



State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

DDS

Minutes of the November 18, 2020 Meeting

Location: Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Pamela DonAroma; Karen Hlavac; Rick Rothstein, Secretary & North Region RAC Chair; Diana Mennone; Deborah Ullman; Kevin Zingler, Chair; Lisa Weisinger-Roland; Rick Lenz; Christine Hainsworth-Straus; Adrienne Benjamin; Joseph Duffy; Dawn Oduor; Dr. Neil Stein; Arlene Reith; Dawn Mattio; Gil Kellersman.

Absent:

DDS Staff: Commissioner Jordan Scheff; Krista Ostaszewski, Director of Legislation, Regulations, and Communications; and Joseph Carvalho, Executive Secretary.

Introductions

Kevin Zingler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Moment of Silence

Public Participation

none

Topics of Discussion

- **South Region RAC Report – 5 minutes**
 - o Leslie - RAC meetings in SR have primarily focused on COVID.
 - o Thomas Dailey - Thanked Leslie and added it's been a difficult year, but succeeded in opening an emergency transitional housing program, has been full since opening, have a stepdown unit that has helped 13 individuals, a new respite center opening in the near term.
- **West Region RAC Report – 5 minutes**
 - o Fritz Gorst - Reiterated Thomas' remarks and added that he kept the West Regional RAC membership abreast of ongoing efforts to distribute PPE, maintain services, and keep the individuals we support safely.
- **North Region RAC Report – 5 minutes**
 - o Rick Rothstein - Couple of field trips, one to the Hartford Regional Center where they watched a demonstration of Assistive Technology and accessible ways to integrate Assistive Technology into the lives of individuals with ID. Noted several changes to the NR RAC membership including Kim Hill and her daughter, someone who receives services from DDS which is a welcome addition.
 - o Elisa Velardo - Commended the work of the North Region RAC for pivoting very quickly to virtual meetings, attendance has been higher than ever due to virtual platform. There has been a tremendous amount of support in the RAC meetings.
- **Council on Developmental Services Report – 5 minutes**
 - o Kevin Zingler - Similar to the Regional RACs, the Council pivoted to virtual meetings and has continued to meet throughout 2020. We've heard numerous stories of the incredible work being done both in the public sector and private sector to protect individuals supported by DDS and to combat COVID-19. Kevin thanked DDS for its partnership with the Council and its work protecting the individuals supported by DDS throughout the Pandemic. It's been a long process, but the Council has been a sounding board for families to ensure their voices are heard. Kevin thanked Commissioner Scheff and Deputy Commissioner Mason for their leadership, partnership, and for their understanding

of how services are delivered in both public and private settings. Throughout COVID, the Council has received regular updates from DDS leadership and the meetings were primarily focused on COVID. Representatives from the Office of Health Strategy gave a presentation to the Council on the healthcare needs of individuals with ID, which led to the Council submitting testimony to a committee studying the needs of individuals with ID.

o Marina Derman (WR) - Regarding the residential waitlist - do people drop off future needs list because their needs were met somehow, or do they fall off the list because they stopped looking? ▪ Commissioner - Need to verify with the business intelligence unit to get more details on those numbers, but it's possible that some families who previously wanted a placement who, due to COVID, have changed their plans.

▪ Thomas Dailey - Agrees with the Commissioner - there has been a reduction in abuse and neglect allegations, and a reduction in future need requests, possibly due to COVID.

o Karen Simon (WR) - When a family asks for services and then backs off, is there follow-up? ▪ Commissioner - The only time DDS doesn't continue involvement is if someone signs someone out of the care of DDS. There is some level of contact maintained.

o Donna and Hal (NR) - When someone is on the waitlist, and there's no placement - what happens? ▪ Commissioner - It depends; a variety of things can happen. In some instances, when we can't find a placement, we can find support in the home while DDS finds a placement. Can look at short-term placements while working to find long-term placements. The regions are creative at triaging these issues when placement isn't readily available. We try to do whatever we can.

o Leslie - When does the residential waitlist information go to the legislature? ▪ Commissioner - Since the pandemic began, I have met weekly with different members of the legislature to update them regarding DDS efforts to fight COVID. This information is published quarterly, and we remind them about and point them to this information regularly.

o Kevin Zingler - vaccine distribution - there are two possible vaccines. Can you comment on how folks with I/DD will be prioritized on that distribution list? ▪ Commissioner - I'm working with stakeholders on several fronts (various committees, meetings with fellow commissioners). DDS is advocating strongly for access and will continue to advocate to ensure that people with I/DD have equitable access in this process.

o Lynn Arezini - asked about priority level of DDS and provider frontline workers

• Commissioner's Report - 20 minutes

➤ **Review and discussion of the residential waiting list in accordance with subsection (f) of section 17a-238a of the Connecticut General Statutes**

• Questions for the Commissioner - 20 minutes

▪ Commissioner - We're not yet sure wherein the line staff will be, but I'm going to continue to advocate because it would be a huge help to our operations if frontline staff are vaccinated and protected against this virus.

[This marks the conclusion of the special joint meeting and the beginning of regular DS Council Business]

Business before the Council on Developmental Services

• Review and Approval of October 15, 2020, Meeting Minutes – 5 minutes o Rick L. asked to amend the minutes to correct the spelling of "DDS Council". Rick L. made a motion to amend the minutes, passed unanimously, and Rick L. made the motion to approve minutes as amended. Adrienne seconded, passed unanimously.

• New Business – 10 minutes

➤ Review and approval of the Council's Schedule of Meetings for 2021 o Karen. made a motion to approve the 2021 schedule, Rick R. seconded, passed unanimously.

- Appointment of the Council's Nominating Committee o Christine nominated the slate including ▪ Adrienne Benjamin
 - Rick Lenz
 - Pam DonAroma

o Karen seconded this nomination, and the slate passed unanimously.

Commissioner - thanked Adrienne and the folks who worked on and submitted the testimony on behalf of the council.

Karen - if anyone has any suggestions on what should be brought to the OHS workgroup, please contact Karen.

Motion to Adjourn - made by Pam, seconded by Adrienne, and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm.