



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Council on Developmental Services

Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner

Minutes of August 24, 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; Karen Hlavac; (via phone) Rick Lenz; Arlene Reith

Absent: Diana Mennone; Patti Silva; Dr. Neil Stein; Deborah Ullman; Kevin Zingler

Staff: Margaret Castonguay, Executive Secretary; Ed Mambruno, Ombudsman; Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison; Jordan Scheff, Commissioner

Introductions

Chair, Adrienne Benjamin, called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Public Participation

Fay Lenz; Rick Rothstein; Stan Soby

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the July meeting were approved

Topics for Discussion

Ed Mambruno Ombudsman

Mr. Mambruno spoke to the Council about the Americans Disability Act (ADA) training video being completed and getting ready to be released by the DDS Training Department. Mr. Mambruno gave congratulations to Jamie Lazaroff, Margaret Castonguay and the Commissioner for their help and participation in the making of the video. Mr. Mambruno will send out an email link for the Council to view the video. Mr. Mambruno spoke to the Council about a meeting at DDS Central's office in which a deaf person was unable to enter the parking complex. Mr. Mambruno and the legal department are working with the building maintenance company to put up signage for people who are coming to DDS and need additional guidance beyond what is currently provided. Mr. Mambruno spoke about receiving a call from a person who was in Mansfield Training School and needed his records retrieved. Mr. Mambruno contacted DDS' North Region to start the inquiry and locate the records to be given to the person. Mr. Mambruno reviewed two phone calls he received and coordinated on with the regions for the Council.

Commissioner Jordan Scheff

Commissioner Scheff, for the last three months, has been visiting all of the DDS offices throughout the state. He went without his Leadership team because he wanted to have conversations with staff on his own. He found the meetings very productive reestablishing and opening up new lines of communications.

The Commissioner updated the Council on the Resource Allocation Plans. When the initial plan was announced, the Commissioner met with the Alliance, who represent many of the providers, answering questions and hearing concerns. The Commissioner and his staff met on strategies to help make the resource allocation plan more manageable and try to reduce some of the burdens on providers. The second Resource Allocation Plan restored roughly 40 percent of what was cut between the first and the second plans which was an improvement. The Commissioner is hopeful the state will have a budget now that SEBAC is ratified and the collective bargaining agreements are negotiated.

The Commissioner answered questions from the Council concerning Community First Choice (CFC).

The Commissioner updated the Council on the Southbury Training School Fire Department. The Commissioner commended Chief Baldwin for his exemplary work and cost saving initiatives in both public and private operations.

The Commissioner updated the Council on DDS overtime. The Commissioner suggested that there are only three options to fix it: hire more staff, provide less service or some combination of the two. The Commissioner would consider any and all possible solutions.

The Commissioner answered Council questions on the conversions. Crescentino (Cres) Secchiaroli has become Director of Public Operations. The Commissioner explained by moving to a statewide public structure, DDS will be able to use those resources and reorganizational means to be much more efficient. Mr. Secchiaroli's former role of executive assistant in the finance department will not be filled saving an additional salary.

The Commissioner spoke about the Waiting List. The Commissioner continues to work with the provider community to help educate Connecticut about what needs to be done to transform our system. Additionally, when we look at our National Core Indicator (NCI) data project, we rank very high on health and safety related issues and extremely poorly in the area of choice. Many conversations have begun that can transform our current system of services. The commissioner believes that there is a real opportunity for hope for people on the waitlist but there is a lot of work to do by all of our stake holders to transform our system, to engage in difficult conversations, to change current expectations for future participants, and for everyone to consider what they can do so that more people can be supported.

The Commissioner spoke about the closing of STS. He stated it will cost DDS money over two years to close STS. Not until the fourth year or so would there be savings. The Commissioner explained no state has successfully closed institutions without adding resources.

The Commissioner told the Council he has a great working relationship with Dr. Pino, Commissioner of the Department of Public Health (DPH). The Commissioner and Dr. Pino have worked together to get DPH to reinstate the rule of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) being able to insert gastrostomy tubes.

As a closing note to the meeting, the Commissioner stated he is excited about the opportunities to fix the 'system'. He has been waiting a long time and is looking forward to the challenge. With or without a budget he and his staff are getting the people in place to continue the conversations with providers and everyone involved to move the system.

Legislative Liaison Rod O'Connor

The Speaker of the House has said that the House Democrats are looking at the week of September 11, 2017, as a target for voting on the state's new two-year budget. Although this has been announced as a target date for a vote, it is not necessarily what is going to happen because the legislators and the Governor still have to come to an agreement on this new budget. There will likely be major changes to any proposed budget that has been released so far by the Governor or the legislative caucuses.

Chairperson Adrienne Benjamin

Ms. Benjamin spoke to the Council about their continued advocacy on behalf of the families and people we support. The Council continues to focus on the budget and funding issues and what the Council, as a group, can accomplish. Communication and following up with the governor and the legislature is an important role and the Council needs to continue advocating with phone calls and letters. Ms. Benjamin asked the Commissioner for a total amount of graduate funding numbers for 330 people. The Council wants to be factual when speaking about the needs of the department in order to be effective advocates for day programs and the Waiting List.

New Business

On-going Council advocacy

Communication and follow-up with the Governor and the Legislature

Bi-law update and approval

Council/RAC meeting to be scheduled for October in Central Office

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

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6.56 p.m.