



State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

DDS

Minutes of the February 18, 2021 Meeting

Location: Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Arlene Reith, Joe Duffy, Adrienne Benjamin, Christine Hainsworth-Strauss, Dawn DeMatteo, Deb Ullman, Diana Mennone, Karen Hlavac, Kevin Zingler, Patti Silva, Rick Rothstein

Absent: Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Rick Lenz

DDS Staff: Commissioner Jordan Scheff; and Krista Ostaszewski, Director of Legislation, Regulations, and Communications; Rod O'Connor, Regulations Analyst; Joe Carvalho, Executive Secretary

Introductions

Kevin Zingler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM

Moment of Silence

Public Participation

Patti Silva announced her family member had received the vaccine and is doing well.

Topics for discussion

- **Approve minutes as amended**
 - o Rick Lenz made a motion to approve as amended, Joe Duffy seconded

- **Legislative Breakfast**
 - o Subcommittee has not met yet but still trying to grasp how the legislative session will proceed.
 - o Rod detailed that the public hearings have been lasting a lot longer because of the new virtual format
 - o Adrienne noted that very few legislators attended the Have a Harc Day event, and asked if exploring the idea of not hosting the breakfast might be worth it.
 - o Commissioner and Kevin Zingler had raised the idea of publishing a press release naming Governor Lamont, Secretary McCaw, and some SACs to be identified.
 - o Adrienne moved, Joe, seconded, to table discussion on breakfast until next meeting.

- **Commissioner's Report**
 - o Budget - relieved to see this year's budget as it was proposed by the Governor
 - Despite some cuts, DDS leadership is confident can continue the level of services we currently provide.

 - o Vaccinations - Public & Private
 - Commissioner's position for much of this rollout has been to prioritize folks with I/DD. It's a balancing act to elevate certain folks up the priority list without making everyone a priority.
 - While continuing mitigation efforts to contain the spread of COVID, we continue to vaccinate staff.

 - o Karen Hlavac - thanked the Commissioner for his ongoing work with the After-Action Review survey, and for using such an important tool. Josh Scalora and Julia Walsh did a wonderful job reviewing the findings - all presented in visual, and easy-to-understand format.
 - o Rick Rothstein - echoed Karen's statement and noted that many are pleased to see how DDS is operating.

o Commissioner Scheff - there are things we might have done differently if we knew then what we know now, but both Josh Scalora and Julia Walsh do excellent work conveying data into understandable narratives that are tied to hard data.

o Karen Hlavac - Question - update on the number of people hospitalized? ▪ Krista shared accumulative numbers which were current up to the previous day. DDS has 72 active cases with staff. Individuals supported by DDS is at 980, though the recovery figures lag so the number of individuals is likely smaller.

▪ Commissioner - we are breathing a sigh of relative relief now but remain vigilant as we see the rise of the COVID variants.

o Arlene Reith - regarding day services, we have our daughter at home, developed a program at home for her, but is there any way I can find out how I can get her vaccinated?

▪ Commissioner - we will share your contact information with DDS team members to identify options.

▪ Karen Hlavac - asked a clarifying question regarding folks who have Downes Syndrome, and the Commissioner will follow up with the appropriate team member and provide an update to the council

o Christine Hainsworth-Strauss - are there cuts to the grants?

▪ Commissioner - ID Partnership took a small cut, but if those cuts go through, we have other accounts from which we can proceed.

o Rod - has a list of some legislation of interest, but also would like to point out the Appropriations committee is having their public hearing about our budget on March 2 at 10 AM - which is not the same day as DDS' presentation to the committee which is Tuesday, 2/23 at 11:30

o Reviewed some pieces of legislation

o Kevin Zingler - entertained a motion to write testimony in support of the Governor's budget. Karen made the motion, Deb seconded to authorize a group to draft testimony to be submitted to Appropriations Committee - passed unanimously.

• Timing of Remaining Council Meetings - Kevin has received some feedback about the day-time meetings being difficult. A poll will be sent to gauge the preferred time of the meetings and we will proceed as needed to accommodate.

• **Topics for next meeting**

Legislative breakfast

Report from IDASH housing program that just opened

• Commissioner added that pre-pandemic, a concern of the Council was sexual assault and prevention. There's a campaign being led by some at DDS to be announced next month.

• Karen moved to adjourn, seconded by Pam. Meeting adjourned at 3:37.