

**DDS North Region**  
**Regional Advisory Council**

January 19, 2022

Meeting Minutes – Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

---

Members Present: Kathleen Hayes, Chair; Annette Scully, Vice Chair; Donna Clauson; Kim Little; Ellyn Little; Rick Rothstein; Lori Sandora; Elisa Velardo, DDS North Regional Director (ex-Officio member)

Guests: Adrianna Ramirez, CTFSN; Melissa Kremmel, CTFSN; Kevin Bronson, DDS

Meeting called to order at 5:04pm.

- Approval of Minutes – The last meeting was held in November and was a joint meeting with the other two Regional RAC's and the Central Office Council on Developmental Services. Minutes were provided by the Central Office Council and are posted on the DDS website.
- Kevin Bronson, DDS Director of Communications, Legislation & Regulations, was invited to attend to discuss Communications. Kevin also provided an overview of new guidelines for Public meetings that are held only virtually. Virtual public meetings must be recorded/transcribed and posted on the website. Also, prior to speaking, each person must state their name and title (if applicable) each time they speak during the meeting.
  - Kevin will send legislative updates on Fridays from himself and Rod O'Connor. They will also be making all legislative updates available on the DDS website.
  - Communication Issues – Kevin reported they are looking at ways to expand membership and representation on the Regional Advisory Councils. A question was asked if there was a way to capture emails for families. While we cannot gather emails to maintain a list, a survey will be going out to gather feedback. Elisa also stated that she will reach out to case management supervisors to share information about the RAC to help spread the word to more families. Kevin also stated that Shannon Jacovino, DDS Ombudsman, will also be reaching out to try to extend membership to RAC's and committees.
- Regional Director's Update – Elisa Velardo
  - 2022 NCI's (National Core Indicators) – DDS participates each year, however, it is particularly important this year since it is now part of the waiver; the sample has been pulled and names of staff are being gathered for those that will be conducting the surveys. Information and data can be found on the National Core Indicators website. The surveys provide an opportunity to get feedback from individuals. All surveys must be completed by 6/30/22. Last year surveys were all done virtually; not sure if in-person will be possible yet this year.
  - Remote Support Pilot Project – NOO was issued in October. Two providers were identified to participate, Midstate ARC and ARC of Eastern CT. Each has identified 10 individuals that are interested in using assistive technology to be able to receive support when someone is not there to provide in-person support. There will be approximately 80 DDS staff statewide that will participate in training provided by SHIFT. The purpose of the pilot is to identify any issues that may arise such as funding or what is or isn't working for people.
  - COVID-19 Update – Statewide meetings have been occurring weekly to review the numbers within our service system. The vast majority have been vaccinated and numbers are leveling quickly. We are continuing to distribute PPE with N95 masks to self-directing families. Home test kits were distributed to providers. The focus has been to ensure that staff, providers, and families have supplies.
  - 5-Year Plan – Two public hearings are being held on the draft of the DDS 5-year Plan.
  - Respite Centers – In response to the higher rate of COVID, respite services have been paused. They are planning to reopen soon; protocols around testing are being developed.
  - CCH – Each Region has been authorized to expand CCH's by 15 for this fiscal year.

- Supported Housing – Supported Housing continues to expand:
  - Three IDASH programs:
    - FAVARH – Bearwoods in Canton is open
    - FAVARH – Lavender Fields in Bloomfield – the developer is hopeful that it will be open in February
    - HARC – Clover Gardens – the first individuals have moved in
  - CRI – Trout Brook Development in West Hartford (not IDASH but similar Supported Housing model); looking at 5/22 to open. Referrals are being reviewed now.
  - Other providers are beginning to engage with developers
- There are some providers that have had vacancies in some CLA's for an extended period. Meetings have begun to try to work with providers within the Region to review those vacancies. There is a pause on development for CLA's and CRS' but there is some capacity within existing CLA's.
- Shannon Jacovino is the new Ombudsperson for DDS. Elisa will invite Shannon to attend a RAC meeting.
- Dr. Cheryl Ellis is the new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for DDS. She will also be invited to attend a RAC meeting.
- Other areas of interest:
  - Kathleen Hayes asked if anyone had any particular areas that members would like to focus on for future meetings or presentations.
    - Amber Burke will be invited for February or March to discuss Employment.
    - Josh Scalora will be invited to speak on development possibly for either February or March meeting.
    - Kathleen will do her presentation on Supportive Decision Making possibly for the April meeting; it was suggested that the date for the presentation be shared statewide so other regions can attend.
  - Rick Rothstein shared that Shannon Jacovino has gone back to posting a monthly Ombudsperson report which can be accessed on the web.
- A motion for adjournment was made and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:12 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Claudia Neumann*

Executive Secretary