



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Council on Developmental Services

Morna A. Murray, J.D.
Commissioner

Jordan A. Scheff
Deputy Commissioner

Minutes of Thursday, January 8, 2015

Location: DDS Central Office, Conference Room A

In attendance: Patti Silva, Chair; Jack Frost, Vice Chair; Adrienne Benjamin; Rick Lenz; Shelia Mulvey; Patrick Vingo; Lisa Weisinger-Roland

Absent: David Hadden; Diana Mennone; Jamie Lazaroff, Secretary; Dr. Neil Stein; Deborah Ullman, Dr. Terrence Macy, Ex-Officio

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

Chairperson Patti Silva opened the meeting at 6:10 P.M.

Opportunity for public participation

No public comment.

Approval of December Minutes

Minutes from the December meeting were reviewed and approved with changes. Lisa Weisinger-Roland made a motion, seconded by Adrienne Benjamin to accept the minutes. The Council voted unanimously to accept the December minutes.

Legislative Update – Christine Pollio Cooney

Christine stated that the legislative session started on 1/7/15. Inaugural events included the inaugural parade, military honors, and the Governor addressing the legislature outlining the priorities of the session. Some committee meetings also began on 1/7.

Christine distributed a list of the committee assignments, which are subject to change. She also mentioned that the CT General Assembly website's format has undergone a format change. Christine mentioned that she and Rod will begin tracking bills which the Council may be interested in and reports will be sent out to individuals who are signed up to receive Rod's legislative reports. She specifically mentioned a bill related to the federal Able Act, house bill 5099. The Governor's proposed budget for the next biennium usually comes out the second week of February, however, the timing was extended and will be presented on February 18th. An extension is typical after an election.

The Governor is in the process of making leadership changes. There is no word on when a new DDS Commissioner will be appointed to replace Commissioner Macy. Christine reviewed some of the other department leadership changes.

Sheila Mulvey questioned who will serve as the ADA Coordinator now that Commissioner DeFronzo has left the Dept. of Administrative Services. Christine will check on this.

Christine distributed a copy of the Council's By-Laws indicating that the Council has the authority to discuss with the Governor's Office the qualifications of the DDS Commissioner.

Pat Vingo stated that this was done when Commissioner O'Meara was leaving the department. Council members agreed that it's an important time for the right person to be appointed as the position of Commissioner is a huge job with some politically charged issues. Council members discussed at length the qualifications they believed the department's Commissioner should possess.

It was suggested that if the Council wanted to contact the Governor's Office it should be done sooner than later. Patti Silva suggested that if the Council decides to go forward with this, those members not in attendance should be contacted for their input. A motion was made by Chair Silva to contact the Governor's Office and second by Lisa Weisinger-Roland. The Council unanimously agreed to contact the Governor's Office to express their ideas of the qualifications the new Commissioner should have. Lisa agreed to contact Jonathan Slifka to discuss arranging a meeting. Patti agreed to send an email to all Council members indicating that the Council will be reaching out to the Governor's Office and they should share their ideas or participate in the discussion if a meeting can be arranged.

Report on (IDD) Service Improvement Working Group - Lisa Weisinger-Roland

Lisa explained her participation in the Working Group. Parents, non-profit agencies as well as DDS staff and most recently Secretary Barnes and Judith Dowd from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) have attended Working Group meetings. She indicated that the group is now discussing the state vs. private provider salary differences, as well as how to get services for those individuals who don't receive any without pulling money from those who currently get services.

Lisa reviewed the budgets for Southbury Training School (STS) and regional centers as given to her by the Arc of CT. Deputy Commissioner Drexler explained that these figures are not necessarily accurate and that many factors go into the \$81 million dollar budget for STS. Lisa stated that the group continues to ask for realistic numbers in relation to the budget, however, doesn't feel they are getting them.

A discussion on the Waiting List numbers and category descriptions was reviewed. The current waiting list numbers can be found on the DDS website under Publications – Reports – Management Information Reports (MIR). The waiting list definitions can be distributed to Council Members.

Deputy Commissioner Drexler indicated that the department has a significant lag in obtaining data. He realizes that the department needs to get better at communicating to parents on the waiting list as this is an important issue for families. The department also needs to be able to take complex topics and be sure that families are getting accurate and understandable information.

Lisa stated that the Working Group wants to know who the people are on the waiting list are and how we define their needs issues. She found the discussions about the DDS system very informative. The Working Group has also been discussing the difference in pay for state employees vs. private employees. They will be researching the idea where paying private employees a living wage will in fact reduce the reliance on the state's Medicaid insurance, resulting in a savings to the state.

Council members engaged in a conversation about the decreasing number of beds due to staff losses, closing of institutions, and the cost of maintaining STS as the number of residents decrease in the coming years.

The Working Group's deadline has been extended. The next Working Group meeting will be January 20, 2015.

This topic will be continued at future Council meetings.

Deputy Commissioner's Update – Deputy Commissioner Drexler

Birth to Three - Service units are up 4.9% for the first part of the year due primarily to increased enrollment. We are projecting a deficit which will need to offset by savings elsewhere.

Autism - We are responsible for qualifying clinical behavioral providers for the new Medicaid services for children with autism. We will initially be contracting for some assistance until we can hire the necessary staff.

Registry - We have added 92 people to the Registry for people terminated for abuse or neglect. Our backlog has been reduced from 211 to 159 this year.

Children Services - We will be sponsoring a training on January 15 and 16 by Karen Harvey, Ph.D. a national expert on trauma informed care.

New Business

I/DD Caucus and the Arc Family Day

Family Day will be held on Thursday, January 15 at the Legislative Office Building – Room 2C, beginning at 11:00 A.M.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 P.M.