, COVID was quite top of our minds for a number of months and years but so far just now we've seen just a small uptick for November. We've only had six reported and then of course for December we've only had two so far that we've entered. Again, I know that we aren't as far as funds for the COVID piece that we were doing a couple years ago, but other than that, I don't think I have anything else. Again, appreciate what you guys do out there. So, thank you

Diedra Freedman: Diane, if you could express our thanks to Dr. Loki. We really appreciated her coming to our last meeting and explaining, answering questions. They were tangential to the agenda presentation that she was giving us, but they were on the agenda and she graciously answered what she could. We really look forward to having her visit us again. And everything that she brings to DDD. And as we said a couple weeks ago, we are just waiting with baited breath for you guys to go over to the AHCCCS IR system so that you guys can start doing some real tracking and trending.

Diedra Freedman: I'll speak for myself. I was just very impressed with what she's looking for. And I haven't had the pleasure of meeting the clinical medical director, but it seems like the two of them have a very good working relationship and I look forward to a lot of improvements in the system. So, we appreciate her coming and hopefully she didn't feel that she was put on the hot seat and that she couldn't handle it and that she never wants to come see us again because I thought that it was very productive and very professional.

Diedra Freedman: And anybody who knows me knows that there are very few people that I make public statements about. Even though I just talk very highly about Leah, my bar is pretty high as to what impresses me and Dr. Loki impressed me. So, who's next? Christina or...

Diedra Freedman: Michelle, who's next?



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Michelle Rademacher: No.

Michelle Rademacher: That's okay. That's okay.

Diedra Freedman: I'm looking at Christina on the screen.

Michelle Rademacher: That's the extent of our staff updates right now.

Updates from Arizona Department of Administration

Diedra Freedman: And Larry's not here.

Michelle Rademacher: He's on leave.

Diedra Freedman: Did he give you an update?

Michelle Rademacher: No, he didn't. He ran away on leave as fast as he could.

Michelle Rademacher: He's probably doing some holiday travels.

Diedra Freedman: He's probably in the Bahamas enjoying himself.

Updates from DDD IOC Liaison

Diedra Freedman: Do you have an update, Michelle?

Michelle Rademacher: I just have a small update. Yes. let's see here. so I just wanted to let the committee know if you're looking in the share drive, you may have noticed that we created a new folder in the shared drive where we uploaded some backlogged IRs from October.

Michelle Rademacher: We thought it might be daunting to find all of those in the uploaded drive with the rest of the IRs and it could be hard to stay abreast of most current reports. Also to help with identifying the most recently closed incident reports, we created a monthly folder for December and we colored it blue. Anytime you want anything moved from the folder, moved into archive, or created just to help the committee out, just let us know. and we're happy to do so. The metrics for November incident reports that were loaded. So Diane gives you the incidents that they enter into the system for the month. And then what Morgan and I report on are the closed incidents and the most recently triaged reports that we provide the committee.

01:40:00

Michelle Rademacher: So for November, on the shared drive, we've provided the committee with a total of 854 redacted incident reports and so this includes 89 open reports which are the most recently triaged reports and they're the most current reports and then 765 of the closed reports. The closed reports are reports in which DDD has completed their investigation and included all the findings.



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Michelle Rademacher: So that is 242 less incident reports than in October. And then I do want to let the committee know that we do have the statewide chairs meeting scheduled for January 22nd is the upcoming statewide chairs meeting. That is extended for members to attend as well. And that is at 5:30 in the evening on the 22nd of January.

Michelle Rademacher: and the DDD public town hall. They're not having a public town hall this month in December. However, they are holding a town hall on January 2nd from 6 to 8:00 p.m. And that's when DDD will present updates and announcements to the public. That's all I've got right now.

Diedra Freedman: *Just to keep the record clear, those redacted incident reports, are all hand redacted, right Michelle?*

Michelle Rademacher: Yes, they are. We don't have a system that will automatically redact and we do redact those. We have a team of four redactors to do that work by hand and then Morgan and I go through and audit them and make sure they're okay.

