

Complaints About DSS's Transportation Contract Continue

by Christine Stuart | Jan 28, 2019

HARTFORD, CT— It's been over a year, but there are still plenty of complaints about the transportation contractor hired by the state Department of Social Services to give rides to Medicaid patients.

Veyo, the company with the three-year, \$140 million contract to provide the services, reported last week that it was unable to complete 14,627 trips in October, 13,102 trips in November, and 14,093 trips in December.

A majority of those trips, according to Veyo, were not completed because the patient requesting the ride did not show up. Of the unfilled trips in October, Veyo said it was because 12,748 patients didn't show up for the ride. In November, that number went down to 11,981, and in December it went up to 13,186.



Christine Stuart / ctnewsjunkie photo: David Coppock, director of strategic partnerships with Veyo gives Care Coordination Committee an update

Drivers are expected to wait a five minutes for a patient to show up before leaving the location.

A PowerPoint presentation given by Veyo last week says the company completed 386,538 trips in October, 359,332 trips in November, and 355,975 trips in December. During that same time period they received 555 complaints in October, 488 in November, and 375 in December.

Brenetta Henry, a member of the Care Coordination Committee and a user of the services, said she was almost kicked out of a sleep study because Veyo failed to pick her up to take her to the clinic. She said she waited and waited and no driver ever showed up.

David Coppock, director of strategic partnerships with Veyo, said the largest number of patient "no shows" is in urban areas. Coppock said he was unable to say exactly why, but will try to break down the information by county.

Henry said she would like Coppock to provide information about why there have been so many "no shows" in the urban areas because the people she speaks to in Hartford have stories about not getting picked up. Henry also questioned why she wasn't able to be one of the eight consumers Veyo is transporting to its offices in North Haven for feedback about its services. She said she thinks it's because of the tough questions she would ask.

Coppock said the company is not being reimbursed for transporting the consumers — or for the food the company provides at the North Haven meetings that are not open to the public. He said it would be unrealistic for them to create a

forum for more consumer feedback.

"I think we are doing what we have been obligated to do at this point," Coppock said. "If we had 20 people attend that would be Veyo footing the bill for 20 people and their transportation. That, once again, we're not getting reimbursed for."

Bonnie Roswig, an attorney with the Center for Children's Advocacy, said Veyo is the "functional equivalent of the state" because its contract is greater than \$2.5 million. She argued the meetings should be open to the public and they should be complying with the same open meeting laws as the state.

"The department and Veyo is only allowing whom they choose to attend those meetings," Roswig said. "There are several people in this room who are users of Medicaid and they were told they are not allowed to go. We were told the press is not allowed to go."

Rod Winstead, the director of integrated care at DSS, said "your distress is so noted, Bonnie."

Roswig also questioned the adequacy of the transportation provider network.

Last May, the company reported it had contracts with 70 transportation providers.

However, there are companies such as Four Fellas Transportation in Bloomfield, which has a contract with Veyo but hasn't been given a ride since April 2018. They are still under contract and have a \$1 million ridesharing insurance policy they've continued to pay without any indication they will get work from Veyo.

Coppock declined to answer questions directly about Four Fellas Transportation.

"These companies are not dedicated 100 percent to Veyo," Coppock said. "They don't just have vehicles sitting around."

Shawn Dehnert, of Four Fellas Transportation, said actually they have a vehicle just sitting there that they can't use because it was dedicated to work it expected to get from Veyo.

He said the reason it looked like the company wasn't meeting the performance standards was because they were assigning them rides in Bridgeport, when the company is headquartered in Bloomfield and serves the Greater Hartford area.

Roswig said the department really needs to be holding Veyo accountable and they're not doing that.

A class action was filed earlier this month against the department for not providing Medicaid recipients with timely transportation.