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Department of Developmental Services

South Region



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Deputy Commissioner

Cres Secchiaroli
South Region Director

**South Region Regional Advisory Council (RAC)
Meeting Minutes
Recorded on 9/21/22**

Attendees: Leslie Bridges Parent, Dawn Dematteo, Carol Cooney, Cres Secchiaroli, Gunnar Abrahamsson, Lynn Arizini, Heidi Earl

Guests attending: Diane Martin, Jacob Earl

The minutes were reviewed and there was a recommendation to add the Norwich Dental Clinic discussion from the June meeting to the minutes.

Leslie Bridges Parent asked if there were more reports of neglect since the outbreak of COVID 19. Director Secchiaroli explained that initially there was a decrease in the number of neglect cases, and that the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has returned to historic norms in terms of numbers of reports of abuse and neglect. The current staffing crisis has greatly impacted human service agencies across the country, DDS is working diligently to refill these gaps to bolster services. There was discussion about the staffing crisis not being unique to DDS and those with disabilities.

There was discussion around what occurs when those with special needs children pass away. Director Secchiaroli explained that there is a replacement guardian that is appointed, to be the advocate and the voice for the child. There was a question about whether or not a replacement guardian can be paid for providing the service of “guardianship”, the answer was no. Guardianship has several domains underneath it, plenary guardians, medical/financial guardians, guardians of abode etc. There is a similar umbrella for conservatorship, depending on the wants and needs of the individual.

It was explained that technically an individual can have both a conservator and guardian. In the instance that there is not a known guardian the court can appoint one. There was a question if one individual can have a conservator and guardianship, there was no clear answer as the Regional Director is not an expert in this matter.

After initial discussion, introductions began. Regional Director (RD) Secchiaroli introduced himself to the group, explaining that he began volunteering for the agency in the 70s and 80s starting out in Direct Care. He has experience in day programs, residential programs, and was recently the Regional Director for DDS Public Operations.

There was discussion from RAC council members, providing background on their loved ones, their time with the council, and their experience with the agency.

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RD Secchiaroli thanked the group for making their introductions.

There was a follow up on the guardian discussion, and whether or not a speaker who is well versed in this matter could attend the meeting to have a discussion with the council. There was a general consensus that this would be beneficial to the council.

Lynn Arezzini asked about I-DASH. RD Secchiaroli explained that I-DASH was a funding source used to create the first supportive housing units. These units are brought up by developers who partner with providers to get financial funding, meeting their low income threshold, allowing the provider community to work with the developer to produce integrated housing options. This model is now being renamed as supported housing, of which there are 3 in the South Region. There are models in Orange, New London, and Pawcatuck. The agency is trying to utilize assistive technology to allow individuals to lead more independent lives.

The conversation moved to the Norwich Dental Clinic, RD Secchiaroli explained that the agency interviewed a candidate for the lead dentist position for the clinic. There was confirmation that the Ella Grasso Dental Clinic is not closed.

RD Secchiaroli went on to explain that the agency is starting a funding initiative, reaching out to caregivers who have families with loved ones still at home on the waiting list, the goal is to support these individuals. These are people identified by the agency where there are opportunities for placement. RD Secchiaroli explained that the agency has learned many lessons from COVID19, including that congregate settings can be a challenge.

There was a question from Carol Cooney as to whether or not the state was still doing walk throughs of homes to ensure licensing. Department of Public Health (DPH) also goes into Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) homes and does inspections, it is federally regulated. RD Secchiaroli explained that the Quality Service Review (QSR) is more concentrated on the person while the licensing is focused on the facility. RD Secchiaroli explained concerns should be directed to the provider, if there is no progress reach out to the case manager who can talk to quality or resource management.

In instances where multiple investigation come from a home, the agency can dispatch staff to review the houses practices and procedures. Investigations go through DDS Department of Investigation (DOI), internal staff reviews these cases, and then they move to the Regional Director's office.

There was additional personal discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:46PM.

Nothing Follows //

Minutes recorded by:
Gunnar Abrahamsson
Regional Executive Secretary