



Council on Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

APPROVED Minutes of Thursday, December 12, 2013

Location: DDS Central Office, Conference Room A

In attendance: Patti Silva, Chair; Jack Frost, Vice Chair; Jamie Lazaroff, Secretary; Adrienne Benjamin; Jennifer Carroll; David Hadden; Dr. John Pelegano; Jim Heffernan; Patrick Vingo; Dr. Terrence Macy, Ex-Officio

Absent: Shelia Mulvey; Lou Richards

Staff: Joe Drexler, Deputy Commissioner; Christine Pollio Cooney, Legislative and Executive Affairs; Maureen Prewitt, Executive Secretary

Chairperson Patti Silva opened the meeting at 6:00 P.M.

Approval of November Minutes

Minutes from the November meeting were reviewed. Dr. John Pelegano made a motion, seconded by Adrienne Benjamin to accept the minutes. The Council voted unanimously to accept the November minutes.

Old Business

Presentation/Election of the 2014 Slate of Council Officers

The 2014 Council on Developmental Services Nominating Committee, which consisted of Adrienne Benjamin, Jennifer Carroll and David Hadden, proposed that the current slate of officers be voted in for another year: Patti Silva, Chair; Jack Frost, Vice Chair; Jamie Lazaroff, Secretary. There were no further nominations from the floor. Jack Frost made a motion, seconded by Dr. John Pelegano to accept the slate of officers as proposed. The Council voted unanimously to accept the slate.

Opportunity for public participation

Lisa Weisinger-Roland attended the meeting. She is interested in being appointed to the council and wanted to listen in on a meeting. Ms. Weisinger- Roland lives in West Hartford and has a son who receives services from DDS. Members introduced themselves and encouraged her interest in becoming a council member.

Discussion and approval of the Council's meeting schedule for 2014

The proposed schedule of 2014 meeting dates was distributed. Dates were agreeable to everyone. A motion to adopt the meeting schedule was made by Jennifer Carroll and seconded by Dr. John Pelegano. However, after the initial vote on the schedule, it was realized that there were errors in the dates for February, October and November. The vote was rescinded and a modified schedule was adopted. The corrected dates for those months are February 13, October 9, and November 13. A motion to adopt the revised schedule was made by Jim Heffernan and seconded by Patrick Vingo. The Council voted unanimously to accept the 2014 meeting schedule. The revised schedule will be sent out.

New Business

Meeting topics for 2014 were discussed. Jen Carroll requested that the department's new Director of Psychological Services, Dr. Peter Tolisano, be invited to a future Council meeting. Other suggestions included the Regional Advisory Council Chairs and Terry Edelstein, Governor's Nonprofit Liaison (it was noted that she had attended a meeting in March 2013). It was also suggested that Trades Organizations (CT Nonprofits, ARC of CT, and CCPA) come to the January meeting to discuss legislative priorities and advocacy networks. Council members felt that the Trades' presentation would be most beneficial as a panel discussion.

It was announced that an event organized by The ARC Connecticut will be held on January 22, 2014 from 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. at the Legislative Office Building, for families of individuals with developmental disabilities. The intent is to get families to come to the Capitol to educate legislators about the global issue many families face of "where do families go from here" as their children age out of school at 21 years old. They want legislators to understand the predicament these families face. It was felt that rather than the individual groups approach, a large group approach would be more effective. Families should be encouraged to bring their loved ones to this event as well. Adrienne Benjamin will email

information on the hearing to Council members. The location has yet to be decided but should be available after the first of the year.

Commissioner's Update

Budget Update – Deputy Commissioner Drexler

The current year's budget is satisfactory and the department is not anticipating the cuts that have been made in the past. Constraints on state and federal budgets in the upcoming years will limit any expansion opportunities.

The Council discussed the Waiting List data that was recently distributed. It was suggested that this topic be presented at an upcoming meeting where Regional Advisory Committee Chairs can attend and where questions can be presented to Commissioner Macy. At question is how does the department distribute funding to everyone associated with DDS. The Governor and legislators have been great in funding supports for high school grads and age outs, however, long term residential services funding continues to be a challenge. The department is looking at ways to be creative within available resources. In this regard Connecticut is in a similar position as other states who are struggling to find ways to realign services to meet fiscal constraints.

Cuts should not be of the size that we have faced in the past year. Last year cuts were made to private providers and changes were made around one time supports for people, which was another cut to providers. DDS was to save three million dollars in a Medicaid audit, but this will be extremely challenging. The reduction in the funding account is why some families are not able to receive services.

The department has made efforts to increase revenue through waiver funding. For instance, in the past, DDS enrolled 120 individuals onto a waiver; however, last year it enrolled over 350 individuals.

The Deputy Commissioner was asked if the department has had any provider agencies that have failed. There have been agencies that have left Connecticut because they felt that the system was not working. This is especially true of for-profit agencies that find out Connecticut may not be as profitable as they thought. There have been no agencies who have failed due to the recent funding cuts.

Council members discussed the department's vision so that they can bring this to legislators who want to help families. The council also asked for clarification of the department's vision to help families before they are in crisis. The challenge of finding alternatives continues to grow but funding is shrinking or staying the same. We need to find other models that will work for our families. From a cost perspective the model that allows the most individuals to be served, would be one that enabled them to live with their families. The department is currently working with a provider to use technology in a home which can also help to reduce costs. Money that is saved from closing public homes or cottages at Southbury Training School is not available to be used for other services as this money goes into the general fund, and this is something that isn't going to change.

Members discussed what services are available for individuals who want to live independently, but their family can't afford it. The Commissioner indicated that this topic was discussed at a recent National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services (NASDDDS) conference he attended. Many other states are in the same place as Connecticut in regards to funding and creating alternatives. The Commissioner stressed that state agencies must no longer be a family's sole solution to caring for their family member. Long term money will be harder to come by. We need to invest time with families and provider agencies to get them to think about alternative solutions. Our Community of Practice and our Michael Smull mentoring project are two tools we are using to engage both groups.

Eight agencies have recently agreed to participate in a mentoring project. The agreement needed to be signed off by every level of the agency from direct support staff to Boards of Directors. These agencies will be mentored by top people in the field and it will be exciting to see what they come up with.

Recently the department pulled data to review the Levels of Need (LONs) of individuals whose caregiver was 60 years of age or older. This data could be used for the legislature.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 P.M.