



# State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

# DDS

## **DRAFT** Minutes of the November 17, 2021 Meeting

**Location:** Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

**In attendance:**

Pamela DonAroma; Christine Hainsworth-Straus; Kevin Zingler, Chair; Patti Silva; Adrienne Benjamin; Diana Mennone; Joseph Duffy; Karen Hlavac, Vice Chair; Rick Rothstein, Secretary; Deborah Ullman;

**Absent:** Rick Lenz; Lisa Weisinger-Roland; Arlene Reith

**DDS Staff:** Commissioner Jordan A. Scheff; Kevin Bronson, Director of Legislation, Regulations and Communications; and Joseph Carvalho, Executive Secretary; Elisa Velardo, Regional Director; Gunnar Abrahamsson, Executive Secretary (SR);

- **Call to Order and introductions**
  - Kevin Zingler 6:04
- **Moment of Silence**
  - Nancy Kalal would like to become a member of a RAC (SR)
- **Opportunity for Public Participation**
  -
- **Topics for Discussion**
  - North Region RAC Report
    - Kathleen Hayes introduced herself and handed it over to Elisa Velardo who detailed the great amount of participation and wide-ranging discussions re: assistive tech, step down unit, emergency transitional housing, and seeds of change presentations.
  - South Region RAC Report
    - Thomas Dailey introduced himself and detailed their monthly meetings including advocacy, working with a research analyst and the Business Intelligence unit to examine diabetes within the DDS system with a report due in December, and previewing an optional training re: how to live a healthy life with diabetes;
  - West Region RAC Report
    - Charles Bergamo has been meeting virtually and had surveyed the WR RAC to raise to the attention of the statewide meeting: finding adequate help is a priority; how to find responsible, adequate and appropriate care.... especially private hires; Quality of Day Programs with severe behavioral challenges; other members of the WR RAC raised thoughts re: funding and opportunities for parent groups and nonprofits for subsidies. The main focus is the employment of caregivers... more focused on finding, not funding.
    - Fritz -
  - Council on Developmental Services Report
    - Kevin Zingler – have been meeting virtually monthly; kicked off this year with the house majority and minority leaders regarding the legislative process and its effects on the Department of Developmental Services; some members of the DS Council testified before the legislature on the Council’s priorities; also met with a representative from NASDDDS regarding federal initiatives; met with Amber Burke, Director of Employment Services at DDS, and how DDS is working to address employment opportunities for folks served by the department; met with Ed Mambruno, the former ombudsperson; and formed a committee for the purpose of interviewing and making recommendations to the Governor for successors to the Ombudsperson position; attended the Seeds of Change presentations led by the Commissioner.
  - Commissioner’s Report

- Review of the residential waiting list in accordance with subsection (f) of section 17a-238a of the Connecticut General Statutes
- Questions for the Commissioner
  - Concerns regarding healthcare and benefits for Caregivers
    - Commissioner detailed the challenges facing providers in providing benefits to attract employees.
    - Unhinging healthcare from employment is really a key.
  - Waiting List and the trend to move away from CLAs to CCHs and other creative options, and how do those trends affect the waitlist? Also, in parent groups, there's anxiety regarding in-home services without independence from families
    - Creating new CLAs without filling the current ones creates more financial stress for the existing providers. There isn't a way to recoup funds for unrealized capacity. We try to engage providers and maximize current opportunities for individuals and families.
    - We need a continuum of supports that include an all-of-the-above approach regarding CCHs and CLAs and being mindful of the impact on legacy systems and those who are supported by them while leaning forward into home and community-based services.
  - In Massachusetts, there are 6000 people who are using day programs aren't back in their living arrangements. What is that number in CT?
    - We will research that and get back to you on a specific number.
    - This number is hard to measure – some aren't returning by choice, and some aren't returning due to a lack of provider capacity by staff shortages, but as well as capacity in terms of space and resources.
  - The Courant wrote about teachers in Hartford are leaving in record numbers. The labor issue can't be solely about money. What do employees want?
    - The Governors Workforce Council has been looking at ways of attracting employees, and one focus is showing prospective employees possible career paths in finding work in this field.
  - Med Certification and the benefits of doing so, to ensure that there is parity in taking that responsibility
    - Different providers have different guidelines regarding compensation for additional responsibilities like Med Certification and Administration
    - The State doesn't have a standard requirement regarding the compensation in
  - DDS Ombudsperson will be announced by the Governor on Friday

[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 the September and October Meeting Minutes
- New Business
  - Review and Approval of the Council's Schedule of Meetings for 2022
    - Karen made the motion to approve as amended, seconded by Patti – passed as revised unanimously.
  - Dr. Menzo "Think College" Presentation
    - Karen introduced Dr. Menzo as the Superintendent at Goodwin University
    - Dr. Menzo introduced Ellen Swiner, joined by Deanne Anderson who then reviewed their slideshow presentation regarding Think College, a national project dedicated to developing
    - Questions for the presenters:
      - Are there age requirements (minimum or maximum)? Is there support regarding transportation? In the classroom support?
        - What we'd like to see is families coming together to help with transportation
        - Age-wise, there are folks in the program who are aged 18-26, but that is not a limit.
      - What is the data on the success of the program?
        - Leslie college has a program, Texas A&M has a program, and UConn was involved in helping this program. Deanne can send additional data.
      - What about folks who aren't eligible for DDS services? Those folks with autism with IQs above 69

- Goodwin University received national grants and are open to thinking creatively on how to engage as many folks as possible.
- If a student was already in a day program but wanted to take some classes, how might that work without losing access to their day program.
  - Fortunately, we are small enough to be flexible and meet 1:1 with prospective students and families to identify different classes and formats that meet the needs of prospective students.
- Is there an ideal candidate for this program?
  - We are looking for students who are interested in being in college and working to achieve skills and their own goals. We are providing a college experience and an opportunity to learn some self-determination skills, and to have supports, but perhaps different supports from what is received through an IEP.
- I know folks who wouldn't want to do homework
  - There are alternative modalities (audio or video recordings), and course objectives can be adjusted to meet the needs of the student. We are flexible re: length of classes and breaks during classes.
- 2022 Meeting Schedule
  - Moved by Adrienne, seconded by Karen
- Appointment of the Council's Nominating Committee
  - A motion to nominate the slate of Adrienne, Pam, and Rick Lenz with Patti Silva as an Alternate if Rick is uninterested or unable – moved by Karen, seconded by Patti. Passed unanimously. Committee to report back
- Nursing Shortages & Med Certification
  - Who can help create more opportunities for DSPs to take classes to become med certified.
    - Kevin Zingler – a nurse delegated the task to administer medications. The requirement is two classes and an exam. There is a committee through the Alliance and the Arcs to improve accessibility to med admin certifications, as well as for families. There are variables and unique angles. DDS is exploring options and paths forward, and perhaps they can report back to the council in a month or two.
    - Kevin Bronson – there is a pilot program to identify options to work on an inter-departmental basis to address med certification concerns.
    - Karen Hlavac – have we thought about tapping into retired nurses to expand their opportunities to expand their training?
      - Kevin Bronson to look into this.
- Investigation Follow Up
  - No discussion
- Adrienne raised a concern about the Ombudsperson position and the notice given to the person(s) who may not have gotten the job.
- Christine Hainsworth-Strauss inquired about the DS Council Membership and if a list of members, their term lengths, etc. could be sent. Kevin Bronson will follow up.

**Adrienne made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Christine. Meeting adjourned at 8:12pm.**

**Next Meeting: Council's Annual Meeting, Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 2:00PM via Microsoft Teams**