



State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff  
Commissioner

Council on Developmental Services

**Minutes of Thursday May 25, 2017**

**Statewide Meeting of the Council on Developmental Services & Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Regional Advisory Planning Councils (RACs)**

**Location:** Department of Developmental Services South Regional Office, 35 Thorpe Avenue, Wallingford, CT 06492  
Third Floor Conference Room

**In attendance:**

Council on Developmental Services:  
Adrienne Benjamin, Chair; Karen Hlavac; Rick Lenz; Diana Mennone; Neil Stein; Kevin Zingler

**Absent:** Jamie Lazaroff, Secretary; Arlene Reith; Patti Silva; Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Vice Chair; Deborah Ullman

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

Collette Bement Langner, Chair; Richard Rothstein, Vice Chair; Joe Duffy; Donna Clauson; Lori Sandora; Annette Scully; Tammy Selinger; Andrew Selinger

**South Region (SR) Regional Advisory and Planning Council:**

Jeff DePina, Chair; Lauralyn Lewis, Vice Chair; Dave Cassano, Secretary; Leslie Bridges-Parent; Dawn DeMatteo; Heidi Earle; Susan Gardner; Britney Gudeahn

**West Region (WR) Regional Advisory and Planning Council:**

Charles Bergamo, Chair; Susan Bastien; Marina Derman; Karen Simon; Arlene Steinfeld

**Staff:** Margaret Castonguay, Executive Secretary; Jolie Crescimano-Goss, Executive Secretary, South Region; Thomas Dailey, South Regional Director; Fritz Gorst, West Regional Director; Claudia Neumann, Executive Secretary, North Region; Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner; Elisa Velardo, North Regional Director

**Introductions**

Chair, Adrienne Benjamin, called the meeting to order at 4:50 p.m.

**Public Participation**

Members of the public introduced themselves  
There was a public thank you to Commissioner Scheff for his comments to the IDD Caucus earlier today  
Public gave comments

**Approval of Minutes**

Minutes for the April meeting were approved

Phone: 860 418-6000 ♦ TDD 860 418-6079 ♦ Fax: 860 418-6001  
460 Capitol Avenue ♦ Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
[www.ct.gov/dds](http://www.ct.gov/dds) ♦ e-mail: [ddsct.co@ct.gov](mailto:ddsct.co@ct.gov)  
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## **Topics for Discussion**

### **Commissioner Jordan A. Scheff Update**

Commissioner Scheff welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the regional directors and secretarial staff for their support. The Commissioner gave updates and answered questions on the following:

- On behalf of Christine Pollio Cooney and Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaisons, who were at the Legislative Session unable to attend the meeting, Commissioner Scheff gave a legislative update. The Commissioner spoke about Mr. O'Connor sending out the legislative update and people are welcome to sign up to be on list serve to receive the update. The Commissioner is visiting the DDS regional offices but because of the legislative session, he is staying close to Hartford and will continue to visit in the near future. The Commissioner spoke about the Senate Bill No. 39 and House Bill No. 6155, and the Deemed Status Bill. The Commissioner answered questions from the members.
- Secretary Barnes from the Office of Policy & Management (OPM) and the Governor announced that ongoing labor negotiations between State Employee Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) for statewide public contracts had reached a general framework. Projected layoffs will have an effect for DDS if layoffs were to move forward. The general framework that was released includes a no lay-off clause for a period of four years.
- Waiting List survey roll-out update. The Commissioner gave an update on the implementation of the revised waitlist survey, described briefly its history and constructs. DDS has already realized some potential shortcomings and may revisit the tool even prior to the first full year of data being complete.
- Individual Plan (IP) Redesign. Bob Smith, DDS Program Manager, is working on the modifications and updates to the IP. We wanted to improve the plan so we can provide information for families, as sort of a tickler, to help and connect people to some resources that are available, such as the Family Support Network, The Arc Connecticut, RACs, etc. From the need to revise the IP and get away from deficit based assessments, we took input from some families and put some important questions right on the front.
- Community Companion Homes (CCH). Commissioner Scheff explained what a CCH is and how they were formerly called community training homes. They are DDS' most cost effective way to provide services. CCHs provide high level quality care with a high level of satisfaction, with a low level of turnover and less instances of abuse and neglect in our group home system.
- Shared Living arrangement question was explained by the Commissioner. Member of the SR RAC shared her experience with a Shared Living home.
- The Commissioner updated the members that there will be camp at DDS this summer. Both Camp Harkness and Camp Quinebaug will be open and operating.
- Targeted Case Management (TCM). DDS has a method of reimbursement for our case management services based on various types of notes, reports, evaluations, and maintaining certain timelines.
- Commissioner Scheff spoke about his viewing of CPTV's Building a Great Life video and encouraged all the members to view it if they had a chance.

