



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Council on Developmental Services

Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner
Peter Mason
Deputy Commissioner

Minutes of October 19, 2017

Location: Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Central Office, 3rd Floor Training Room

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin, Chair; Jamie Lazaroff, Secretary; Karen Hlavac; Rick Lenz; Diana Mennone; Arlene Reith; Kevin Zingler

Absent: Patti Silva; Dr. Neil Stein; Deborah Ullman; Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Vice Chair

North Region (NR) Regional Advisory and Planning Council (RAC):

Lori Sandora; Tammy Selinger; Andrew Selinger; Mary Lou O'Connor

South Region (SR) Regional Advisory and Planning Council:

Kathleen Stauffer; Lauralyn Lewis; Dave Cassano; Britney Gudeahn; Leslie Bridges-Parent

West Region (WR) Regional Advisory and Planning Council:

Chuck Bergamo; Marina Derman

Staff: Margaret Castonguay, Executive Secretary; Thomas Dailey, South Regional Director; Fritz Gorst, West Regional Director; Ed Mambruno, Ombudsman; Peter Mason, Deputy Commissioner; Christine Pollio Cooney, Legislative Liaison; Jordan Scheff, Commissioner; Elisa Velardo, North Regional Director

Introductions

Chair, Adrienne Benjamin, called the meeting to order at 5:11 p.m.

Public Participation

Walter Glomb; Stan Soby

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the September meeting were approved

Topics for Discussion

Ed Mambruno, Ombudsman Report

Mr. Mambruno welcomed the DDS Council and the (RAC) members to the October meeting. He explained his two simultaneous roles as DDS' Ombudsman and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator and Compliance Officer.

Commissioner, Jordan Scheff

The Commissioner began by welcoming the RACs and thanking them for attending. Knowing that these special meetings usually invite a number of questions, the Commissioner made his intent to keep his report brief and clear to all. The Commissioner shared, that despite the lack of a budget, DDS was in the midst of a rather historic moment. DDS simultaneously announced the conversion of ten public group homes and the hiring of permanent direct care staff for the first time in many years. The Commissioner stated, with the additional position, it will allow the agency to better manage its overtime.

The Commissioner shared the good news of hiring Peter Mason as Deputy Commissioner.

The Commissioner updated the Council on the announcement of the postponement of a furlough day scheduled on November 25, 2017. The private providers are working extremely well with DDS per the Resource Allocation Plan. There has been some give and take in an effort to mitigate the impact of the plan.

The Commissioner attended the Charting the LifeCourse presentation at Middlesex Community College hosted by Robin Wood, DDS Director of Family Support Strategies & Advocacy. The Commissioner stated the presentation was a successful event co-sponsored with DDS and the State Department on Aging, the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities and funded in part through a grant from the Administration for Community Living. Hundreds of people participated in the two day curriculum which was presented by Barbara Brent, Director of State Policy, National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) and Jane St John, Senior Research Assistant, UMKC Institute for Human Development. LifeCourse Planning information can be found on the DDS web site at:

<http://www.ct.gov/dds/cwp/view.asp?a=2042&q=591452>

The Commissioner answered questions from the Council and RAC members.

Legislative Liaison, Christine Pollio-Cooney

Christine Pollio Cooney gave a legislative update. There is still no final budget yet. As soon as a final budget is passed, DDS will work to get the document and details out to stakeholders as soon as possible. Legislative concepts for proposals in the 2018 legislative session are currently being contemplated and drafted. Ms. Cooney shared some draft ideas that are being contemplated. As a reminder draft proposals require approval by the administration before being put forth to legislative committees for public hearings.

With the strong support of Commissioner Scheff, DDS has begun an earnest review of agency policies, procedures and regulations in an effort to bring them up to date. As initial steps, key staff and subject matter experts have been assigned to review specific topics, priorities have been assigned by Leadership staff and are currently being reviewed and timelines are being established.

