



State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

DDS

Minutes of the July 15, 2021 Meeting

Location: Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

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

Absent: Arlene Reith, Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Patti Silva

DDS Staff: Commissioner Jordan Scheff; Joe, Carvalho, Executive Secretary; Rod O'Connor, Regulations Specialist

Introductions

Kevin Zingler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:07 PM

Moment of Silence for those affected by COVID-19

Topics for discussion:

Commissioner's Report

- Commissioner opened by describing recent work utilizing ARPA funds to reduce waitlist, facilitate service delivery improvements, stabilize providers, to incentivize recruitment and retention of provider workforce.
- Seeds of Change Presentations for DDS Families, Staff and Providers
 - o The Virtual Presentations for DDS Families, Staff, and Providers are a chance to get a glimpse of the Commissioner's vision for the future of DDS - including how we can leverage the lessons we've learned throughout the pandemic, and maximize opportunities like the recent historic investments from the American Rescue Plan.
 - o This series of presentations will be followed by forums to create opportunities for public feedback, and for brainstorming with families, staff, and providers.
- DDS Retirements & Recruitment of New Staff
 - o There is expected to be a significant number of retirements, the plan is to train new staff alongside outgoing staff.
 - o Under the executive order, we were able to bring in additional staff, some of whom were able to be matriculated fully into DDS
 - o Hope is to bring in durational staff with 6 months experience to help backfill vacancies effectively
 - o Diana Mennone – asked about retired workers coming back. □ Commissioner – they are allowed to work a limited amount of time for the state post-retirement. Staff used to have to retire within 2 years to work in retirement, but that mandate was lifted during the pandemic. Hope to retain some flexibility moving forward.
- EVV Update
 - o 99% of compliance, but some ongoing issues are being worked through.
 - Karen – asked about employees who are required to submit paper and electronic timesheets?
 - Commissioner – this is being sunset, but currently, this is a measure to ensure that payments aren't delayed.
 - Christine – it would be helpful if there was an evening phone number for help with EVV after 5 PM, and issues with the system
 - Adrienne – detailed the experience of people with difficulty navigating the system – commissioner to follow up with some staff.
- Discussion of Employment Innovation Grants

- o Need to gather more information on this and can provide an update next time.
- Questions for the Commissioner
 - o Rick Rothstein – Have you read the letter re: Final Settings Rule?
 - Commissioner – I don't know how it will play out, but there is stakeholder outreach that needs to be done. Would like to respect the wishes of individuals to reside where they would like, while ensuring: lease or lease-like agreement, an eviction process consistent with other rentals, the ability to lock the door, integrated into the community. Need to work with CMS to ensure that we meet the spirit of the Final Settings Rule.
 - If the Commissioner gets an update from NASDDDS regarding their pushback toward CMS, he will update the Council.
 - The Commissioner hopes that we can provide as much mixed-use housing throughout the state.

At 2:53 pm Karen Hlavac made a motion, seconded by Rick Lenz that the Council goes into Executive Session for purposes of discussing the DDS Ombudsman search.

[Executive Session]

- The Council reconvened in an open session at 3:23 pm.
- Karen Hlavac reported that no votes were taken in the Executive Session. Kevin Zingler said that the Council would have a Special Meeting of the Council in early August to discuss the recommendations for the DDS Ombudsman position and to approve the minutes of the June 2021 meeting.
- A motion was made by Deborah Ullman, seconded by Christine Hainsworth-Straus to adjourn the meeting at 3:30 PM.