



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



Jordan A. Scheff
Commissioner

Elisa F. Velardo
Deputy Commissioner

DRAFT Minutes of the November 16, 2022 Meeting

Location: Microsoft Teams Meeting

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin; Pamela DonAroma; Kelly Dorsey; Christine Hainsworth-Straus; Karen Hlavac, Vice Chair; Rick Lenz; Diana Mennone; Arlene Reith; Rick Rothstein, Secretary; Patti Silva; Kevin Zingler, Chair

Absent: Joe Duffy; Deb Ullman; Lisa Weisinger-Roland;

DDS Staff: Commissioner Jordan A. Scheff; Stacie Silva-Gordon, North Regional Director; Shannon O'Brien, West Regional Director; Kevin Bronson, Director of Communications, Legislation, & Regulations; Shannon Jacovino, DDS Ombudsperson; Joseph Carvalho, Executive Secretary

Call to Order and Introductions

Kevin Zingler, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

Moment of silence for those impacted by COVID-19

Beau Doherty – Proclamation Presentation & Recognition of Service

- Kevin Zingler read an official proclamation from Governor Lamont recognizing Mr. Doherty's career-long commitment to Special Olympics and to people with intellectual disability.
Beau Doherty thanked the Governor, Kevin Zingler, the Council, the Commissioner, and everyone attending the meeting for their kindness.
Commissioner Scheff shared a heartfelt thank you to Beau for his leadership, vision, and partnership, and work on behalf of so many people whose lives have been made better by his contributions to Special Olympics and beyond.

Opportunity for Public Participation

Name(s) if applicable

Topics for Discussion

North Region RAC Report

- Stacie Silva-Gordon, Regional Director, thanked Rick Rothstein for acting as interim chair of the NR RAC. The North Region is working on filling vacant positions, has focused recently on partnerships including IDASH housing, sponsored the regions first breast cancer awareness walks.
Rick Rothstein, interim NR RAC Chair, noted that the NR RAC has been meeting virtually, and plans to continue in the virtual format. Some of the issues discussed include: staffing shortages, COVID, retirements, the wait list, and IDASH housing opportunities. Concerns regarding abuse and neglect procedure have also been discussed

South Region RAC Report

- Leslie Bridges-Parent, SR RAC Chair, reported that the SR RAC has been meeting weekly this past year. Topics of interest this past year included staffing issues, abuse and neglect, and housing. Thanked Thomas Dailey, the former Regional Director, for his work.

West Region RAC Report

- Chuck Bergamo, WR RAC Chair, opened by sharing staffing has been a large focus of the WR RAC this past year. Chuck noted that the issue used to be funding, but now the issue is finding. Chuck also indicated he has been interested in why guardians can't be paid to provide services to their own loved one, and has been in contact with DDS staff on this issue.
- Shannon O'Brien introduced herself as the new West Regional Director as of July 2022. In the WR RAC meetings she has attended, Shannon noted she has heard similar themes described by other RACs including staffing concerns. Her focus has been becoming more familiar with the Individual and Family Support Division, Respite Centers. Shannon announced a recent opening of IDASH housing in Torrington, CT. She looks forward her work ahead in the West Region.

