



State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

DDS

APPROVED Minutes of the March 21, 2019 Meeting

Location: DDS Central Office, Hartford, CT

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin; Pamela DonAroma; Joseph Duffy; Christine Hainsworth-Straus; Karen Hlavac, Secretary; Jamie Lazaroff; Rick Lenz; Diana Mennone; Dawn Oduor; Rick Rothstein; Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Chair; and Kevin Zingler, Vice Chair

Absent: Arlene Reith; Dr. Neil Stein; Deborah Ullman;

DDS Staff: Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner; Krista Ostaszewski, Director of Legislative Affairs; Rod O'Connor, Legislative Liaison;

Introductions

Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m.

Public Participation

John Frost; Doug Lavery; Fay Lenz; Kim McGrath; Stan Soby;

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the February 21 2019 Council meeting were approved. The motion for approval was made by Kevin Zingler and seconded by Pamela DonAroma.

Topics of Discussion

- **Council Legislative Breakfast** – There was a general discussion of the Council’s Legislative Breakfast that was held on Wednesday, March 13, 2019. Council members said that it had been a success and that having another legislative breakfast next session should be considered. Diana Mennone suggested that in addition to nametags, next time there should be a sign-in sheet so that council members would know who has been to the breakfast. Ms. Weisinger-Roland said that the Council should send out thank-you notes to those legislators who attended. Both Jamie Lazaroff and Karen Hlavac said that ongoing contact with legislators was crucial in increasing the visibility of the Council and in getting legislation the Council supports passed. Council members thanked Mr. Zingler and Ms. DonAroma for all their work in making the breakfast a success.
- **Discussion of Topics for Future Council Meetings** – Ms. Weisinger-Roland explained that with the Council’s tour of the Hospital for Special Care planned for Thursday, April 11, 2019 that the Council might wish to consider cancelling the scheduled Council meeting on April 18, 2019. A motion was made by Mr. Zingler, seconded by Rick Rothstein, to have a Special Meeting of the Council at the Hospital for Special Care on April 11, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. The motion passed on a voice vote. A motion was made by Ms. Hlavac, seconded by Joseph Duffy to cancel the Council’s scheduled meeting on April 18, 2019. The motion passed on a voice vote. The Council member’s should meet at the Hospital for Special Care’s Gift Shop prior to the tour beginning at 3:00 p.m. There will be a short Council meeting at the conclusion of the tour.
- Ms. Weisinger-Roland informed the members that Commissioner Jordan Scheff would not be able to attend the Council’s scheduled meeting on May 16, 2019 and asked the members if they felt they would like to reschedule the May meeting to accommodate the Commissioner’s schedule. Commissioner Scheff indicated that either Deputy Commissioner Peter Mason or DDS Chief-of-Staff Kathryn Rock-Burns could attend

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the May 16th meeting in his absence. The member's consensus was that they would like the Commissioner to attend their May meeting and offered Thursday May 2, 2019 as an alternate date for the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Zingler, seconded by Dawn Oduor, to cancel the May 16, 2019 Council meeting. The motion passed on a voice vote. A motion was made by Mr. Zingler, seconded by Ms. Oduor, to have a Special Meeting of the Council on May 2, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. at the DDS Central Office. The motion passed on a voice vote. The topic for the May Special Meeting will be DDS's employment initiatives with Amber Burke, DDS Director of Employment and Day Services, as the presenter.

- In discussions of the Council setting up a tour of the department's new Step Up/Step Down Unit, Commissioner Scheff said that the Unit itself could not be toured because of the ongoing work with individuals who were living in the Unit. Any type of tour would be disruptive to these individuals' lives.

