



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, March 17, 2016**

Location: Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Central Office, Conference Room A

**In attendance:** Adrienne Benjamin, Chair; Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Vice Chair; Jamie Lazaroff, Secretary, via phone; Jennifer Carroll; Jack Frost; Rick Lenz; Diana Mennone; Patti Silva; Deborah Ullman; Patrick Vingo; Kevin Zingler

**Absent:** Karen Hlavac; Dr. Neil Stein

**Staff:** Margaret Castonguay, Executive Secretary; Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison; Jordan Scheff, Deputy Commissioner

**Introductions**

Chair, Adrienne Benjamin, called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

**Public Participation**

Rick Rothstein, Tom Fiorentino and Shannon Jacovino

Public comment from Tom Fiorentino and Rick Rothstein to the Council summarizing their concerns over the budget cuts and how the Council could help.

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes for the February 29, 2016, meeting were approved.

**Topics for Discussion**

Rod O'Connor gave the legislative update to the Council. Mr. O'Connor commented on bills moving through the legislature. House Bill 5176 'An Act Concerning Community Residences'. This bill requires the departments of Public Health, Developmental Services, Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Correction, at a municipality's request, to: 1. designate a department employee to serve as liaison to the municipality with respect to matters related to existing or proposed community residences (i.e., group homes) that the department funds or operates in the municipality and 2. notify the municipality that it funds or operates community residences in the municipality. Senate Bill 294 (Raised) Public Health, 'An Act Concerning Services for Individuals with Intellectual disability', to require the Commissioner of Developmental Services to take certain actions relating to the Department of Developmental Services' waiting list, to require the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to consult with stakeholders on a plan to close facilities operated by the department and to require advance notice when an individual with intellectual disability's eligibility for state-assisted care will end.

Senate Bill 17 ‘An Act Implementing the Governor’s Budget Recommendations for Human Services’ to implement the governor’s budget recommendations, to move the DDS Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder Services (ASD) to the Department of Social Services (DSS) is out of committee. House Bill 5587 ‘An Act to establish a council to make recommendations concerning services for children and young adults with developmental disabilities’ who may or may not have mental health treatment needs. Members of the Council asked why a Council is being created when one is already established with the same purpose. Deputy Commissioner Scheff will look into this question. Mr. O’Connor answered questions from the Council and explained March 31<sup>st</sup> is the Appropriations Committee joint favorable deadline and April 1<sup>st</sup> is the Finance Committee’s joint favorable deadline. By the March 31<sup>st</sup> deadline, the Appropriations Committee should have a budget adjustment bill to pass out of the committee. If there is no budget adjustment bill passed by the legislature in this session, then the budget passed in the 2015 session for FY16 and FY17 remains unchanged.

Deputy Commissioner Jordan Scheff updated the Council on how agencies will be considering layoffs, as the Governor, in his budget address, cited reductions of employees through attrition and other means. Consequently, agencies are preparing staff reduction contingency plans. Savings will come from retirements, restructuring and other possibilities, including a hiring freeze and layoffs while continuing to maintain focus on reducing overtime spending. The Deputy Commissioner updated the Council on the conversion of public Community Living Arrangements (CLAs) and units at DDS Regional Centers. The Deputy Commissioner explained grant accounts, waiver reimbursement and Medicaid services. He stated, at this time, there is no certainty as to the funding of the age outs and graduates. The Deputy Commissioner answered questions from the Council.

#### **New Business:**

The Council voted to form a committee in order to draft a letter to the Governor. The committee members are Adrienne Benjamin, Patti Silva, Jennifer Carroll and Jack Frost. The committee wants to focus on disproportionate cuts, families losing hope as a result of budget cuts, the Waiting List, Behavioral Services Program (BSP), day services and graduates.

The Council would like to consider the following:

- Writing an article for the press
- Asking the Governor for a meeting
- Long range strategies
- Forming the foundation for a public meeting

The Council discussed the change in time of the Council meetings from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on the days noted in the current Council calendar. Members are welcome to call into the meeting if they cannot attend.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.