

**DDS South Region
Regional Advisory and Planning Council
Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2021
6:00 PM
(via Teleconference)**

Members Participating: Chair Leslie Bridges-Parent, Robin Brewer, Lynn Arezzini, Carol Cooney, Dawn DeMatteo, Heidi Earle, Kate Haaland, Erin McGuire, and Thomas Dailey, DDS South Regional Director

Public Participation: David Cassano, Diane Martin

Scribe: Jolie Crescimano-Goss, DDS Executive Secretary

Chairperson's Report:

- **Call to Order** – Chair Bridges-Parent called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.
- **Citizen Comments** – Comments and discussion centered on the following:
 - The various and on-going struggles faced by families that have adult loved ones living in the family home. It's been an especially long nine months for all despite everything DDS and its providers have done to ease the impact. Director Dailey concurred and noted that the pandemic has yielded many very complicated and difficult situations all around – some more difficult to resolve than others.
 - Allied – Customer Services concerns. Extremely long wait times when on hold. Suggestion made for Allied to hire more staff.
 - EVV – Requirement of both paper and electronic timesheets. Director Dailey will provide the Council with additional information following the meeting.
 - DDS mask exemption documentation – Some medical providers are not accepting the documentation. This has resulted in some families having to look for new medical providers for their loved one.
 - Vaccine Prioritization Phase 1b – Concerns raised for individuals who live alone or in the family home not being included in 1b, given they have staff coming in and out of their homes regularly.
- **Field Activity Report** – Tabled due to the pandemic.

Regional Director's Updates: Director Dailey updated the Council on recent happenings at DDS including:

- CCH Program - 15 new CCHs in development statewide. Very good news.
- ETHP – Very busy program with over 14 people served since inception.
- CRT – This newer program, operated by Oak Hill in conjunction with DDS, helped 10 people by providing the clinical resources needed to avoid further decompensation, and ultimately fewer hospital ER visits and psych admissions.
- SDU – The DDS operated Step-Down Unit has helped 14 people to date.
- DDS Respite Centers remain closed due to the pandemic.
- Diabetes Care – Research continues. Data on the DDS community and the general population are consistent. Data on injectables varies. This might be due to the release of new medications, which is a good thing.
- Healthcare Coordinator RFP – Seeking a provider to contract with the state to offer more of this vital service.
- COVID-19 Vaccine and Direct Care Staff – Roughly 50% of direct care staff appear to be declining the vaccine. DDS and the provider community continue to encourage staff to be vaccinated. Suggestion made to offer monetary incentives to staff.
- Providers Stepping Up – Many providers continue to step up and take on emergency cases for DDS during the pandemic. This has been a great help and is very much appreciated.
- Appendix K – DDS will be applying to the Federal CMS for an extension of Appendix K, which exempted DDS from certain waiver related service requirements during the pandemic that directly benefitted individuals, families, providers, and DDS. Outcome to be determined. A copy of Appendix K will be sent to council members for their information.

Council Open Discussion Topics: Open Council discussion ensued on the following topics:

- VAMS (vaccination administration management system) vs. Hartford Healthcare's system for the administration of vaccinations. Many have found VAMS to be less than user friendly; however, its help center received high marks in responding to questions.
- DDS' role in advocating for the Vaccination Prioritization of individuals who live at home and what the RAC could be doing to support the effort. Member Haaland will forward to all contact information for the co-chairs of the allocations sub-committee as they are the body making recommendations on inclusion in phases. Director Dailey noted that the DDS Ombudsmen Ed Mambruno can be reached via email at ed.mambruno@ct.gov.
- ABLE Accounts. Member Arezzini recommended the Ohio stable account. She will forward contact information to all following the meeting.

- DDS Rent Subsidy Program limitations. Council members are encouraged to reach out to Tim O'Brien who manages the rent subsidy program for the South Region at timothy.obrien@ct.gov.

New Business: The RAC decided that it will continue to meet monthly during the pandemic in order to remain abreast of how things are going on the DDS front. The RD's office will schedule a February meeting date.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jolie Crescimano-Goss

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Executive Secretary

DDS South Region

Next Meeting: February Meeting Date TBD