Legislative Update

- Rod O'Connor discussed several bills that the department has testified on this session. Mr. O'Connor said that [**S.B. No. 372 An Act Concerning the Provision of Resources to Guardians of Adult Children with Intellectual Disability**](#) had not yet been voted out of the Public Health Committee but that DDS had opposed the bill because the language of the bill was vague as to who would be eligible for these subsidies, the department did not have the resources to provide these subsidies and that Medicaid would not reimburse for these subsidies so that the subsidies if enacted would be paid with state funds only. [**DDS Testimony on S.B. No. 372**](#)
- [**S.B. No. 393 An Act Concerning the Department of Developmental Services' Level of Need Assessment**](#), which seeks to have DDS update its Level-of-Need Assessment tool in particular to medical assessments and have the department consult more with families, providers and advocates on issues related to the LON assessment, has not been voted out of the Public Health Committee. It may have a substantial fiscal note if it is voted out because all changes to the LON assessment must be tested for both validity and reliability before the LON can be updated. [**DDS Testimony on S.B. No. 393**](#)
- [**S.B. No. 1035 An Act Authorizing Deemed Status License Renewals for Certain Nonprofit Community Service Providers**](#), that would allow private providers which had been accredited by national accreditation organizations to substitute their accreditation in lieu of community living arrangement license renewal. This bill is similar to one that was passed out of the Government Administration and Elections Committee in 2017. The Alliance is backing the current bill. DDS was disappointed that this bill has come back because of the department's efforts since 2017 to work with the Alliance and private providers through an ongoing Lean process to streamline licensure requirements and to address other provider concerns. DDS will be testifying in opposition to the bill. [**DDS Testimony on S.B. No. 1035**](#)
- [**H.B. No. 6365 An Act Allowing Persons with Intellectual Disability and Their Families to Access the Registry of Department of Developmental Services Employees Who Were Terminated or Separated from Employment as a Result of Abuse or Neglect**](#), would allow persons with intellectual disability and their families to have access the abuse and neglect registry of former Department of Developmental Services employees. DDS has concerns that this bill would make the DDS Registry open to the public when the former employees had been put on the registry administratively but had not been convicted of a crime. DDS had discussed with the Public Health Committee leadership a way for those persons with Community First Choice funding from DSS to be able to access the DDS Abuse and Neglect Registry. The bill is still awaiting final action in the Committee. [**DDS Testimony on H.B. No. 6365**](#).
- Proposed [**H.B. No. 6527 An Act Requiring Additional Oversight over Group Homes by the Department of Developmental Services**](#), which was very vague as to what type of additional oversight the department was to provide in group homes, has died. [**DDS Testimony on H.B. No. 6527**](#)

Commissioner's Report

- Commissioner Scheff discussed the testimony he had given to the Appropriations Committee and the Appropriations Health Subcommittee on various items in the Governor's proposed budget. He said that the answers he provided in the Health Subcommittee Workgroup were well received.
- The Commissioner said that the Step-Up/Step-Down Unit on the Hartford Regional Center campus is now open and that there have been three referrals so far. Various hospitals have expressed gratitude to DDS for this Unit because it allows the hospitals to discharge individuals to the more appropriate care provided in the Step Up/Step Down Unit. The Unit staff is now pairing individuals with providers to transition out of the Unit and into a home. Mr. Rothstein asked if only hospitals and providers were able to access the Step Up/Step Down Unit or whether families could also access the Unit's services. The Commissioner said that it was available for any individual who might require its services.
- Commissioner Scheff explained that the DDS mobile crisis response initiative is using existing Department of Children and Family and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services resources to handle initial responses to crises and then transitioning individuals to DDS services once the immediate crisis has been resolved. DDS is working with Connecticut 2-1-1 to provide information to the public on how to handle a crisis involving a person with intellectual disability and what services DDS is able to provide.
- Adrienne Benjamin asked about the Community Companion Home (CCH) pilot to create 20 CCHs in each of the three DDS regions. The Commissioner explained that the goal of sixty had been met but that some regions had created more than 20 and some had created fewer than 20.

New Business

- Ms. Weisinger-Roland asked if there was any new business for the Council. Ms. Benjamin asked if the two CCH providers who were at the meeting as a part of the public could discuss their concerns with the program. Upon hearing the concerns, Commissioner Scheff said that a conversation with him would be the best way to resolve any issues they had.

Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING:

April 11, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. at the Hospital for Special Care

Scheduled Council Meeting on April 18, 2019 has been cancelled.