Ms. Cooney explained how residential waiting list will be presented differently in the agency Management Information Report (MIR) given the March 1, 2017 implementation of the Support Survey through the Individual Planning (IP) process. The support survey identifies whether or not an individual has unmet residential or day service needs. If the individual is determined to have unmet residential needs, a Residential Request Assessment is used to identify what category of need the individual has (Emergency, Urgent or Future Needs). Starting in the September MIR which reflects the first quarter of data for fiscal year 2018, data will be presented using the new categories. If an individual has not yet had their IP meeting, or data has not been updated, individuals will still be reflected in the data by converting their current priority to a category. Emergencies will remain an Emergency category, Priority Ones will be reflected in the Urgent category and Priority Twos and Threes will be reflected in the Future Needs category. For the Emergency and Urgent categories, data will be separated by individuals who have no annualized funding and those who do, but still have an unmet need. Explanations regarding the changes were introduced in previous versions of the MIR and will continue to be explained going forward for some time. There was a suggestion by meeting participants that DDS provide case management staff with a better understanding of how the data is used or intended to be used by stakeholders. DDS agreed to explore ways to share this information through existing training or other opportunities. There was a request to share the final Survey and Assessment forms with the council and RAC members.

Ms. Cooney indicated that the flyer created to share information about the Regional Advisory Councils began being distributed through the IP process as of July 1, 2017. Some families at the meeting indicated that they did not receive the flyer at their IP meeting which occurred after July 1. Ms. Cooney indicated she would follow up with appropriate staff to ensure it is being distributed.

North Regional Director, Elisa Velardo

Ms. Velardo announced the NR will be starting a Healthy Relationship series. The series is in partnership with Planned Parenthood which occurs a few times a year in each of the regions. The series will be held on Mondays in East Hartford for six sessions, there is still room available with interpreters provided. Ms. Velardo circulated a flyer with information. Also, a contact sheet was distributed for the Self Advocacy Coordinator (SAC) groups in the NR listing the three coordinators. They actively want to engage people to get involved and help spread the word about self-advocacy and self-determination in ways that are easy for others to understand. The November meeting is being held in East Hartford with the topic of budgeting and finances with upcoming presentations on '*getting your driver's license*'.

Ms. Velardo gave an update on the two conversion homes in the NR that will be converted after the first of the year.

The Community Companion Home (CCH) program staff is continuing to work on getting the word out on CCHs and they are in the process of updating brochures and materials for family members and potential licensees which will be coming out soon. The NR has posted positions for six case managers and one case management supervisor.

West Regional Director, Fritz Gortz

Cres Secchiaroli has assumed the position of Director of Public Operations and now oversees the Lower Fairfield Center in Norwalk, the Northwest Center in Torrington and three public community living arrangements (CLA). Two of the CLAs in Cheshire and Norwalk are part of the ten that are being converted.

Mr. Gortz explained to the Council that even without a budget, the WR continues to have emergencies and strives to be able to serve people in the best possible ways even the ones they are not aware of. Mr. Gortz had a case in the WR where an individual who lived with his father and they stopped wanting services. The mother, who lives in California, called DDS and said something is not right and no one is answering the phone. The dad had died and the individual was there a few days in the home. He is now with DDS and doing well. The WR continues to have emergencies and people needing services and they do not have any new money. Regularly, Mr. Gortz and WR consult with Commissioner Scheff and continue to help and support people.

The WR has case management supervisor positions posted and five case managers that are most highly needed to continue to serve families. Case managers are a big asset to our funding through Medicaid. Having them available to provide services, write notes and get the billing in is crucial.

South Regional Director, Thomas Dailey

Mr. Dailey updated the Council on the SR converting six group homes in this round of DDS conversions. The SR works closely with providers, families and DDS staff to make sure all transitions are safe.

The Commissioner and Mr. Dailey hosted a SR Employee Recognition Day at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford on October 5. There were approximately 200 staff, families, individuals and providers who came to participate. There were awards in many categories, community connections, volunteers above and beyond, living the mission, private public partnerships, dedication and leadership and the annual Linda Cavagnaro award, which is in memory of deceased DDS employee who was an extraordinary teacher. There were also years of service awards and three staff people who received 35 years of service awards, which was remarkable. Post note: no DDS funding was used for the event. It was all done through fundraising.

Today, the SR presented at the New Haven Collaborative which is a coalition of private and public agencies that do outreach to the most hardest hit families in the greater New Haven area, including children and families who are homeless or for whom there are little resources. Mr. Dailey explained that once we have a budget, we will start our annual outreach to schools, local education agencies (LEA) hospitals and other community agencies. This is done each year in the SR where there is outreach to those agencies, to educate them on DDS and see what can be done to help with eligibility, family grants, anything that people might not know about. Mr. Dailey commented that it is remarkable how little people know about our agency despite what a very large agency DDS is.

