

**FINAL Minutes of November 16, 2010**

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Donna Bouteiller; Jack Frost; Jim Heffernan, Vice-Chair; Tom Kalal; Greg Kelly; Sheila Mulvey; Peter O'Meara, Ex-Officio; John Pelegano, Secretary; Patrick Vingo.

Absent: Jennifer Carroll, Chairperson; Lou Richards; Patti Silva.

DDS STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: Christine Pollio Cooney, Legislative Affairs; Ed Mambruno, Ombudsperson; Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison.

Jim Heffernan, who chaired the meeting in Jen Carroll's absence, opened the meeting at 6:10 PM and welcomed all members and guests.

OMBUDSPERSON'S REPORT:

Mr. Mambruno reviewed his October report. Numbers of cases have remained consistent. Also, he has had several recent calls related to the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) because there is no statewide coordinator and he used to have that role.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Chris Russo attended the meeting and is possibly interested in being appointed to fill one of the current council vacancies. He lives in West Haven and came to the meeting to see what it was like. Attending with him was Nadine MacGillivray, Case Management Supervisor in the South Region.

REVIEW OF THE MINUTES:

The minutes were approved with a recommendation to not use acronyms and to spell words out for easier understanding by members and the general public.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

Christine Pollio Cooney reported that she and Rod O'Connor met with the Office of Policy and Management for a first review of DDS's non-budgetary legislative proposals for the 2011 session. The initial feedback was positive. Mr. O'Connor provided an overview of the election results. At the state legislature, in the House of Representatives, the Republicans picked up 14 seats and in the Senate the Republicans picked up one seat. Caucus Leadership has been chosen and remains mostly the same with the exception of the new House Majority Leader, Brendan Sharkey, due to Representative Denise Merrill running for and winning the office of the Secretary of the State. Governor-Elect Dannel Malloy will take office on January 5, 2011, the opening day of session. He is in the process of assembling his transition team in the coming weeks. The legislative team will share information with Council members as they receive information. The legislative hearing on the new supports waiver will likely be planned for the 1st full week in December.

COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE:

Commissioner O'Meara shared some good news that DDS has been granted automatic refill for nursing positions. This should be helpful to the Regional Centers in filling critical vacancies. The

department's holdback in the quarterly allotment was restored to 100% and there have been no budget rescissions to date. Eight state agencies are running deficiencies, but DDS is not one of them. Commissioner O'Meara shared a copy of the Birth to Three Program's annual report and noted that it can be found online. The report highlights the positive stories of individuals who have been able to avoid needing special education at age five. The Commissioner mentioned highlights of the tentative budget that Governor Rell transmitted to Governor-Elect Malloy this week. The Commissioner is hopeful that the new administration will request to sit down and meet with DDS to discuss our current service needs. The new administration is expected to submit its own proposed budget in February. There will be public hearings and the legislature will have to vote to approve a final budget. Council members asked questions about whether or not it might make sense to advocate for federal reimbursement to come directly to DDS as opposed to the state general fund. The Commissioner cautioned that a careful analysis would need to be done on any proposal to redirect federal Medicaid funding. The point was also made that states may only be allowed to have one designated Medicaid agency which is currently the Department of Social Services (DSS). Also, several other state agencies operate waivers, not just DDS. The Commissioner agreed to keep members updated on any budget or transition team information.

Jack Frost inquired about proposed reduction options related to public Community Living Arrangement (CLA) closures. Commissioner O'Meara responded that during the past 5-6 years, DDS has done consolidations through attrition. Public group homes have been consolidated as census declines, or due to physical plant issues. No public employees lose their jobs with these closures because the employees are reassigned. Cottage consolidations have similarly occurred at Southbury Training School. More privatization could be proposed if there was another Retirement Incentive Plan. A question was asked about a stricter use of the Level of Need (LON) tool. Deb Duval will be doing a presentation in January on this issue. On the issue of federal reimbursement, Commissioner O'Meara mentioned that Beth McArthur has returned to work on the Advanced Planning Document which will assist in enhancing client information systems. This process may be eligible for significant reimbursement by the federal government. The trend is that the federal government is increasing its oversight regarding states' obligations to provide services and supports that have measurable outcomes.

OLD BUSINESS:

At 7:35 the Council reconvened the Executive Session that was recessed at the October meeting. Executive Session was adjourned at 7:50 and the regular meeting was reconvened.

NEW BUSINESS:

Christine Pollio Cooney discussed dates for the 2011 meeting schedule. Meetings will be the second Thursday of each month with no meeting scheduled in August. A motion was made by Jack Frost to approve the proposed schedule and was seconded by John Pelegano. Members should think of potential topics or tours they would like to propose and bring these ideas to the next meeting for discussion. Volunteers were requested to make up a nominating committee for Council leadership. Jack Frost, Tom Kalal and Sheila Mulvey volunteered and will present a slate at the Annual Meeting in December.

Tom Kalal described many positive recreational experiences and opportunities made possible in the South Region by a Rehabilitation Therapist 2. Numerous DDS consumers attend monthly dances, attend family swims, and participate in bowling leagues. Mr. Kalal is concerned that if the staff person retires, DDS may be unable to fill the position or the position may be eliminated. He inquired if any back up plans could be considered if this happens, such as hiring part-time staff or a

temporary durational position. Recreation programs impact the quality of life for consumers. Donna Bouteiller mentioned that she was instrumental in getting the town of Cheshire to hire someone through the Park and Recreation program to provide these same types of services. Wallingford also has a good program. It was mentioned that some private providers offer these types of services. It was questioned why these services are not covered by the waivers. Mr. Kalal emphasized that some older adult consumers have no one to advocate for them for these services. Commissioner O'Meara said he would look at the position when the time comes and would certainly advocate for a refill.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm on a motion by Jack Frost, seconded by Tom Kalal.