



State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff
Acting Commissioner

Council on Developmental Services

Minutes of Thursday, February 16, 2017

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

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin, Chair; Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Vice Chair; Jamie Lazaroff, Secretary; Jennifer Carroll (via phone); Karen Hlavac; Rick Lenz; Diana Mennone; Arlene Reith (via phone); Patti Silva; Dr. Neil Stein (via phone); Deborah Ullman; Kevin Zingler (via phone)

Staff: Margaret Castonguay, Executive Secretary; Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison, Christine Pollio Cooney, Legislative Liaison; Jordan Scheff, Acting Commissioner

Introductions

Chair Adrienne Benjamin, called the meeting to order at 4:09 p.m.

Public Participation

Jack Frost, Fay Lenz, Laura Lynn Lewis, Rick Rothstein

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the February meeting were approved with edits

Topics for Discussion

Commissioner's Update

Acting Commissioner Jordan Scheff updated the Council on the Governor's budget proposals. The Commissioner stated there are many terrific topics in the budget.

As a result of many conversations from advocates, sister agencies, the ID Partnership, himself and others, the Commissioner discussed how grateful he was to the Governor for including items in his budget that would be beneficial to DDS, including some money to help providers. The \$1.8 million will stabilize providers undergoing conversion of DDS grant-funded services to Medicaid fee-for-service payment. This will allow rates for the lower-rate providers to be increased without having to reduce funding from the higher rate providers.

The Commissioner spoke about the additional \$1.0 million to fund other initiatives in creating a broader continuum of services. One initiative would be to expand and revise respite and to develop age-appropriate socialization and independent living opportunities that could be conveyed during an individuals' time in respite. Another initiative could be Assertive Community Teams (ACT), similar to the ones the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS) runs to support families and private providers to prevent emergency placements or emergency department visits.

DDS is interested in developing capacity mobile crisis teams. These teams will better address behavioral emergencies for individuals with ID to prevent emergency placements or emergency department visits and stabilize the person to be able to return home. DDS would like to develop wrap-around services models to support individuals with ID in supportive housing.

\$1 million will fund services that support target placement off the Waiting List into existing vacancies in the CCHs. In the Governor's press briefing, he said that if it is effective, it would be the start of money, not an end. We have numbers of already licensed, approved and ready to go vacant CCHs. We will continue to develop additional homes making certain we have enough to hit the ground running on July 1.

Waiting List information will be on next month's Council agenda. Christine Pollio Cooney, Legislative Liaison, will send the Council updated Waiting List information. The Commissioner told the Council DDS will be using a new form and procedural process to improve the Waiting List priority format.

The Commissioner explained the IDASH program is a supportive housing program modeled after what DHMAS does in their supportive living centers. DDS would look to do a similar program which is earmarked with \$1.4 million annualized for services and rental assistance. In this two year cycle, there is only \$350,000 in this budget as the homes will not come on line until then. There is \$20 million of bond funding at the Department of Housing (DOH) for the building projects themselves.

The Commissioner informed the Council on the lack of graduate funding. If the budget passes as presented, DDS will have to address this concern through creativity, collaboration and innovation to try and provide supports to as many people as possible. In past years, DDS has not received a full years funding and usually has been able to provide for the needs of most.

The Commissioner told the Council there was a cut to family grants of around \$400,000. An important note, if DDS goes forward with CCH placements, once a lot of the families qualify for CCH placement, they will not get grant funding. So there would be a saving on one side and a reduction of some expenses on the other. Families who were reliant on grant funding may not need it, depending on how far the funds can be pulled to be an offset. The grant account has been managed closely in working with the families for the best outcomes similarly.

The Commissioner updated the Council on the Facilities report. Secretary Barnes will be reviewing the report and we will share the data as soon as it becomes available.

The Commissioner updated the Council on the ID Partnership. The process of developing a new set of rates and getting providers to be enrolled billers, to maximize revenue, is complicated and slow. Chris Lavigne and his staff, at the Department of Social Services (DSS), have met routinely with DDS on rate structures and alternatives in maximizing revenue. The parent group has met twice and it was recommended at public meetings that minutes be taken. We are in the process of gathering previous meeting information and the DDS Web Master will be posting the minutes once they become available.