Diedra Freedman: *So hopefully when we move to the AHCCCS system, they'll be automatically redacted because there's fields that they'll just be able to redact from the IRs, is my understanding. Is that correct, Diane?*

Diane Kress: Yeah, I think that's what I've heard, De. That it will have that capability and I believe there's some builds in there that there's going to have certain phases as we move again to the portal and start working on it. I think there's other phases that the system has a possibility of doing.

Diedra Freedman: *And we still have no date?*

Diane Kress: We have no date. We hear the conversation. I do believe there was some sort of survey sent out recently again to our qualified vendors with just a questionnaire of what it would take for them to enter incidents using the AHCCCS portal and what's their takeaway. So it will be interesting. I believe the survey ends January 3rd for their input.

Diane Kress: So, yeah,...

Diedra Freedman: It can't be any harder than the 20 page incident report or 11 page incident report that they're currently filling out, Diane. But my personal opinion.

Diane Kress: I Again, I agree. It's got some really great information. I believe they are making some enhancements. There's a couple of things that we've noticed. We could have had some additional comments or additional boxes because again when you've got medical group homes, it's not just a group home. We also have to identify that there are medical group homes that are specific. So it kind of makes it challenging when you're looking through systems and you want to make sure that this person is identified or resides in a medical group home which makes a difference.

Diane Kress: So yeah.



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Diedra Freedman: [Yeah, we talked at the last meeting](#) about medication information being accurate and...

Diane Kress: Mhm.

Diedra Freedman: how important it is and how it's a cultural issue at DDD that everybody understands how important it is and takes responsibility about how important it is. So hopefully we'll be seeing improvement

Diane Kress: Absolutely. And then again just reporting incidents though.

Diedra Freedman: [Hopefully we'll be seeing improvement.](#)

Diane Kress: Yeah, I hope so. So, yeah, 2025 is around the corner, so let's see.

01:45:00

ADJOURNMENT

Diedra Freedman: Is there anything else that anybody needs to discuss or, Are we ready to adjourn? Okay, it is 7:47 p.m. on the 10th of December. Our next meeting is an off meeting. It will be the second Wednesday. And then after that it'll be the first Wednesday. Only for January do we have to make the concession because of New Year's. So from my house to yours.

Diedra Freedman: Hey, Dawn.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Hey, sorry De. Sorry everybody. Just a quick question. Was there a vote on changing the day of the meeting or is that coming in a different meeting? I missed that. What is...

Diedra Freedman: No, we changed it, Dawn. We're now meeting on the first Wednesday except for January because of the New Year's Day is actually the first Wednesday.

Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: okay

Brad Doyle: It's

Diedra Freedman: But from my house to yours, I wish you all a happy holiday, whatever holiday that you guys celebrate and a happy and healthy new year. So, all of you, please take care and we'll see you on the 8th of January. Thank you for your attention and as I said at the last meeting I am most thankful for everyone...

Diedra Freedman: who attends these IOC meetings and especially the volunteers with the IOC. You guys, this is the most thankless job I think in the system. But you all do an amazing job and you all bring amazing enthusiasm and skills to the table and I appreciate all of you.

+1 602-*.**84:** All right.

Diedra Freedman: Have a great night and a great holiday. We'll see you next month. Bye.



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Dawn McReynolds UHC OIFA: Thank you. Bye.

Diane Kress: Yeah. Happy holidays. Bye.

Christina Hedges: Thank you

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: Good next year.

Wendy Herring - Mercy Care OIFA: Bye guys.

Meeting ended after 01:47:29 🙌

This editable transcript was computer generated and might contain errors. People can also change the text after it was created.

For all of November 2024 IRs, the Committee members have been given a total of **854** incident reports in the Shared Drive. This included **89** open and **765** for closed reports.

The IRs will be reviewed by the committee members.

Number of Questions for Quality Improvement Manager, QIM: **8**

Members of the committee will comment on incident reports directly and the liaison will send them to QIM.

All PRC meetings are being attended by Crystal Fox.

Number of Behavior Plans turned in by IOC Members: unknown

The Program Review Committee (PRC): unknown

The next scheduled meeting is January 8, 2025 at 6:00 pm.