



FINAL Minutes of February 19, 2009

Members in attendance: James Heffernan, Vice Chair; Sheila Mulvey; John Frost; Ted Walen; Carlos Colon; Patrick Vingo; Peter H. O'Meara - Ex-Officio.

DDS Staff in attendance: Deputy Commissioner, Kathryn du Pree; Ed Mambruno, DDS Ombudsperson; Christine Pollio, Dir. Legislative and Exec. Affairs; Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison.

James Heffernan, Vice Chair, chaired the meeting for Jennifer Carroll. The meeting was opened at 6:34pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No one from the public was in attendance.

MINUTES

Jim asked for a review of the January minutes. Jim suggested that they be changed to reflect that Alyssa Goduti from CCPA was speaking about the Rescue Fund for private providers. Jack Frost made a motion to approve, seconded by Jim. The minutes were approved with the recommended change.

OMBUDSPERSON REPORT (ED MAMBRUNO)

Ed Mambruno reported on the February report. He highlighted his work to address nursing home concerns and a meeting with regional OBRA Coordinators. He is working cooperatively with Karen Huntington, Utilization Review Nurse. He reports that communication with nursing homes is improved. He then discussed recent family calls regarding service provision. His monthly report was distributed.

Discussion ensued about a family member who wanted to be the paid staff person to care for his adult child. Ed explained this particular situation and Kathryn discussed the process and criteria the department uses to decide when this is appropriate.

A question was asked about the review of a nursing home placement meant to be short term for rehabilitation. Regional OBRA Coordinators review the placement to determine medical necessity.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE (CHRISTINE POLLIO)

The three agency bills in the Public Health Committee were all approved at the first level and sent on to appropriate additional committees before going to the House or Senate for a final vote. We still have two agency bills to go to a public hearing. There are numerous bills that have been proposed that Rod and Christine are tracking.

Program Review met on the raised bill related to the Aging Needs study. All of our testimony is available on line. We responded to the study recommendations as well. The response was emailed to members.

Our budget hearing before Appropriations is scheduled for February 20, 2009. The Commissioner will testify in the morning and the public hearing will begin at 3pm. Peter will address questions about our budget and is prepared to respond to Results Based Accountability (RBA) questions for five of our program areas: voluntary services, respite, case management, individual supports and CLA residential services.

Christine explained that public testimony is given by DDS, DMHAS, DPH and the Office of Health Care Access. Members of the public will sign up tomorrow to testify. The Governor did share her third mitigation plan for FY 09 today and has asked to legislative review by February 25. It recommends a rescission in clinical services and reflects a lapse in the autism pilot.

The Governor has recently appointed Thomas Kalal to the Council. He will join the Council for the March meeting. He resides in East Lyme. Christine is updated the membership list. There is a new rate for mileage reimbursement. Members can give their reimbursement requests to Christine or Rod.

The Appropriation's deadline for legislation is April 16, 2009. The committee's budget recommendation will probably be released earlier in April.

Ted suggests discussing some reaction to new bills under new business.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Peter reported that Jennifer Carroll attended the February webcast of the Trades meeting where the budget was presented, which is now posted on our web. Peter thanked Jennifer for attending on behalf of the Council.

April 14th – 16th is the next Investigator training and Council members are welcome to attend.

Peter stressed the need or the department to actively communicate with all of our stakeholders regarding budgetary changes over the next few months. Town meetings with staff are planned over the next three weeks and family forums will be held in May after the budget is more final.

Joan Barnish will be asked to send all members access information for future Trades webcast meetings.

Peter reviewed the Governor's proposed budget for DDS, supports new caseload growth for high school graduates and age-outs. There is no new funding for the Waiting List but the department has already exceeded the requirements of the Waiting List Settlement. The private sector is flat funded. The budget does reduce public services modestly and the hiring freeze will continue. Given the state economy, we are very pleased with the maintenance of services and caseload growth.

This year's budget deficit of \$1.1 billion will be addressed in the Governor's mitigation plan and includes wage concessions and retirement. If there isn't agreement on this, other staffing changes will be necessary.

Peter shared the impact of a retirement incentive package on DDS. Eight hundred and eighty one (881) employees meet the criteria and 390 are more likely to retire. We do not yet know anything about the refill rate.

The Governor and OPM have been very supportive of the needs of individuals served by DDS.

The department was able to increase revenue to the state by \$250 - \$300 million in FY 09 through a retroactive rate adjustment, which while a one-time increase will increase the rates going forward and will generate approximately \$70 million in additional federal reimbursement in FYs 10 / 11.

Jack Frost asked the question as to whether the current union agreements limit the department's ability to restructure. Kathryn explained the current prohibitions to privatize services and an effort in one region to work collaboratively around day service changes.

Sheila asked if there have ever been studies of the true cost savings of retirement incentive programs. Peter indicated there is a debate on whether it saves money. LOFA does do an analysis of proposed plans. Jim indicated studies indicating there is not a long-term savings. Peter explained after questions that it would be available to any eligible employee and could not be restricted to certain staff functions. Peter discussed the strength and talent of our public employees clinically and the importance of the provision of case management by public employees.

Sheila asked about the dental cuts. The dental coordinator is working on the dental coverage issue and determining specific impact to DDS consumers. She also inquired about the impact of rescissions on services. The department will handle through utilization.

Carlos inquired about positions being cut, specifically Commissioners. Peter responded that so far, DDS has fared fairly well. The Governor continues to control costs by requiring reductions in gas consumption, cell phone use, vehicle use, hiring freeze, a voluntary furlough day for managers etc.

Sheila asked if there has been any more discussion about agency consolidations. Only what was proposed in the Governor's budget. Also, the Govt. Administration and Elections Committee (GAE) has been requesting detailed organizational charts from multiple agencies.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

Ted Walen recommended that the Council advocate to the Governor and the Appropriations Committee members on continued funding for the Waiting List and dental care for consumers. Members agreed and added the issue of addressing concerns of private providers. Ted made a motion to have the Council send letters to the Governor and Appropriations Committee members expressing their concerns for these areas. Patrick Vingo seconded. Jim will talk to Jen Carroll next week and they will work with Christine to draft a letter and get it out in the next couple of weeks.

A brief discussion on the impact of the stimulus package ensued. Details are still being determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33pm.