Mr. Daily announced the retirement of Marie Bennett, Assistant Regional Director for Individual and Family Support on November 1, 2017. Mr. Dailey expressed that Ms. Bennet's leaving will be a great loss for the department and he is hoping to be able to refill the position.

Mr. Daily updated the Council that statewide 30 private provider staff and public staff were trained as affiliated trainers by the National Task Group (NTG) on Dementia and Alzheimer's and today finalized the curriculum that will be provided to private providers and the state could use to train their direct care staff. NTG is remarkable group of people who do their own work through fundraising.

Mr. Dailey told the group it was a very successful summer at Camp Harkness. There were thousands of visitors having a successful camp season for Oak Hill, United Cerebral Palsy, Arc of New London and Southbury Training School (STS) as well as multiple fundraisers at the camp.

The Norwich Dental clinic has been completely upgraded allowing for the treatment and care of more patients. The clinic welcomed a new dentist, Steve Ruiz, DDS. The clinic will administer oral cancer assessments, dental restorations, crowns, dentures, extractions, root canals and dental sealants. DDS is very excited about the clinic and preparing to install a new medical information system at the site which will improve the services even more. The clinic can serve individuals who live on their own, with their families, in private group homes as well as public services.

North Region RAC, Rick Rothstein

Mr. Rothstein told the Council the NR has been active with 12 members in total. They would like to have an individual who is served by the department and an invitation has gone out to someone to see if they are interested. The NR RAC is actively seeking new members.

South Region RAC, Lauralynn Lewis

Ms. Lewis told the Council the SR RAC meets regularly and the group is waiting on a budget to be confirmed.

West Region RAC, Chuck Bergamo

Mr. Bergamo told the Council, the WR, similar to the NR, would like an individual we support on their council. The WR RAC is at full capacity for members. Mr. Bergamo said the WR, like the NR, has a Facebook (FB) page which they are posting to every week. They will be taking posts from the DDS web site and posting onto the West Region FB page. The WR RAC is inviting speakers to their meetings. Last meeting they had an attorney come and speak about Probate and guardianship.

Chairperson, Adrienne Benjamin Update

Ms. Benjamin thanked the RACs for attending and gave the group a graph chart displaying the Level of Need (LON). Ms. Benjamin explained the importance of advocating for all levels of needs. The graph chart that was created by Ms. Benjamin, her husband, Steve Horowitz and Rick Rothstein using DDS' October 20, 2016, LON data (Home Scores) of 13,551 individuals. (The home LON score is the highest of the Composite Home and Behavior Home scores.) A discussion followed, and DDS staff expressed concerns about the chart not conveying a clear message or fully reflecting information in the source document such as where individuals reside and whether or not an individual's needs are met or the priority of their need for services. Commissioner Scheff cautioned using the data without a chance to better understand the message trying to be conveyed with the data.

Ms. Benjamin reminded everyone of the subcommittee's work last year, bringing the following groups together: The Arc, CTDDS Families First, Our Families Can't Wait, Jaime Lazaroff, Self-Advocates, Kevin Zingler, of MARC, CT Council on Developmental Disabilities, Lower Fairfield Regional Center, and Southbury Training School to learn more about each other and build common ground as advocates. One of the seven principles agreed upon was that our families have a wide array of needs which was illustrated in the graph chart.

Ms. Benjamin acknowledged that while a LON is not a perfect measuring tool, it does give an idea of a person's needs. The Commissioner and Legislative Liaison, Christine Pollio Cooney, explained the LONs and services and how the data can be useful. Ms. Benjamin and the Council will continue to advocate in supporting the most amount of people, while aware that the funds are not adequate to meet all needs.

New Business

On-going Council advocacy

Communication and follow-up with the Governor and the Legislature

Council to invite Scott McWilliams

Bilaw update and approval

Robin Wood, Director of Family Support Strategies & Advocacy will present at the November Council meeting

Council members spoke about forming a subcommittee on dental care

CMS Community Living Right Changes 2019, Peter Mason, Siobhan Morgan and Robin Wood to be invited

Waiting List

Council to re-invite Kendres Lally and Peter Hughes as guests

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.