



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 September 14, 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; Rick Lenz; Patti Silva; Dr. Neil Stein, (via phone); Deborah Ullman; Kevin Zingler

Absent: Karen Hlavac; Diana Mennone; Arlene Reith

Staff: Margaret Castonguay, Executive Secretary; Christine Pollio Cooney, Legislative Liaison; Jordan Scheff, Commissioner

Introductions

Chair, Adrienne Benjamin, called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

Public Participation

Sue Bastian; Jack Frost; Laura Lynn Lewis; Rick Rothstein

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the August meeting were approved with edits

Topics for Discussion

Kendres Lally, DDS Director of Investigations and Peter Hughes, Abuse Investigation Division Program Director, spoke to the Council regarding their roles and the history of the DDS Investigations Division. Ms. Lally and Mr. Hughes explained how the Abuse Investigation Division was once part of the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA) which no longer exists as a State Agency and has been replaced by the private agency, Disability Rights Connecticut, Inc. Even with this change, DDS will continue to work collaboratively with Disability Rights Connecticut, Inc. as issues arise. Currently, under Connecticut General Statute (CGS), the Abuse Investigation Division (AID) was moved to the State Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), however, per a Memorandum of Agreement, the AID is now housed at the DDS Central Office and is administratively supervised by Ms. Lally. Until the current CGS is updated with language merging the AID into DDS, the DDS Division of Investigations and the Abuse Investigation Division are two separate divisions. Mr. Hughes and his staff will continue to report to Ms. Lally in her role as Director of Investigations during this time of transition. Ms. Lally and Mr. Hughes said they are in great need of additional staffing for the divisions.

Ms. Lally and Mr. Hughes explained the AID handles natural family home investigations which is the major difference between the divisions. The Abuse Investigation Division also assesses the need for protective services when an allegation is initially made and at the end of an investigation. DDS does not currently have the statutory authority to be able to assess the need for protective services and investigate family homes which only the AID can for individuals with intellectual disability (ID) who reside with their families. The AID's authority is limited to individuals with ID between the ages of 18 and 59 inclusive. In the DDS Division of Investigations, there is authority with not only different ages but investigations are also conducted in cooperation with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Social Services (DSS). DDS also investigates a wider range of types of allegations in comparison to the AID, including allegations of financial exploitation, verbal and psychological abuse. These three allegations that DDS is responsible for would not fall under the purview of the current statute of AID which further clarifies the differences between the DDS Investigations Division and the AID. Under the former OPA statute, the AID was the oversight agency and the investigations conducted at DDS were under their authority. Now, the focus of the AID is mostly natural family homes and DDS has taken the lead with oversight of the private provider investigations as well as conducting investigations at DDS facilities and allegations pertaining to self-directed staff. Ms. Lally, Mr. Hughes and the Commissioner answered questions from the Council. Mr. Hughes and Ms. Lally were asked to come and present again at a future Council meeting.

Commissioner Jordan Scheff

Commissioner Scheff updated the Council on his conversation with the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), regarding staff positions at DDS. OPM was very supportive of the needs of the Department and was able to let DDS move forward in hiring additional employees. The Commissioner during his regional office tours, made a pledge to employees he would not work on filling Central Office positions until he was able to hire more positions directly effecting health and safety. Now with the State Employee Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) and Collective Bargaining agreements in place, the Commissioner is able to hire direct service workers, case managers and case manager supervisors. Scott McWilliams will be joining DDS as Chief Financial Officer starting in October replacing Mary Fuller who retired. Mr. McWilliams currently works at OPM and previously at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DHMAS) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF). He has a background in rate setting and IT development projects, beyond his fiscal skills.

In keeping his promise to increase communications with staff and providers, the Commissioner with the help of his Executive Staff, with special acknowledgment of Christine Pollio Cooney, Legislative Liaison, and Katie Rock-Burns, Chief of Staff, released the Executive Briefs for the first time in five years. The Executive Briefs give updated information to staff and providers. In the current issue, there was a thank you to direct support professionals and the Self-Advocate Coordinators (SAC) were mentioned highlighting their new hires and updates on the programs they are working on. Executive Briefs are posted on our web site. Next month, staff will be working on an internal newsletter and a Direct to Families newsletter in helping restore some of the communication that has been lost over time within the department.

The Commissioner has been working with providers and speaking to Walt Glomb, Executive Director of the CT Council on Developmental Disabilities, on how DDS can help with the further development of concepts around Community Companion Homes (CCH) and shared living arrangements. The Commissioner continues to have conversations with the unions and proceeding with moving towards system changes. We are all waiting on a budget and can then move forward in working together to shape the outcomes of the DDS of the future.

Christine Pollio Cooney is asking for legislative ideas and concepts for the next legislative session. The deadline has passed for when budget options, mid-years adjustments and technical adjustments are given but there is nothing to submit until a budget is confirmed and the entire cycle will be condensed.

The Commissioner answered questions from the Council.

Legislative Liaison Christine Pollio-Cooney

Christine Pollio Cooney gave a legislative update. There is still no final passed budget yet. The legislature is expected to go in today (9/14/17) but as of this evening's council meeting the legislature had not yet reconvened. The Finance Committee did meet today to adopt revenue estimates, which provides the basis for how much can be appropriated on the spending side of the budget. As soon as a final budget is passed, DDS will work to get the document and details out to stakeholders as soon as possible. Ideas for legislative proposals for the 2018 legislative session (February-May 2018) are currently being contemplated. If members have any ideas for non-budget related proposals, please email Christine directly asap. Agency meetings with the administration to discuss legislative concepts will commence soon. Approvals to draft specific proposals are expected later this fall in time to submit proposals for the regular session which begins in February. The budget bill number is Emergency Certification, House Bill 7501.

Chairperson Adrienne Benjamin

Ms. Benjamin gratefully thanked Rick Rothstein for his emailing to legislators a copy of the Op-Ed article, *Our Daughters At Mercy Of Stalled Connecticut Budget*, written by Ms. Benjamin and Council member, Arlene Reith, which appeared in the Hartford Courant on September 12, 2017. CT DDS Families First also made copies of the article and circulated it throughout the Legislative Office Building.

Next month, the Council and the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) will be having a joint meeting at DDS's Central Office. Ms. Benjamin suggested the meeting time could be adjusted to accommodate the agenda and the opportunity get to know each other better. Ms. Benjamin asked Council members to consider writing articles about the positives of day services and to work on opportunities in getting family stories out to the public and how they, as a group, can keep supporting families as best they can now and going forward.

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

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

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6.56 p.m.