



State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

DDS

Minutes of the December 17, 2020 Meeting

Location: Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Pamela DonAroma; Karen Hlavac; Rick Rothstein, Secretary; Diana Mennone; Deborah Ullman; Kevin Zingler, Chair; Rick Lenz; Christine Hainsworth-Straus; Joseph Duffy

Absent: Dr. Neil Stein; Arlene Reith, Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Adrienne Benjamin

DDS Staff: Commissioner Jordan Scheff; and Krista Ostaszewski, Director of Legislation, Regulations, and Communications

Introductions

Kevin Zingler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM

Moment of Silence

Public Participation

Patti Silva and Fey Lenz wishes everyone on the council happy holidays and a healthy new year

Topics for discussion

- Review and Approval of the November 18th Meeting Minutes
 - o Minutes were not prepared in time for the committee meeting.
 - o Motion to table the minutes until the next meeting. Made by Karen, seconded by Rick L. unanimous approval

- Report from Nominating Committee
 - o Pam, Adrienne, and Rick were the members of the nominating committee. Due to the pandemic, they met by phone and agreed that the business of the council ran well for the last year and they would like to nominate that the current council officers are maintained to offer stability to the council.

 - Election of the Council's Officers for 2021
 - o Motion to re-nominate the current council officers ▪ Kevin Zingler, Chair
 - Rick Rothstein, Secretary
 - Karen Hlavac- Vice Chair

 - o Motion made by Joe and seconded by Rick R. with unanimous approval.
 - o Congratulations to the council officers!

• Commissioner's Report – 30 minutes

- o Shared personal updates about the last three weeks.
- o Discussed day program financial struggles due to the pandemic and provided recent important news that allows DDS to continue an enhanced payment structure that provides a bit of relief to day providers outside of in-person attendance. DDS met with providers this week to explain the approved payment structure and answer any questions.
- o COVID uptick experienced in public and private over the last few weeks. From what DDS can tell it does not look like this spread occurred at the day program. Most recently there seems to be a leveling off in public but private is still working through the increase in cases.
- o Vaccine distribution- Commissioner talked through a recent national call on other states' experience with vaccine distribution. DDS can confirm direct care DDS staff (public and private) and ICF/IID residents will receive priority access in phase 1a. Discussion still occurring about where individuals in CLAs and living in their own homes will fall in the vaccine schedule. For more information about the COVID-19 vaccine in CT please visit: ct.gov/covidvaccine

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- o Pam- concerned with the percentage of direct service staff willing to take the vaccine. Is there an educational program that can be executed?
- o Response- Commissioner is on Communications subcommittee for vaccine and talked through some strategies. Additional educational materials are in the works by the administration and this subcommittee.

- Appendix K Extension

- o Krista detailed that appendix K is an option for states offered through CMS for additional flexibilities in how states issue their waiver services during a state of emergency and still receive federal reimbursement. CT applied for appendix K flexibilities in March. The appendix is good for one year from application. For CT The appendix ends March 15, 2021.

- o Kevin suggested the council create a subcommittee to draft a letter of support to extend the appendix k flexibilities. The flexibilities are necessary for DDS to continue to provide services and receive federal reimbursement for these services.

- o Kevin, Rick L., Pam, Christine, and Rick R. volunteered to draft a letter of support and circulate it to the full council for review and approval.

- o Deb made a motion to approve the drafting of the letter the subcommittee as noted above and seconded by Pam, passed unanimously

- Virtual Legislative Breakfast

- o Kevin suggested hosting a virtual breakfast or meeting for legislature during the legislative session and recommended award ceremony for an employer, advocate also be included. Pam suggested also honoring a direct support professional. Kevin will work on the next steps.

- Topics for Next Meeting

- o General comment was made about open council seats and some members needed to be reappointed. DDS agreed to look at the full council appointment list and review

- o Christine asked if there was an activity that parents and guardians can do at home with their loved ones to show their support and gratitude for direct support staff. Commissioner offered the DDS gratitude committee to discuss the idea and see how they can help. Krista will bring the idea to the committee for review.

- o Kevin offered an opportunity to host the new House Majority Leader, Rep Rojas, and House Minority Leader, Rep. Candelora at the January 2021 meeting. Kevin and Karen will work on the next steps.

- o Christine asked to have a conversation around enhancing employment opportunities for DDS individuals.

- o Commissioner suggested inviting Deputy Commissioner Mason and Employment Director Amber Burke to one of the upcoming meetings.

- o Motion to Adjourn - made by Karen Hlavac and seconded by Pam, passed unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 3:26 pm.