Council on Developmental Services Report

- Kevin Zingler, DS Council Chair, noted that the Council has been meeting virtually this past year. The Council testified to the legislature in support of the Governor's nomination of Shannon Jacovino to be DDS Ombudsperson, and worked with Shannon to update the Ombudspersons monthly reports. The Council provided review and feedback to DDS's Five Year Plan which was submitted to the legislature earlier this year. The Council has focused on similar concerns expressed by other councils including staffing, and has met with Goodwin University about possible paths to employment to help alleviate staffing and nursing issues. The Council also testified in support of the Governor's budget for DDS. The Council met with Cheryl Ellis, DDS DEI Director and she gave an overview of DEI initiatives which the Council applauds. The Council met with Peter Mason, the DDS ARPA Coordinator, to provide an overview of funding opportunities for system transformation throughout the state, as well as Krista Ostaszewski who detailed the waiver amendment process and what changes are being sought to better serve the folks who receive DDS services. We were also joined by a new Council member recently appointed by Governor Lamont: Kelly Dorsey who is a Self-Advocate Coordinator.
- Commissioner Scheff responded to a number of questions.
  - Regarding a question posed by Chuck Bergamo, the Commissioner noted that CMS is the ultimate policy maker regarding waived services, and potential changes like paying guardians to provide support.
  - Regarding a question posed by Lynn Arezzini, the Commissioner clarified that a specific IDASH housing initiative which fell through wasn't due to a lack of funding, but because it is a competitive process that went in a different direction. The Department will continue to push for more IDASH housing and that providers
- Adrienne Benjamin made a note that Connecticut's congressional delegation is a resource and a place to direct our collective advocacy.
- Commissioner Scheff noted due pr

Commissioner's Report

- Review of the residential waiting list in accordance with subsection (f) of section 17a-238
- The Commissioner reviewed the two slides included below and responded to questions.

**DDS Residential Waiting List**  
Understanding the Categories

- In 2017, DDS developed new categories to help determine priorities:
  - **Waiting List**
    - **Emergency**- The individual has an immediate need for residential placement, support, or services.
    - **Urgent**- The individual is requesting placement within 1 year and has been determined to have the most pressing need for services.
  - **Planning List**
    - **Future Needs**- The individual wants or will need services in 2 or more years.

**DDS Residential Waiting List**  
June 2022/2021

Waitlist- No Services	June 2022	June 2021	Waitlist- Underserved	June 2022	June 2021
Emergency	67	49	Emergency	43	30
Urgent	592	600	Urgent	232	218
<b>No Services Total</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>Underserved Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>248</b>

  

Future Needs (want/need services in 2+ yrs)	June 2022	June 2021
<b>Future Needs Total</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>950</b>

  

Waitlist TOTAL (no services, underserved, and future needs)	June 2022	June 2021
<b>Waitlist Total</b>	<b>1,835</b>	<b>1,847</b>

- Rick Rothstein – why would the Future Needs list go down from 950 to 901? Do people retract their requests for services?
  - Commissioner – that decrease is in part to funding these requests, and in part to people in this category shifting into an Emergency or Urgent category.
- Adrienne Benjamin – several years ago there was an infusion of funding for the waitlist, and there were conversations about funding for parents as they age – has there been movement?
  - Commissioner – though not articulated in statute, the Department, through policy, decided to look at aging caregivers. Regional Directors were recently given approval to target aging caregivers with funds available this year.
- Annette Scully – without IDASH housing east of the river, would DDS consider letting families purchase a home and would DDS consider staffing or help to get it started?

- Commissioner – Arc of Eastern Connecticut recently broke ground on a development in New London. There are other things on the horizon.
- Karen Simon – in a recent conversation with her Case Manager, she shared her husband would be having surgery and would have to stay off his feet, to which the Case Manager shared that there was funding for circumstances like this for staffing, but unfortunately due to the staffing crisis, we might not be able to find support we need despite having funds available. Is there more information about those who are self-directed?
  - Commissioner – staff will share a link to the Management Information Report which has a lot of detailed information that goes beyond what these slides can show.
- Update re: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- Commissioner shared that there are various efforts underway because of recent ARPA funding that is being channeled into different initiatives to incentivize innovation and better outcomes. At a recent conference hosted by National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services (NASDDDS), the Commissioner heard similar experiences being faced by his colleagues and counterparts around the country. They shared the interesting problem of having a once in a lifetime opportunity with few staff to make the most of these opportunities. CT is better positioned than many other states and ranks among the top states in terms of direct support worker wages, but there remain improvements to be made. Still, there is an opportunity to lean into assistive technology that will not only enhance independence, it will allow existing staff to provide support to other individuals who need staff. With partners at the table, including individuals and providers, ARPA has huge potential to make great improvements to our system.
- The Commissioner also highlighted changes to the DDS leadership team due to retirements in the past year, and is grateful to have a strong team moving forward.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- Minutes of the October Meeting were approved unanimously with the following changes: ensured Karen Hlavac’s full name was written where only her first name was written; a correction to the spelling of Dr. Kerins’ name; adjusted the attendance list to ensure Rick Lenz’s name appears only once; and a correction to the spelling of Judge Wright of Wallingford. The motion for approval was made by Karen Hlavac and seconded by Pam DonAroma.

