



State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

DDS

Minutes of the May 20, 2021 Meeting

Location: Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin, Christine Hainsworth-Strauss, Diana Mennone, Karen Hlavac, Kevin Zingler, Patti Silva, Rick Rothstein; Pam DonAroma; Rick Lenz; Joe Duffy;

Absent: Dawn DeMatteo; Lisa Weisinger-Roland; Arlene Reith; Deb Ullman

DDS Staff: Commissioner Jordan Scheff; Joe, Carvalho, Executive Secretary

Introductions

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

Moment of Silence

Public Participation

None.

Topics for discussion

- **Review and Approval of the April Meeting Minutes** – 5 minutes o Joe Duffy moved to approve, Karen seconded, passed unanimously.
- **Commissioner's Report & Legislative Update** – 20 minutes
 - o Ombudsman Role
 - Ed Mambruno retired as of May 1. State Statute requires the Council to recommend 5 people for the Governor's consideration. It is an appointed position, appointed by the Governor based on the recommendation of the Council.
 - Kevin Zingler asked for a job description (to be sent via email)
 - Karen – stated she was a part of the interview committee involved in selecting Ed Mambruno.
 - Diana - is this a state position? Can a retired state employee do this? • No
 - Adrienne - he had this position under Governors of both party affiliations • Commissioner indicated that he was the incumbent of this position, and unlike his successors, he was not subject to replacement by new administrations until the time of his retirement.
 - Kevin - perhaps DDS can join 2 or so members of the Council to help identify 5 candidates, and bring them to the Council for its consideration. • Commissioner – several people could satisfy the responsibilities of the role. Perhaps someone with a disability.
 - Kevin - if we were to pursue a subcommittee, what should it look like? • How big?
 - o Commissioner and 3 council members were proposed by the Commissioner and Kevin Zingler
 - o Motion to appoint an ad hoc committee of 3 people to work with the commissioner to identify 5 candidates for the Council's consideration
 - o Pam moved, Adrienne, seconded, passed unanimously

- Kevin asked if anyone was interested
 - o Karen Hlavac raised hand
 - o Patti Silva raised hand
 - o Rick Rothstein raised hand

- Pam made a motion to nominate the 3 people as a slate, Rick Lenz seconded,
 - o Passed unanimously

▪ **Legislative update**

- PCA bill - Gov's office working with OPM on this
- Budget - Governor put out a budget, Legislature proposed a budget, OPM is looking into details of the legislature's proposal. Discussion around the ARPA funds is complex due to the way it binds future legislatures.
- Council was instructed to direct questions to Joe Carvalho. who can relay them to Kevin Bronson for further review?

▪ **Commissioner's Update**

• Union Activity

o Strike Action that was set for Friday, May 21 has been postponed until June 4. DDS is working with the administration to alleviate the situation between providers and the Union.

o There are important pieces of context that affect this discussion including:

- FMAP - a 10% bump, which has created a competition of ideas among state agencies, and other parties that are affected by state funding, including unions.
- COVID-19; understandable pressure felt by employees during the challenging 14 months of the Pandemic
- Not enough workforce to supplement the loss of workforce during union activity.
- Minimum wage bill enacted under the previous administration that adds to the stress on providers.

• Not a regular legislative session - there are financial considerations with ARPA and other dynamics at play that may lead to an extension of the legislative session from early to late June.

• Reported a sad situation earlier in the week regarding two staff members working overnights in the Norwich area - one of those two staff passed away, and the other staff had to do CPR. Commissioner offered his condolences for the staff member lost and thanked and consoled the staff member who was on shift.

• A person who receives DDS services recently wrote the Commissioner with a note of gratitude

- Kevin Zingler asked about vaccination rates among those who receive DDS supports and staff.
 - o Commissioner - Individuals receiving services are vaccinated at a higher rate than the general population, and for staff, because the vaccines are approved under emergency use authorization, employers can't mandate the disclosure of vaccination status.

• **Topics for Next Meeting** – 5 minutes

o Rick Lenz asked about the status of previous “topics for next meeting”?

o Adrienne - what about outstanding appointments?

o Patti - ways to thank Ed Mambruno?

- Kevin Z. - perhaps we can invite him to a Council Meeting?
- Commissioner - that's a great idea and we will invite him to the next meeting.

o Next meeting is June 17th at 4 PM

• **Rick L moved to adjourn, seconded by Patti. Meeting adjourned at 3:04 PM**