



Council on Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

APPROVED Minutes of Thursday, March 14, 2013

Location: DDS Central Office, Conference Room A

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

Absent: David Hadden; Sheila Mulvey; Lou Richards;

Staff: Maureen Prewitt, Executive Secretary; Christine Pollio Cooney, Director, Legislative and Executive Affairs; Joseph Drexler, Deputy Commissioner; Ed Mambruno, DDS Ombudsperson

Chairperson Patti Silva opened the meeting at 6:07 P.M.

New Council Member

Patti Silva introduced Adrienne Benjamin, who was recently appointed to the Council. Adrienne is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and a parent of a child who receives services from DDS.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Approval of December Minutes

Minutes for the January meeting were reviewed. One technical edit was requested. Jim Heffernan made a motion, seconded by Dr. John Pelegano to accept the minutes with the change. The Council voted unanimously to accept the January minutes with one change.

Presentation: Terry Edelstein, Nonprofit Liaison, Governor's Nonprofit Liaison

Terry Edelstein, Nonprofit Liaison to the Governor, discussed her position as a member of the Governor's Cabinet. Her previous position with a provider association helps her to fulfill her role as liaison between the administration and providers. Ms. Edelstein distributed handouts detailing the various projects she is involved in which include a work group on deemed status and single licensing, the Governor's Cabinet on Nonprofit Health and Human Services, bonding for nonprofit health and human services providers, and the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission. Also distributed was the Governor's press release on the new state bond pool for nonprofit providers and information on the Governor's Cabinet on Nonprofit Health and Human Services, which Ms. Edelstein Co-Chairs.

Ms. Edelstein discussed her involvement on the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission. This Commission's focus is on guns, school safety and mental health issues. The Commission is debating whether the diagnosis of Aspergers should be included in the discussion on mental health. Several issues discussed by council members related to the Sandy Hook Commission were mental health services in Connecticut, privacy issues, criminal background checks, and preventative measures.

The Council discussed security in group homes and the protocols in place in case of unwanted visitors. Both public and private employers offer a variety of trainings, including workplace violence to their staff.

Patrick Vingo said that at recent meeting at Lower Fairfield Center (LFC) they discussed the issue of security. Alarms that had been installed years ago after a missing person incident have now been deactivated. Families struggle between the need for a safe and secure setting and the disruption of quality of life for individuals who have to listen to the loud alarms. DDS' Human Rights Committee reviews alarm requests before installation to be sure there is a good reason for the alarm rather than having them merely for staff convenience.

Jamie Lazaroff noted that no consumers are on the list of members of the Cabinet on Nonprofit Health and Human Services. Ms. Edelstien stated that all meetings are open to the public and she is always looking for people to serve on various committees.

Ombudsman's Report – Edward Mambruno, Ombudsperson

Ed distributed his February monthly report and gave a quick synopsis of some of the calls he has handled during that month. Council members should contact Ed if they have questions regarding the January report that was previously emailed.

Legislative Update – Christine Pollio Cooney

Christine will be adding Adrienne Benjamin to the distribution list to receive legislative updates. February was a busy month preparing testimony on the budget for the Appropriations Committee, as well as testimony for the Public Health Committee and other legislative committees. The Public Health Committee heard numerous DDS related bills on one day. All DDS testimony is available on the DDS website. Christine and Rod will share information regarding the Appropriations Committee version of the budget when they receive it. Please contact Christine if you have any legislative questions.

Autism Awareness at the Capitol is scheduled for April 3. More information on this event will be distributed soon.

Jennifer Carroll expressed her gratitude to Susan Keane from the Appropriations Committee who was able to make available to families an alternative waiting location while waiting their turn to testify. This allowed individuals a quiet location to wait if the prolonged noise and activity of the hearing room would have been upsetting to them.

Jim Heffernan recommended that Patti Silva write a letter on behalf of the Council thanking the Susan Keane for her assistance in securing a waiting room during the hearings.

Patti Silva thanked members who testified or attended the budget hearing in support of the department.

Jamie Lazaroff will be testifying before the Education Committee regarding special education issues and read his testimony to the Council.

Commissioner's Update

Commissioner Macy stated that, in preparation for legislative hearings, Christine spends an enormous amount of time preparing documents, many in a short period of time. This is complex, time consuming work and requires quick thinking. The department is thankful for Christine and Rod O'Connor's hard work on legislative issues.

The Commissioner met with legislators from Newington on a bill they proposed to prohibit DDS from closing any regional centers or group homes. Commissioner Macy is hopeful that the bill will not move forward. Another bill was established to develop a residential farm. It is not anticipated that this bill would go through federal waiver funding as it does not support this type of residential setting.

Commissioner Macy has developed a letter in response to the recent Hartford Courant articles. The letter will be sent to constituents, families, staff, and providers. A similar letter will be sent to legislators on the Public Health Committee. Most of the incidents noted in the Hartford Courant series were known to both the department and the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA) who investigates allegations of abuse and neglect.

The department does look into ways to prevent future incidents. For example, the department's Mortality Review Committee investigates deaths of individuals, anti-scalding devices were installed in all group homes in the state after an individual died from being scalded, and a fall assessment is now completed for our individuals who have risk factors for falling. Commissioner Macy is planning further discussions with the Department of Public Health Commissioner related to individuals with intellectual disability in nursing homes.

The Commissioner stated that individuals at Southbury Training School who are moving into community settings will not be placed into a nursing home if their needs change except in extraordinary circumstances. Any nursing home placements of people who lived at STS would require the Commissioner's approval. Individuals who may require another placement will go into another type of home rather than a nursing home. The department will be developing a policy on nursing home placements to reduce nursing home placements from other settings as well.

The Autism Feasibility Study has been delivered to the Governor. The study recommendations are a blueprint of how the department will move forward with autism services. Jennifer Bogin, DDS Director of Autism, will be attending the May Council meeting.

Robin Wood is coordinating the Contributing Citizens Mission Event on March 21. One of the speakers that day will be Adam P. Salina, Mayor of Berlin who works to support people with disabilities in his community.

Deputy Commissioner Drexler gave an update on the status of the department's budget. The area of greatest concern is the residential account. DDS will have to go forward with residential reductions which will mean real cuts to the providers. We will have cutbacks on one time supports, rather than cutting rates. A decision on personnel cuts will be made after we receive information from the Appropriations Committee. The department is also creating a financial disincentive for placing people in nursing homes from Community Living Arrangements.

Ms. Lakisha Hyatt has been hired to replace Doreen McGrath, the former DDS Director of Health and Clinical Services who retired in December 2012. There was a small interview pool for the position; however, the quality of the candidates was very good. Ms. Hyatt previously served as a Director of Nursing 2 at Connecticut Valley Hospital. She has a high level of energy and excellent problem solving skills. She will be an asset to DDS as we try to improve our connections with the mental health system.

The Commissioner stated that the DDS Program Review Committee (PRC) had an important purpose at one time; however, he has been working with regional directors and psychologists on a plan to reduce medications for individuals who are currently on many medications. The department is looking at where it wants to go on behavioral planning and is trying to change the system fundamentally.

Labor unions took issue with a retirement option made available to a small group of people in 2011. Because of this, employees will be allowed another option to retire prior to their retirement age. It could have a dramatic impact on the department's workforce. Continued retirements are having an impact as our employee count has dropped dramatically in a short period of time from approximately 3500 staff to 3200. Another issue DDS is facing is an aging workforce.

Old Business

2013 Meeting Topics/Site Visits

In April, Council members will tour the Walgreens Distribution Center from 3:00-5:00 P.M. The facility is not able to provide a location to hold a Council meeting. Council members decided to omit the meeting portion and only participate in the tour. Directions will be provided prior to the tour.

Council members suggested that a possible meeting topic for the July meeting be a report from the Quality Monitoring Division. It was suggested that the Office of Protection and Advocacy be added as a meeting topic for a future meeting.

Council members have not been receiving copies of the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) minutes. It was suggested that links to the RAC minutes be emailed to Council members.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 P.M. on a motion made by Jamie Lazaroff and seconded by Jim Heffernan.