

**DDS-South Region  
Regional Advisory and Planning Council  
Meeting Minutes  
February 16, 2011**

**Members Present:** Chair Nancy Kalal, Jean Brookman, April Dipollina, Jack Frost, Steve Fusti (by phone), Diane Martin, Lori Richardson, Danielle Shepard, Kim Wollschleager and Mary McKay, DDS-SR Regional Director/Ex-Officio Member.

**Members Absent:** Carol Cooney and Michael Del Sole

**I. Chairperson's Report**

- **Call to Order** –Chair Kalal called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
- **Citizen Comment** – None presented.
- **Review of Minutes** - A review of the November 2010, meeting minutes ensued. **In the presence of a quorum, and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the November 22, 2010, meeting as presented to the meeting.**

**II. Educational Liaison and Transition Coordinator Presentation**

- **Overview of DDS Education Liaison & Transition Services** – Maria Loiewski, Program Supervisor, Barbara Poplawski, Transition Coordinator and Laurie Duffany, Educational Liaison, provided an overview of DDS' Education Liaison and & Transition Services.

Families must request the services of the Ed Liaison and the Transition Coordinator through the IFS Helpline. The IFS division serves approximately 1900 individuals living at home with no significant DDS supports. Of these, 1,118 are children that are school age. There are not enough education and transition staff to serve all, thus requiring the need for referral based services until the year of graduation. Once a request is made through the Helpline, the Helpline forwards a referral for services to Maria for assignment. Educational Liaison services are provided to individuals up to 16 years of age. Service referrals for individuals over 16 are assigned to a Transition Coordinator.

The role of the DDS Ed Liaison is to increase parent/school communication to insure children have quality educational experiences. Conducting school observations, attending PPTs, and increasing parental advocacy for education are common tasks of the DDS Ed Liaison. Interaction with schools varies- some are welcoming while others are not. It is important to note that the State Department of Education's (SDE) website is an excellent resource for

families. For electronic copies of the publications shared at tonight's meeting, Parents Guide to Special Education and Building a Bridge, and other information visit the SDE website at [www.sde.ct.gov](http://www.sde.ct.gov) (click on "Quick links" and then "Special Education" for more information). Other resources for families include the Special Education Resource Center (SERC) in Middletown - [www.ctcerc.org](http://www.ctcerc.org) and the CT Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) in Niantic - [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org).

The Transition Coordinator's role is to assist families and students with transitioning from school to adult life. To that end, they work with students, families, case managers, schools and providers. DDS assigns a Transition Coordinator to all grads during their last year of high school. In any given year, the Region can expect to serve between 80-90 grads. Many school districts have their own Transition Coordinators, but not all. In terms of best practices, some towns have more resources and offer more opportunities to students. Finding the appropriate program for the student is extremely critical to their success. Other critical pieces include the LON and the student's participation in the planning. Over time DDS services are becoming more visible to districts and families.

The Council came up with the following suggestions for increasing families' awareness of transition planning and school districts focus on transition planning:

1. Create a "Consumer Corner" blog on the DDS website as a place for families to share their experiences.
2. Posting links to transition resources/organizations on the DDS website (i.e. CPAC, State Department of Ed, and SERC).
3. Work to expand the role of school guidance counselors to include transition planning for students with disabilities.
4. Work to increase the number of off site transition/employment training programs available to students with disabilities.
5. Support a mandate legally requiring districts to include a transition course as part of their curriculum.

At the Council's request, a list of school districts with Transition Coordinators will be shared with them at the next meeting.

Mary announced that DDS is co-sponsoring a "School Days to Pay Days" conference designed specifically for school personnel. DDS is striving to increase employment opportunities for young adults. For example, out of 82 grads last year in SR, only two are employed in regular jobs. DDS is actively

ramping up efforts to increase the number of consumers doing real work for real pay.

April added that a transition workshop will be held on April 7 at Learn in Old Lyme and a Wrights Law Conference will be held on April 28 at CCSU in New Britain.

### **III. Old Business**

- **2011 Council Priorities – Next Steps**

Legislative Relationship Building: This priority will be addressed through the Council's support of the CT FSC's Legislative Breakfast Meet & Greet in March and by participating in a combined Legislative Meet & Greet this spring with the NR Regional Advisory Council.

Transition Planning/Outreach—targeting 16-21 year-old population: Preliminary discussions on this item took place earlier in the meeting. Next steps to be determined.

Creative Housing Options: Due to time constraints, this item was not discussed. Item deferred to next meeting.

### **IV. New Business**

- **CT FSN Updates:**

CT FSC Legislative Breakfast Meet and Greet – The CTFSC will host its annual legislative breakfast meet and greet at the Legislative Office Building on March 10, from 9-11am. Increasing Access to services for families raising children with special healthcare needs is the focus of this year's event. All are encouraged to attend, especially families wishing to share personal stories. The CTFSN is also accepting comments or personal stories in advance of the event for anyone unable to attend. Additional information will be forthcoming via the CTFSN list serve. April is requesting the help of the RAC in attending the event and/or promoting it among local legislators, families, colleagues, and friends.

Summer Camp Presentation – The CTFSN is hosting a presentation on summer camp for children with special needs on March 30, at 6PM, at L&M Hospital. Presenting organizations will include High Hopes, Camp Harkness, ARC of New London County, and Oak Hill.

Respite – The development of a Southeastern CT respite caregiver list is underway by the Family Support Network. There are five respite providers on the list at this time, all of whom are Lighthouse Voc-Ed Center employees.

Grace Curtis Workshop – The 5th Annual Grace Curtis “Stand Up and Be Counted” Day will be held on March 21 from 8am-4pm at the Mystic Marriott in Groton. This year’s theme is “Celebrating Women on the Autism Spectrum”. For more information or to register, visit [www.lighthousevotedcenter.com](http://www.lighthousevotedcenter.com).

Bill #529-An Act Developing an Autism Resource Center – Sponsored by Senator Murphy, the bill proposes the development of an Autism Resource Center. The CTFSC supports the concept of establishing a resource center for all developmental disabilities in Southeastern CT.

- **Combined DDS Regional Advisory Council Legislative Breakfast Proposal** - Each spring the RAC in the North Region of DDS hosts a theme-based legislative breakfast at the LOB. This year, they are extending an invitation to the South and West RACs to join them in co-hosting the event. Following discussion, the council agreed to participate in the event. Council member Jean Brookman offered to participate on the planning committee on behalf of this council. The RD’s office will forward Nancy and Jean’s contact information to the North Region to get the ball rolling. The breakfast is tentatively scheduled for April 20, 2011.
- **DDS Administration** - Discussion ensued on possible changes in DDS Administration. The council agreed to continue the discussion in Executive Session on February 22, 2011, at 6:00 PM at the Clinton Library.

**V. Statewide Council on Developmental Services Update**

Jack reported that DDS’ portion of the Governor’s FY12 proposed budget looks good. It is important to remember that the Governor’s proposed budget for DDS is predicated on a number of things including state employee concessions, increased tax revenues, and formal approval by the legislature.

**VI. Next Meeting Date**

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the DDS-South Region Advisory and Planning Council will be held on March 23, 2011, at 6:00 p.m., at the Henry Carter Hull Library in Clinton.

Minutes submitted by: Jolie Crescimano-Goss, Executive Secretary, DDS-South Region