**Approval of Council’s Schedule of Meetings for 2023**

- The Council’s 2023 Meeting Schedule, seen below, was approved unanimously. The motion for approval was made by Patti Silva and seconded by Rick Lenz.

<b>Council meetings are usually scheduled on the third Thursday of the month and begin at 4:30PM and are held virtually via Microsoft Teams.</b>		
January 19, 2023 @ 4:30 PM	May 18, 2023 @ 4:30 PM	September 21, 2023 @ 4:30 PM
February 16, 2023 @ 4:30 PM	June 15, 2023 @ 4:30 PM	October 19, 2023 @ 4:30 PM
March 16, 2023 @ 4:30 PM	July 20, 2023 @ 4:30 PM	**November 15, 2023 @ 6:00 PM Joint Meeting with RACs
April 20, 2023 @ 4:30 PM	**August 2023 – No Meeting	**December 14, 2023 @ 4:30 PM Annual Meeting

**Ombudsperson’s Report**

- Ombudsperson detailed two pieces of feedback she received prior to the meeting regarding her monthly report to the Council. The first was an accidental inclusion of a bullet point from a previous report, and the other was a question about eligibility. The Ombudsperson met with the DDS legal department to ask questions about the eligibility process. Every application has the opportunity to be reviewed by three different reviewers. If there is a disagreement among the first two reviewers, it is sent to a third reviewer who acts as a tie breaker. With regard to hearings, once a request for a hearing is submitted, the hearing will be scheduled in a few months and they are processed in the order they were received. Families can request a continuance if they need one. All hearings are done by independent attorneys contracted by DDS. People can hire their own attorneys and bring anyone they want including witnesses, but tests that are done after age 18 won’t be accepted due to state statute.
  - Chuck Bergamo asked if a genetic test was done after 18 and establishes that disability existed prior to age 18, would that allow
  - Commissioner detailed a few different circumstances under which DDS ultimately makes someone eligible when they were previously made ineligible.
  - Adrienne Benjamin asked when the Ombudsperson gets callf from families who have concerns about eligibility, do you receive many calls from families of persons with autism?

- Ombudsperson indicated while not all calls are, she does get some calls from families of persons with autism.
- Commissioner took a quick point of personal privilege to mention that we have received word that Deb Ullman has tendered her resignation from the Council.

#### Update from Subcommittee on Abuse & Neglect Procedures

- Rick Rothstein reported that the Subcommittee has been meeting weekly and has met with a range of people including the DDS Ombudsperson, Jim Welsh from Disability Rights CT, and DDS Director of Investigations Kendra Lally. Jim Welsh has volunteered to help write recommendations for policies and procedures. The Subcommittee wants to hear from the public about their experiences with abuse and neglect procedures.

#### Appointment of the Council's Nominating Committee

- Pam DonAroma, Adrienne Benjamin, and Rick Lenz were unanimously appointed to the Nominating Committee for purpose of reporting back on a recommendation of Council officers for 2023. Moved by Karen Hlavac, seconded by Patti Silva.
- Commissioner Scheff encouraged Council members to look out for and bring in anyone interested in serving on DDS boards and councils who could improve and expand upon our efforts to make boards and councils more representative of the diversity of our state.

#### Chairman asked if members of the Council had any other questions or comments.

- Rick Rothstein raised two legislative issues. One regarding a bill affecting DDS last session regarding ABLE accounts and asset limits. Another is regarding the SSI Reform Act is still alive in Congress and the Arc is sharing a template letter to encourage outreach to federal lawmakers.

#### **Adjournment**

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7PM.