## **Regional Updates:**

- The North Region is very engaged in what is going on around the state and well represented by the ten people who sit on the NR RAC. They have overwhelming confidence in Elisa Velardo, North Regional Director, to be able to answer questions and follow-up with information to questions she does not know how to answer at that time. Director Velardo commented she finds the meetings to be informative to her, and hopefully the group finds her contribution informative, as well. A suggestion was made for opportunities for the different RACs to compare agendas and follow the NR in having guest speakers, so if a question comes up in one meeting, the next meetings they try and have a guest speaker come and address the topic. The need was mentioned to have more families involved with the RACs, even as guests to get information. Spreading the word to families to attend RAC meetings is a good way of getting and giving information, collaborating and meeting with the regional director.
- The South Region explained how notifying families about the RACs came about. In the early 1970s, the legislature gave this gift to families called the Regional Advisory Planning Councils. The SR would like more families to participate or attend RAC meetings. If families are unable to attend, they can connect in other ways such as RAC Facebook pages. The SR suggested possibly a SR Facebook page or a coordinated regional or central RAC Facebook page, as well as having a newsletter. SR would like more families involved and aware of the RAC meetings and having the RACs mentioned at every annual IP meeting would be helpful. Unique to the SR is the Creative Housing Work Group. The group meets every second Thursday of the month at the Old Saybrook Library. It is great place for families to meet, collaborate and share information. There are guest speakers and a flyer with information.
- The West Region reports they are now fully staffed. They have an open Facebook page which is a good way of getting information out. Flyers are also a good idea to hand out at meetings. The RAC groups in general are ambassadors with the DDS Council to promote the opportunities that are available and share information in sponsoring a unified agenda of support. Question going forward having one Facebook page or separate pages for the different regions. We have to have discussions with the Council on the best ways going forward to use social media. Need to get out awareness about the RACs.

## **DDS Council Chairperson Adrienne Benjamin Advocacy Opportunities**

Ms. Benjamin spoke to group about advocacy and advising opportunities in reaching out to legislators, the Governor and the public. While the legislative session is in, it can be a good time to write letters, send emails, make phone calls, lobbying and uniting to speak out and be heard.

A member spoke about some towns having a Commission for Persons with Disabilities. The Commission discusses budgets, and education. The Westport group put together a letter that was written to legislators, expressing their concerns about the budget. Also, they went through the first selectman's office with a press release that included the letter and a call to action to say if you have a family member, you should be calling. Suggestion was made to reach out in other towns to form committees for advocacy.

Ms. Benjamin thanked the RACs for meeting and having the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas. A future date for the September 14<sup>th</sup> Council meeting was suggested and would be added to the June agenda for new business.

## **New Business:**

The Regional Advisory Council's (RACs) coming to the September 14th meeting location TBD

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

Robin Wood to be invited to present on the Community of Practice

Peter Hughes, Special Investigator and Kendres Lally, Director of Investigations, to be invited to present

Council advocacy opportunities

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.