

DDS North Region
Regional Advisory Council

May 17, 2023

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

Members Present: Richard Rothstein, Temporary Chair; Annette Scully, Vice Chair; Lori Caughlin; Cynthia Lichtsteiner; Mary Lou O'Connor; Susan Prihar; Tammy Selinger; Stacie Silva-Gordon, DDS North Regional Director (ex-Officio member)

Guests: Melissa Kremmel; Brian Reddy (DDS); Karen Sticklin (DDS)

Meeting called to order at 5:05pm.

- Open Forum for Public Participation – no public participation
- Legislative Update:
 - Rick Rothstein reported that there are two main issues being focused on that are of interest for us.
 - The first is the budget.
 - Looking to increase rates for providers. There is concern that after going through great financial stress for many years, particularly the last two, Governor Lamont put a zero increase in his budget for the next two years and the Appropriations Committee included a 1% increase for both years. A continuous advocacy effort has been going on and will continue up until June 7th.
 - Rally being held on 5/24 on the lawn at the State Capitol for all non-profits, not only ID. People are being asked to attend, if possible, or call their legislators with concerns for providers being able to support our individuals and the need for the increase.
 - Unions from six agencies, including Oak Hill which is the largest, have called for a strike. They are looking to have wages increased to \$25/hr.
 - The second main issue is HB 5001, which is very complicated. It is 18 pages and includes just about all of the DDS-related legislation. It includes provisions that would change many things about the way people with ID and autism receive services. Some of the elements in the bill is a mandate to review the Level of Need system using ARPA funds, looking at employment programs, including employment incentives, and increased reporting about the waiting list. It requires DDS and DSS, together with OPM, the legislature, and the governor, to reduce the waiting list, specifically looking at the Emergency portion of the waiting list. It also includes a Transition Academy. Details have not yet been developed for the plan for the Transition Academy.
 - The feeling is that the Bill is very likely to get passed, however, may change between now and the time it passes. Nothing is final until it is signed by the governor.
 - There is also a very strong workforce development component in the bill for both individuals and also staff, to try to help with the staffing crisis.
 - ARPA is also continuing.
 - Rick will send the explanation of the bill to Council members.
 - Regional Director's Update – Stacie Silva-Gordon
 - Stacie reminded everyone about the 4th Tuesday forums. The next one will be on Individual and Family Support and Respite. All the forums are recorded, so they are also available later on the DDS website. Also, the STEP (Supporting Transformation to Empower People) informational forums that are being facilitated by the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner are also available.

- Stacie introduced Karen Sticklin, Assistant Regional Director for IFS, who oversees the Individual and Family Support Division. Karen gave a brief overview of the Division, which includes the Helpline, Clinical Transition Advisors, eligibility case managers, respite centers, and Camp Quinebaug. Karen introduced Brian Reddy, IFS Dir. of Service Development & Support, who will be doing a presentation about the services that are available to individuals who live at home with their families or who live on their own in the community. Brian shared a PowerPoint presentation.
- Stacie shared that effective Friday, May 19th, the North Region will have a new Director of Quality Assurance who will be working to ensure everyone is receiving quality services and assisting in different areas in reference to quality. Stacie will invite the new Director to attend our next meeting.
- Officer Nominations
 - Rick Rothstein announced that although Kim Little was not able to attend this evening's meeting, she has volunteered to be the new Chairperson. Annette Scully has agreed to continue as Vice Chair, Tammy Selinger will continue as Secretary.
- A question was asked regarding the STEP plans. Stacie will have more information regarding the plans that have been approved and will ask the Resource Administrator to attend the next meeting to share the information.
- Meeting was adjourned at 5:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Claudia Neumann
Executive Secretary