

**Final minutes 9-10-09**

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jennifer Carroll, Chair; Carlos Colon; Jim Heffernan, Vice Chair; Tom Kalal; Sheila Mulvey; Peter H. O'Meara, Ex-Officio; John Pelegano, Secretary; Patrick Vingo; Ted Walen.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jack Frost; Gregory Kelly

DDS STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Kathryn du Pree, Deputy Commissioner; Christine Pollio, Legislative & Executive Affairs; Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison; Sarah Kasacek, Director of Investigations; Edward Mambruno, DDS Ombudsperson.

Jennifer Carroll- Chair opened the meeting at 6:02 pm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Donna Bouteiller introduced herself as a parent of a child served by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). She was attending to learn about the activities and workings of the Council. Sheila Mulvey indicated she had invited Ms. Bouteiller and hoped she could eventually be appointed as a Council member.

JULY MINUTES:

Technical corrections were proposed. Tom Kalal motioned for acceptance of the minutes as amended and Patrick Vingo seconded the motion. The corrected minutes were approved unanimously by a voice vote.

OMBUDSPERSON REPORT:

Ed Mambruno briefly discussed his role as Ombudsperson including visits to Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs) providing acute or long-term care to DDS consumers. He has visited 122 individuals as of August. There are approximately 350 DDS consumer in SNFs at any given time. He coordinates his work with the DDS utilization nurse. Between both staff, all SNF residents have been visited. They will continue their visits.

Ed Mambruno told Council members that he is preparing his annual report, which should be sent to Council members soon. He shared his monthly report. Ted Walen asked about Mr. Mambruno's observations of the treatment and discharge planning for people in nursing homes. Mr. Mambruno reported that treatment is better than expected, as are staff interactions with residents. There is turnover of social workers at the facilities. Sheila Mulvey asked about Mr. Mambruno's report on Chelsea Place where staff was uncooperative. Mr. Mambruno worked with the facility staff on allowing him access to DDS consumers. Jim Heffernan was very complimentary of Mr. Mambruno's work on an issue for someone regarding the use of a GI tube, which a consumer didn't want. Mr. Kalal asked for clarification of the SNF acronym. Mr. Mambruno dealt with an emergency respite at Ella Grasso Center to relieve the family of daily responsibilities and advocated for a CLA placement. Mr. Mambruno complimented Vanessa Alvarez and her staff.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

Christine Pollio shared handouts from Creative Living of Connecticut who attended the July meeting of the council. Ms. Pollio will be updating the contact list and asked for any changes in member's information.

The budget update and discussion of the conversion plan will be addressed in detail by Commissioner O'Meara later. The budget passed and is being implemented without the Governor's signature. Implementation language is being drafted. Session has tentatively been scheduled on September 23rd and 24th for the legislature to finalize and pass the implementation portion of the budget. DDS's conversion plan was reviewed at a public hearing on September 3, 2009, which included testimony by Commissioner O'Meara and panels of provider and union representatives. The afternoon was reserved for public testimony.

Christine Pollio reminded the Council that it is time to solicit ideas for legislative proposals for Fiscal Year (FY) 10. DDS proposals are due October 15, 2009 to OPM and the Governor's Office for review. Jim Heffernan asked about budget related proposals, which Ms. Pollio said would be shared with Vince O'Connell. Tom Kalal asked about legislation DDS would propose and Ms. Pollio and Rod. O'Connor summarized proposals from last year that were not enacted. Jim Heffernan asked that Ms. Pollio email a summary of these so Council members could build on this foundation. Jennifer Carroll asked Ms. Pollio to clarify if she would entertain ideas from individuals and Ms. Pollio said they would be welcome.

Patrick Vingo asked about the course of closure for Southbury Training School (STS) based on law and consent decree requirements. Ms. Pollio talked about the requirements and the political implications as well as the divided opinions among parents, advocates and legislators. Commissioner O'Meara explained that this type of proposal would have budget implications. Commissioner O'Meara mentioned previous studies on this issue, which have never resulted in additional legislation. The administration is committed to fulfilling the obligations of the Consent Decree and providing a quality environment for people living there. It will remain a viable part of the service system in Connecticut. Commissioner O'Meara hopes the court case will be fully resolved within six months. The Messier case remains open with a narrowed focus on community placement.

Sheila Mulvey asked if community consumers could buy into dental insurance offered to state employees to improve access to dental care. Commissioner O'Meara will ask the dental coordinator to research this issue. We will put it on a future agenda and invite Izabella Pulvermacher, Dental Coordinator, to attend.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Kevin Morey offered his resignation due to an employment conflict. Commissioner O'Meara recognized his participation, assistance and perspective as a council member.

Commissioner O'Meara summarized the highlights of the FY 10/11 budget with the caution that it could continue to be revised during the year through implementation language, holdbacks and rescissions. The Governor has concerns about revenue targets. As the budget is currently constructed, DDS can manage its obligations. Funding is available for school graduates and age-outs but none for the waiting list. There is no COLA for providers. The Voluntary Services Program (VSP) has been cut by \$1 million and the Birth to Three Program by \$5 million. The budget directs DDS to increase parent fees and insurance coverage of Birth to Three services. Additional details on this issue will likely be worked out in a budget implementer.

DDS lost 395 employees to the RIP and will only be allowed to refill 72 positions permanently, which includes nurses, clinicians, case managers, quality reviewers and maintenance staff. Commissioner O'Meara extended his thanks to the staff for their teamwork and willingness to assume extra duties.

Ted Walen asked about the impact of the budget on providers, which will be in the areas of future costs and wages. Turnover has been reduced due to the economy but providers still have challenges to address without a COLA. Sheila Mulvey asked about new providers. DDS added approximately 18 providers in FY 09. We lost nine of which only some were for financial reasons. Quality indicators indicate that cost or wages are not the indicator of quality. Also, quality indicators do not evidence any statistically significant difference between the public and private sectors. Dr. Pelegano asked what would happen if revenues didn't meet projections and Commissioner O'Meara explained the Executive Branch's responsibilities to further reduce expenditures.

A few unionized providers have received strike notices but some have been rescinded. Jim Heffernan noted HARC has a strike notice for September 22nd.

H1N1 planning is underway and involves DDS. Vaccines will be available in mid October and it is a two-dose system. Jenifer Carroll asked Dr. Pelegano about individuals with underlying medical conditions. He indicated they are a priority. The Department of Public Health will be working with us on our role in administering or coordinating vaccinations.

Tom Kalal asked about the CLA conversion project because he had heard concerns about the possible loss of clinical services. Deputy Commissioner du Pree responded about the requirements of the RFP, which include the responsibility of providers to provide the services and supports in the person's Individual Plan.

Jennifer Carroll thanked Commissioner O'Meara and department staff for keeping council members up to date on these important issues and for continuing efforts during these poor economic times.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS

Jennifer Carroll asked for ideas for speakers for future meetings. Members are interested in inviting Secretary Genuario, Izabella Pulvermacher, Kathryn Reddington, Siobhan Morgan, Dan Micari, Deb Duval and the Self Advocate Coordinators. They would like to visit a regional center or Camp Harkness and a private provider program, such as HARC. DDS staff will come up with a proposed schedule for review by the council at a future meeting.

Jim Heffernan made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Dr. Pelegano seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.