



# State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services

# DDS

## **DRAFT Minutes of the May 19, 2022 Meeting**

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

**In attendance:** Adrienne Benjamin, Diana Mennone, Karen Hlavac, Kevin Zingler, Rick Rothstein, Patti Silva, Rick Lenz, Pam DonAroma

**Absent:** Christine Hainsworth-Straus, Deb Ullman, Arlene Reith, Joe Duffy; Lisa Weisinger-Roland

**DDS Staff:** Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner; Kevin Bronson, Director of Communications, Legislation, & Regulation; Shannon Jacovino, Ombudsperson; Joseph Carvalho, Executive Secretary

### **Introductions**

Kevin Zingler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:36 PM

### **Moment of Silence for those affected by COVID-19**

### **Opportunity for Public Participation**

**Nina Nagy** – has a son within the DDS system. Listed several areas of concern including: the group home situation, the psychological needs of the children which aren't being met, the system is not oriented toward problem solving, the trauma caused by underserved needs. Ms. Nagy indicated this is a concern for many families and that self-direction is not possible because the paperwork is cumbersome. The system is not responsive on an individual level and I can only ask to make it more responsive.

No other public participation.

### **Topics for discussion:**

- **Review and Approval of previous council meeting minutes**
  - April 21, 2022
  - Motion made to approve minutes as amended by Karen Hlavac seconded by Rick Rothstein.
  - Passed unanimously
- **Commissioner's Report**
  - Noted that there is an updated secure email system and have heard very few complaints since it was put in place recently.
  - Peter Mason is our ARPA coordinator, and we will be having a few listening sessions where we can gather feedback.
  - Acknowledged the recent receipt of the Q&A document re: Abuse and Neglect and asked the Council if they would look it over and reply with questions for a more substantive conversation next month.
  - Commissioner gave additional context as to how DDS came to fund CRSs and CLAs in the 1980s and the 1990s, described the development of the Vacating Committee comprised of DDS and DSS staff as additional safeguards, and a related party transaction reporting process that was instituted

around the same time that the Vacating Committee was started. Opened the conversation for questions:

- Adrienne Benjamin – that was complicated!
- Rick Rothstein – I was the CFO for CiL, so I'm familiar with how this worked. There is no way the state would have been able to do what they did without these systems. I do have concerns if individuals are forced to move if the owner wishes to sell as it seems that there is no barrier to doing so.
  - Commissioner – most homes that are selling like that were vacant at the time of sale, and I'm not aware of people being forced to leave a home for the purpose of a sale.
  - Rick Rothstein – if a tenant needed to leave the home, they would often have to take the loss on the sale of the home.
- Adrienne Benjamin – re: ARPA funding, can it also be used for regional centers and/or state-run group homes?
  - Commissioner – HCBS services are also known as waived services. Some publicly run group homes are waiverable, and there are other areas of enhancements that can be made but not infrastructure enhancements in the way other waiverable settings are eligible.
- **Ombudsperson Report**
  - Ombudsperson Shannon Jacovino opened her portion of the agenda with questions
  - Rick Rothstein – I see that there are a lot of concerns and complaints you receive; are there any themes you are seeing?
    - Ombudsperson – as one could expect at this time of year, folks who have autism who may have an intellectual disability but may not be eligible for DDS services are beginning to call with questions re: transitional services. Even if they are not eligible, I try to work with them. There was one situation where a sibling filed an appeal on a decision, but there is a backlog of cases. I have one recommendation for improvement: if an appeal can't be heard in a time that is specified in the procedure, then an attempt should be made to notify the party awaiting a decision.
      - Commissioner – just wanted to note regarding the backlog of eligibility decisions: there is a backlog in the hiring of eligibility staff that we are currently working through with partners to fill these vacancies ASAP.
    - Ombudsperson – when working with the Regions and staff generally, I have primarily noticed that issues being brought to my attention are already being worked on.
      - Rick Lenz – I think your approach is collaborative and helpful and I applaud your work. Keep it up.
        - Ombudsperson – thank you.
- **Legislative Session Wrap Up**
  - Karen Hlavac - Asked for a review of SB 164.
    - Kevin Bronson – it was amended so I would need to reexamine before comment.
    - Commissioner – we have recently begun quarterly meetings with the Probate Court Administrator and described the language of the bill per his recollection.
    - Adrienne Benjamin – shouldn't we be celebrating the budget?
      - Commissioner – There are some minor adjustments that the legislature made to the Governor's proposed budget. There were two reductions to the Governor's proposed budget regarding community engagement and camps, but generally we are happy with this year's budget.
    - Rick Rothstein – if you could please summarize the budget, that would be helpful.
      - Kevin Bronson – sure, I can put together a summary. We are waiting on additional information from OPM, but I will put something together.
    - Kevin Bronson – just one last note before I close, we are working on appointments to the DS Council and look forward to some progress soon.

- **CRS and CLA Funding Discussion**
  - Kevin Bronson noted the Commissioner covered this comprehensively under the Commissioners Report and asked if there were any questions regarding CRS and CLA funding. There were none.
- **Beau Doherty Retirement**
  - Maybe we can invite him to an upcoming Council meeting and be joined by SACs.
    - Commissioner – noted that Beau is very understated about himself despite having been involved with Special Olympics, Best Buddies, and playing an outsized role in Unified Sports in CT, the U.S. and around the world – his impact can't be overstated.
    - Patti Silva – agreed with the Commissioner about Beau. The level of what he's done over the years is astounding. All my kids have participated, and we as a family are so appreciative of CT's chapter of special Olympics. Can we get him a proclamation?
      - Commissioner – Kevin Bronson can assist with a proclamation.
    - Rick Rothstein – It would be nice for legislative leadership issue a citation to Beau for his service.
    - Patti Silva – offered to gather needed info (retirement date, bio, etc.) to Kevin Bronson so he can request the citations and proclamations on behalf of the Council.
- **Topics for Future Meetings**
  - Rick Rothstein – when I heard about supported decision making, I wanted to run away. After hearing a presentation about it, I more greatly appreciate the spectrum of options. Kathryn Hayes (I think that was her name?) could give a presentation over the summer.
  - Adrienne Benjamin – I agree supported decision making should be discussed.
- Commissioner closed with a note of personal privilege – noted that a longtime advocate is in declining health.
- Kevin Zingler asked for a moment of silence out of respect for her years of advocacy.

Motion to adjourn was made by Karen Hlavac and seconded by Adrienne Benjamin Meeting adjourned at 5:57

**Next Meeting June 16 at 4:30 PM via Teams.**