The Commissioner told the Council the Governor assumes in the budget proceeding with the privatization of the Community Living Arrangements (CLAs), which are reducing in number.

The Commissioner told the Council the 5 Year Plan is on the DDS web site and commented the plan contained feedback that was received. Examples were better data and information from the Self Advocate Coordinators (SACS). Rod O'Connor will send out the information in the Legislative update. The Commissioner likes the plan and is appreciative of the information.

Legislative Update

Christine Pollio Cooney, Director of Legislative Affairs, gave the Council a legislative update.

It is expected that the Public Health Committee will have a day to hear all DDS-related bills. They are leaning towards, but have not yet confirmed a March hearing date. As soon as we know, we will send out the information via Rod O'Connor's legislative update distribution list.

S.B. No. 839 is DDS's technical bill. S.B. No. 796, An Act Concerning the Use of Respectful and Person-First Language, which is the Governor's respectful language bill. This is a comprehensive bill, intended to update several outdated references in multiple state agency's statutes. The Governor has asked each individual agency to review their own statutes and this proposed bill is the result. S.B. No. 797 is the moving of the Office of Protection and Advocacy's Abuse Investigation Division to DDS which is also in the Governor's budget.

The Public Hearing in the Appropriations Committee on the Governor's proposed budget related to DDS has been scheduled for Thursday, February 23, 2017. DDS testimony is being drafted. DDS is scheduled for 11:00 a.m., with public testimony starting at 4:30 p.m. Information is available on our DDS website. DDS has testified on one group home siting bill in the Children's Committee. It was actually targeted at the Department of Children and Families (DCF). We are planning to testify in the Planning and Development Committee when the group home siting bill is scheduled for a public hearing. Commissioner Scheff plans to testify in person. Ms. Pollio Cooney thanked the Council for their advocacy and for all of their hard work to educate legislators on DDS issues.

Council Chair Update

Adrienne Benjamin, Council Chair, updated the Council on the IDD 7 Project and the CT Family Hearing day at the Legislative Office Building. Many families and advocates presented at Hearing Day and did a great job. There were not many legislators present. The focus on the 7 points and the Advocacy Sub Committee's unity were well received. Many people from the committee were not able to attend but the letter to the Governor was mailed out. Ms. Benjamin spoke to legislators focusing on the unity of the group. Kevin Zingler attended with his agency and said it was a great opportunity to meet with his representative delegation to speak about DDS funding. He was appreciative of everyone's advocacy.

Ms. Benjamin addressed the Council on the plans for additional advocacy. Council members can attend or send in testimony for the Public Health Committee and the Appropriations Committee hearings. Ms. Benjamin, as Chair, can make a statement at the hearings for the Council. A motion was put forward to form a subcommittee to draft a letter that will be read from the Council. Patti Silva and Lisa Weisinger-Roland will work with Ms. Benjamin on drafting the letter. The Advocacy Sub Committee is working on setting up a time to meet with legislators to speak about the day funding for graduates.

Jennifer Carroll spoke to the Council and DDS staff about having information from the high school transition team regarding graduate funding sent to the families ahead of time. This information would come from case managers, educational liaisons or any staff. Commissioner Scheff told the Council the day the budget was announced he reached out to Commissioner Porter at the Department of Rehabilitation Services and Commissioner Wentzell at the Department of Education.

Jaime Lazaroff told the Council about Disability Advocacy Day sponsored by CT Cross-Disability Lifespan Alliance, CT Developmental Disabilities Council, CT State Independent Living Council, CT Office of Protection & Advocacy, and University of CT Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities to be held on March 7, 2107 at the State Capitol.

New Business:

- Robin Wood to be invited
- The Self Advocate Coordinators (SACS) to be invited for the April meeting
- Melissa Marshall, new DD Council director to be invited
- Regional Advisory Committees to meet at the May 18 Council meeting in the DDS Wallingford Office. Time to be determined
- Kendres Lally, Director of Investigations to present on Abuse and Neglect
- Members of the ARC to be invited

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.