## DDS North Region Regional Advisory Council

September 21, 2022

Meeting Minutes – Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams (meeting was recorded)

Members Present: Richard Rothstein, Temporary Chair; Annette Scully, Vice Chair; Donna Cohen; Kim Little; Tammy Selinger; Stacie Silva-Gordon, DDS North Regional Director (ex-Officio member)

Guests: Cynthia Lichtsteiner; Mary Lou O'Connor; Melissa Mills

Meeting called to order at 5:00pm.

Mr. Rothstein began the meeting with introductions.

- Approval of May Meeting Minutes Annette Scully made a motion to approve the minutes; seconded by Tammy Selinger; minutes were approved as written.
- Regional Director's Update:
  - Stacie Silva-Gordon shared that a memo was sent out to extend the hold on new development for an
    additional six months. There continues to be many existing vacancies that are unfunded statewide. There
    needs to be a focus on filling those vacancies before proceeding with any new development.
  - Many agencies are still experiencing a staffing crisis. Agencies have been holding job fairs and using social media to try to help address the issue and stabilize their workforce. DDS has also provided some resources from our ARPA funding to assist in this area. Commissioner Scheff also sits on a Governor's workforce council to discuss these issues since the issue is statewide, across all agencies. It has been difficult for providers to take on new admissions into their homes due to the staffing crisis.

Mr. Rothstein asked how day programs have been affected and if people are remaining home due to a shortage of staff in programs. Ms. Silva-Gordon stated that it has also been a challenge in day programs and being able to provide supervision levels if a person needs one-to-one supervision has been difficult.

Many issues have contributed to the staffing issue, on the national level as well as the state level, including salaries, benefits, people choosing to continue to work from home, etc. which has made it difficult to find people looking to work in the field.

A question was raised about what happens when someone needs placement and the beds available are not appropriate for the person. Stacie stated that the department is working with agencies that have vacancies to look at possibly doing some internal moves to provide more opportunities for new individuals. It was also stated that the open beds are now also available on a statewide basis, so if necessary, a person could be placed in another region if there is a better fit for the person.

4th Tuesday Monthly Forums – Forums are being held on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 3:00-4:30pm on a variety of topics for families as well as staff, to share information about specific services that are available. DDS will provide an overview of the service and then private providers and families have shared their experiences with that service. Recently, there have been presentations on Supportive Housing and IHS. Parents have given tours of their family members' apartments, sharing examples of technology and what has been helpful for individuals now living on their own. Upcoming topics will be Sept. (27<sup>th</sup>) – Assistive Technology; Oct. – CCH; Nov. – Customized Employment; Dec. – Remote Supports. Anyone that is not able to attend at the time the meetings are held can find recordings of the forums on the DDS website. The link to join the forums, which are held virtually via Microsoft Teams, can also be found on the website (Fourth Tuesday Forums on Innovative Options (ct.gov).

A suggestion was made to possibly have one of the topics be geared toward helping people understand what all of the services are other than just CCH, also CLA and CRS, since some families know that a CCH would not work for their family member but don't know what the other services are.

It was also asked if the topic of Shared Living could possibly be presented since IDASH isn't available for all who qualify.

Stacie Silva-Gordon will share the suggestions with Central Office.

- Stacie shared that DDS has been really focusing on utilizing the ARPA funding. A transformation consultant has been hired to assist with the system transformation. Five committees will be developed, an Advisory Committee, a Residential committee, a Day committee, an Individual and Family committee, and then a DDS staff committee. Some of the committees have already started meeting and recordings are available on the DDS website along with a link with the ARPA information. Former Deputy Commissioner Peter Mason, who has retired but returned temporarily, is also assisting with coordinating.
- Legislative Updates Rick Rothstein shared updates.
  - ARPA It was passed about 18 months ago. All of the ARPA committees are posted on the website and meeting recordings and minutes are available for review.
  - A reminder that the election will be coming up on November 8<sup>th</sup>. There have been many retirements on both sides of the aisle and both chambers. It was suggested that people meet the candidates if you have an opportunity. After the election, the process will need to begin of educating all of the new members of issues pertaining to the IDD community.
  - There will be a candidate forum held on October 12<sup>th</sup> for the offices of Governor and Lieutenant Governor,
     Secretary of State, and Treasurer from 3:00-8:00pm. It can be attended virtually, and people do not have to attend in its entirety.
- Future Meeting Topics
  - Rick Rothstein stated that he has agreed to fill the role of Chair until January. Nominations will be needed for a new Chair.
- Open Forum for Public Participation
  - No new topics raised.
- Motion to adjourn was made by Annette Scully; seconded by Donna Cohen. Meeting was adjourned at 5:45 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted, **Claudia Neumann**Executive Secretary