



State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

DDS

APPROVED Minutes of the February 21, 2019 Meeting

Location: DDS Central Office, Hartford, CT

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin; Pamela DonAroma; Christine Hainsworth-Straus; Karen Hlavac, Secretary; Jamie Lazaroff; Rick Lenz; Diana Mennone; Dawn Oduor; Arlene Reith; Rick Rothstein; Dr. Neil Stein; Deborah Ullman; Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Chair; and Kevin Zingler, Vice Chair

Absent: Joseph Duffy

DDS Staff: Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner; Krista Ostaszewski, Director of Legislative Affairs; Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison; Joseph Carvalho, Executive Secretary to the Commissioner

Introductions

Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m.

Public Participation

Fay Lenz; John Frost; Mr. Frost reminded the Council of the dates of the upcoming Special Olympics Winter Games beginning Saturday, February 23, 2019

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 17, 2019 Council meeting were approved. The motion for approval was made by Kevin Zingler and seconded by Karen Hlavac.

Topics of Discussion

- **Council Legislative Breakfast** - Mr. Zingler told the Council members that the Legislative Breakfast scheduled for Wednesday, March 13, 2019 from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in the 2nd Floor Atrium of the Legislative Office Building was receiving donations of food and beverages from several sources. He said he would e-mail the members with an update in the next week. Mr. Zingler and Ms. Weisinger-Roland discussed the idea of presenting awards from the Council at the breakfast to legislators, businesses and self-advocates that have d been champions for persons with I/DD.
- Members put forward nominees for the business award and discussed each nominee's qualifications. A motion was made by Ms. Hlavac, seconded by Rick Lenz to give the business award to Highland Park Market. On a voice vote, members approved the motion.
- Members discussed the qualifications for the award for self-advocate and determined that nominees could be either public employee or private provider self-advocates and whether there could be more than one self-advocate awardee. Various nominees' qualifications were discussed. A motion was made Mr. Zingler, seconded by Adrienne Benjamin to award two self-advocates, Genna Lewis and Varian Salters. On a voice vote, members approved the motion.
- Council members discussed how many awards should be given in the legislator category. It was determined that there should be awards for a House and Senate Democrat and a House and Senate Republican. A discussion ensued on various legislative nominees for each of these awards. A motion was made by Pamela DonAroma, seconded by Dawn Oduor to nominate Representative Catherine Abercrombie as the House Democrat awardee. On a voice vote, members approved the motion. A motion was made by Ms. DonAroma, seconded by Ms. Oduor to nominate Senator Cathy Osten as the Senate Democrat awardee. On a voice vote, members approved the motion. A motion was made by Ms. Hlavac, seconded by Ms. Oduor to nominate Senator Len Fasano as the Senate Republican awardee. On a voice vote, members

approved the motion. A motion was made by Mr. Zingler, seconded by Ms. Hlavac, to nominate Representative Kathleen McCarty as the House Republican awardee. On a voice vote, members approved the motion.

- Council members looked at a proof of a Council bookmark with the 7 Principles written on it. The bookmarks will be handed out at the legislative breakfast and will be paid for by a generous donation from a former Council member.
- **Discussion of Topics for Future Council Meetings** – Ms. Weisinger-Roland led off the discussion by suggesting that the Council might want to meet with legislative leaders and the Governor. Diana Mennone offered the suggestion that a meeting should be devoted to the issues of Aging in Place. Mr. Lenz said that employment and opportunities for persons with intellectual disability was an area of interest. Rick Rothstein said that tours of both the DDS Step Up/Step Down Unit and the Hospital for Special Care would offer Council members insight into different types of services and settings.

Legislative Update

- Krista Ostaszewski explained to Council members that DDS had been testifying on various bills in the Public Health Committee and had been tracking a large numbers of bills for their potential impact on the department and its stakeholders. She highlighted that DDS had testified on a group home zoning bill in the Planning and Development Committee as it has done over the past several years. Deborah Ullman asked if there were any talking points that advocacy groups or DDS produced that would help stakeholders talk about various bills. Ms. Ostaszewski said that DDS did not write talking points per se but the Commissioner’s testimony on particular bills could be used for that purpose.
- Ms. Ostaszewski detailed three bills before the Public Health Committee, one that would require DDS to update its Level of Need assessment, one to pay guardians a stipend for providing services to an individual, and one extending the deadline on a task force on employment opportunities.
- Mr. Lenz asked a question about [S.B. No. 63 An Act Concerning the Establishment of Supported Decision-Making to Assist Persons with Disabilities](#) that would allow for “supported decision-making” and how that would intersect with the rights of guardians in decision-making. Commissioner Scheff indicated that there might not be a lot of overlap between those persons who have guardians and those persons who wish to sign an agreement for supported decision-making.

Commissioner’s Report

- Commissioner Scheff told Council members that he would be unable to attend the I/DD Caucus Family Hearing Day because of a family commitment.
- The Commissioner said that the Governor’s Proposed Budget for FY20/FY21 was very good for DDS. It preserved funding for several of the department’s initiatives including what was formerly the I-DASH housing initiative of supportive apartments in communities. Ms. Hlavac asked about the budget line item for the 10 conversions of public group homes to private provider group homes. The Commissioner explained that the line item was the annualization of the 10 converted homes from last year’s budget and not 10 additional conversions in the next biennium
- The Commissioner said that the Step-Up/Step-Down Unit on the Hartford Regional Center campus is ready to open and already has one referral pending.
- Commissioner Scheff noted that the roll-out of the provisions of the wage increase bill passed in 2018 was almost complete. There had been some issues with how the wage increase was supposed to be implemented and what employees would receive the increases. The higher wages may reduce costs over the long term for training new employees, reducing overtime costs and help providers to retain employees.
- Ms. Benjamin asked about whether respite services would be staying in the public sector. Commissioner Scheff said that private providers would find it difficult to provide respite on a large scale because the providers are not funded for days when a respite bed might be empty. Public respite homes are not currently open seven days a week but there has been thought given to opening a respite center in the middle of the state that would be open all week.

New Business

- Ms. Weisinger-Roland reminded Council members that the I/DD Caucus Family Hearing Day was coming up on Monday, February 25, 2019 at the LOB.
- Jamie Lazaroff read the testimony he would give at the Family Hearing Day on behalf of the Council.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING: March 21, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.