



Approved Minutes of February 17, 2011

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Donna Bouteiller; Jennifer Carroll; Jack Frost; David Hadden; Jim Heffernan, Chair; Gregory Kelley; Sheila Mulvey; Peter O'Meara, Ex-officio; Dr. John Pelegano, Secretary; Lou Richards; Patti Silva; Patrick Vingo, Vice-Chair.

Absent: Thomas Kalal.

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

Jim Heffernan called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No one from the public attended the February Council meeting.

REVIEW OF THE JANUARY MINUTES:

David Hadden moved and Jack Frost seconded a motion to accept the minutes of the January 13, 2011 Council meeting. The motion carried.

OMBUDSPERSON REPORT:

Ed Mambruno discussed recent cases. He was also contacted by a retired dentist who wants to volunteer his time. Commissioner Peter O'Meara discussed the state operated dental clinics and the community clinics on contract with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). There was a discussion about Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders as the result of one issue brought to the Ombudsperson's attention.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

Christine Pollio Cooney reviewed the four proposed agency bills and the department's testimony supporting them and one additional Public Health Committee bill regarding staff identification badges, which DDS testified against. There is support for the department's respectful language bill in the legislature and from the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA). DDS is waiting for the bills to be voted out by the Public Health Committee. The Judiciary Committee is reviewing the department's sexual assault bill and DDS will testify next week.

Ms. Pollio Cooney then reviewed many of the bills that DDS is tracking. There are eight bills regarding the siting of group homes. DDS testified at the public hearing against the two bills under review by the Planning and Development Committee. Many legislators were supportive of DDS Community Living Arrangements (CLAs) in their communities. Ms. Pollio Cooney appreciated the written testimony of individual Council members.

There are multiple bills about autism services including Medicaid coverage, expanding the definition of intellectual disabilities to cover autism, insurance coverage and the creation of an autism center in Southeast Connecticut. Ms. Pollio Cooney then discussed various privatization bills. There was discussion about Connecticut agencies accessing federal background checks for direct support workers. DDS now requires a state criminal background check. There may be a pilot on federal background checks that would include Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICF/MRs).

The Governor has proposed which agencies he would consolidate, reducing the number of agencies by one third. DDS will remain an independent agency under the Governor's proposal although bills in the legislature have been proposed to consolidate or merge DDS with other Human Services agencies. Mr. Heffernan asked Rod O'Connor and Ms. Pollio Cooney to keep the Council members informed of these bills' status. There is a bill to merge licensing functions of various human service agencies. There is a bill regarding oversight of people who transport individuals with developmental disabilities. There is a bill to reduce the age at which guardianship can be initiated. The budget hearing date for DDS is March 2, 2011. The public portion of the hearing starts at 3:00 PM. Senator Toni Harp and Representative Juan Candelaria co-chair the Appropriations Health and Hospitals subcommittee. No additional bills can be introduced by individual legislators but committees can continue to raise concept bills until the committee's raised bill deadline.

COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE:

Commissioner O'Meara told the Council that he and Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree taped a budget Webinar that will be available on the DDS website. Commissioner O'Meara also encouraged members to listen to Governor Malloy's budget address on the Connecticut Network (CT-N).

Commissioner O'Meara summarized the Governor's proposed DDS budget. The Governor's priorities are to restructure state government, cut expenditures, achieve employee concessions by negotiating with public employee labor organizations, and then look to increase revenue. DDS's budget remains intact as proposed by the Governor. However, this is the first step in the budget approval process.

While there are no cuts to the private sector, there are no Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAS) proposed, which will remain a concern to DDS private providers.

The total department budget is proposed to be \$1.06 billion in FY 2012 and \$1.07 billion in FY 2013. Savings are projected by limiting inflation, increasing insurance reimbursement for Birth to Three, equipment fund reductions, funding reductions for autism services, and a 1% cut to individual self-directed budgets. The Governor's budget provides funding for high school graduates, age-outs, Voluntary Services Program (VSP) transfers from DCF, and individuals needing forensic services. The budget also continues to transfer \$500,000 in FY 2012 from The Department of Social Services (DSS) for home health services.

Further savings are projected through continued consolidation of cottages at Southbury Training School (STS) and the closure of five public CLAs, which will reduce department overtime costs by redeploying direct support staff. These savings will be accomplished through attrition.

An ICF/MR user fee is proposed to increase federal revenue coming back to the state.

An interagency study of needs of persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is proposed that will include determining the feasibility of a center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities.

Commissioner O'Meara thanked the Governor, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the legislature for their continued support in serving individuals with intellectual disability. DDS receives a significant portion of the state budget. Commissioner O'Meara credits the integrity and quality of services offered by both the public and private sectors and the oversight DDS provides.

Mr. Hadden proposed that the Council write a letter to the Governor indicating the Council's pleasure with the Governor's support of services offered by DDS and its provider community. Discussion ensued about the provider community's stability and funding needs. Mr. Frost motioned and Mr. Hadden seconded a plan to write to the Governor and to draft testimony for the Appropriation Committee's budget hearing.

Mr. Heffernan discussed the Executive Committee's meeting with Deb Heinrich, Nonprofit Liaison to the Governor, who said she supported the rate adjustments proposed by the department that were included in the recommendations of the Rate Study Committee. They also discussed the rate issue for the providers, what worked well in the department; the criteria for any new leader of DDS, and the statutory language about the role of the Council in selecting the Commissioner. It was a positive meeting and Ms. Heinrich is open to future dialogue with the Council. She has been invited to attend a future Trades webcast that are produced monthly by the department.

Mr. Heffernan asked Deputy Commissioner du Pree for follow-up on the number of consumers who self direct and hire a family member. Approximately 90 – 100 consumers hire a family member to work with them.

Future meeting topics were discussed. Dan Micari will present on Quality Management in March. Ms. Pollio Cooney will invite the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) chairs to join the Council in May. Ms. Pollio Cooney will also further research a visit to the Coast Guard. The Council would like to invite Ms. Heinrich and Ben Barnes, Secretary of OPM to a future meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Patti Silva discussed the North Region RAC's plan to host its legislature breakfast and format it as a 'meet and greet'. It will be held April 20, 2011, 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM. They are inviting the other region's RACs and the Council to cosponsor the event. Jennifer Carroll and Ms. Silva volunteered to help plan the Council's involvement with the breakfast, which was motioned by John Pelegano and seconded by Mr. Heffernan. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Pelegano listened to a federal teleconference about new federal disabilities initiatives. He will share the mailing list with Council members.

Ms. Silva talked about the inclusive cheerleading squad in Wethersfield, which has been approved by Wethersfield's superintendent. Numerous cheerleaders have already volunteered. This will be the first inclusive squad in Connecticut.

Mr. Frost discussed that the South Region RAC may have a self advocate who wants to join the Council.

Mr. Frost asked about the plan to self-insure Medicaid health services. DDS understands this proposal is directed toward HUSKY and the elderly.

Mr. Hadden motioned to adjourn and Mr. Frost seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Heffernan adjourned the meeting at 8:20 PM.