

DDS North Region Regional Advisory Council

April 21, 2021

Meeting Minutes – Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Members Present: Kathleen Hayes, Chair; Annette Scully, Vice Chair; Donna Clauson; Mary Lou O'Connor; Rick Rothstein; Lori Sandora; Tammy Selinger; Elisa Velardo, DDS North Regional Director

Guests: Melissa Cruz, Leslie Prior; Pat Tyler; Pat Stavola

Meeting called to order at 5:05pm.

- Meeting began with introductions.
- Legislative Update –
 - The budget will be the biggest focus; there is no new information yet.
 - Rick Rothstein shared information on a new federal proposal to eliminate the waitlist and a proposed Bill that would eliminate all ICF's (HCBS Access Act of 2021); seeking comments by 4/26.
- Partners in Policy Making Training – Melissa Cruz shared that the last class was held on the 27th. The focus was on employment. The previous class focused on ADA. The training is for individuals with IDD and family members to learn how to advocate. Working on a project to get more training for special education teachers and IEP's. The website UCEDD.org has more information.
- Regional Director's Update – Elisa Velardo
 - Elisa stated that she will try to have some future speakers attend to share information on specific topics that may be of interest. Kevin Bronson has been invited to attend the next meeting. Kevin is the new DDS Director of Legislative Affairs (position formerly held by Krista Ostaszewski). There is also interest in having our Transition Advisors and Greg Lawton, who is the manager that oversees that program as well as Camp Q, attend. Elisa will invite them to attend the May meeting.
 - Vaccination Clinics – Over the last few weeks several dedicated clinics have been held. 7 clinics were held between 4/8 and 4/18. 5 were held at the Xfinity Center in Hartford run by Hartford Healthcare, and 2 were held at Windham Hospital. They were specifically held for individuals eligible for DDS, as well as family members and caregivers. The clinics worked very well for individuals who have difficulty with getting vaccines. They were very accommodating for people with additional needs, such as providing quiet areas, or coming out to the car to administer the shot. DDS staff were also in attendance at each location to assist which made things go very smoothly.

A concern was raised regarding direct support staff who are not willing to get the vaccine and why it cannot be required in our homes. Elisa shared that while the vaccine cannot be mandatory, efforts have been made to ensure that factual information is being provided to encourage more participation. A short video was also made to share factual information about the vaccine.

- National Core Indicators (NCI) –

Elisa explained that we have participated for many years. The NCI is a national tool used by 48 states to assess the outcomes of surveys provided to individuals and families about the services that they are receiving. Further information can be found on the website NationalCoreIndicators.org. They are being done differently this year and are being done virtually. Typically, a random sample is done of 400 individuals that are identified to be surveyed. Then training is done for the interviewers, and surveys are scheduled. Reports go back to 2005 and 2006 and information is able to be compared between states. Families are encouraged to participate as the information gathered is very helpful to identify areas that we need to focus more on. Josh Scalora is the statewide point person for DDS.

There are 118 more surveys to be conducted; 60 surveyors have been trained in the North Region. The data takes a while to compile after they are completed, but Elisa will share when the information is provided.

- All initiatives are continuing, i.e. IDASH (3 in the NR)
- Elisa asked if there were any particular presentations members would like to have. We will begin with DDS staff – Transition Advisors/Camp Q for the May meeting, as well as introduction of Kevin Bronson. Elisa will also invite Stephen Morris from FAVARH to present on the IDASH program and give more information on funding, how people are chosen, etc. A June meeting may be scheduled.
- App K – The program will end and is time-limited; it was originally scheduled to end on 3/15. The extension was approved. In situations where family members have been providing services it is being reviewed monthly for planning purposes because it will be phased out as people return to programs. In some specific cases, in situations where there has been a delay due to not being completely vaccinated, it can be approved, however it is being reviewed for planning.
- Day Program Re-Opening – currently over 50% utilization; with more vaccines, number is expected to go up.
- Open Participation – there were no comments.

A motion for adjournment was made and seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 6:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia Neumann

Executive Secretary