

**DDS-West Region
Advisory Council Minutes
October 30, 2014**

Members Present – Charles Bergamo, Mickey Herbst, Gil Kellersman, Karleen Craddock, Lisa Schwab, Cindy Stramandinoli, Corinne Tartaglia

DDS Staff: Fritz Gorst, Regional Director & Eunice Rivera, Executive Secretary

Call to Order – Mickey Herbst called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

Member Comments

- **Approval of Minutes** – Minutes were reviewed and accepted.

Update from Regional Director

Fritz Gorst gave an update to the group on how he is getting back into the swing of things and he mentioned how grateful he was for all of the support offered to him while he was on his extended medical leave.

Election Next Week

Mickey explained how the ARC has a candidate score card on how they fare with issues related to the developmental disability population. He indicated that the legislators and state representatives give a response to where they stand on specific issues with DDS. He also shared that if there are any specific questions or issues that you would like to bring forward to your representatives that it is not too late to do so. There is also still time to share information with friends and family to support the candidate that you feel is the candidate of choice. At the next meeting, we will know who the Governor is. This will be added to the agenda for discussion at the next Advisory Council meeting.

Request for New Chairperson

Mickey has been serving as the Chairperson of this Council for several years. He offered up his position to anyone on the Council who would like to serve in this capacity. Chuck Bergamo was nominated by Lisa Schwab and Karleen Craddock to serve in this capacity. After a vote, the Council approved Mr. Bergamo as the new Chairperson for the Advisory Council.

Your Voice Makes a Difference

The original members of the Council discussed how their voice has been heard by the Department and they encouraged the newer membership to become actively involved in advocating for their family members. They mentioned that their voices have been heard by local legislators and they are pleased with this. They encouraged getting connected with their local representatives. The message shared was that when people speak up and become actively involved they can have a positive influence in advocating their position.

Purpose of the Council

Mr. Bergamo inquired about the “purpose of the Council”. He was interested in what the other regions are doing so that we can replicate that here in the West. Fritz indicated that the other regions are similar in their membership and their activity.

Mr. Herbst shared that the Council discusses systems that are working and not working and serve as an Advisory to those types of issues. Those issues are shared with the Regional Director and things that are not working can be researched and corrected or changed. The group shares information and receives information. The group also shares information.

A request for the statute that outlines what the council member is charged with was made. Eunice will email the statute to the members.

Facebook Page and Sharing of Information

There was discussion on creating a Facebook page for the sharing of information. Some members felt it would be a useful place to share discussion and to network. Sharing of information could also be done here; however, the best source of accurate information is the DDS website. No official decision was made on who would create the page (Administrator).

The group inquired as to whether there is DDS representation at any of the School Resource Fairs that are held in different towns. The response was that Brian Smith (DDS Grant Manager) and other staff do attend these fairs and are available to answer questions and share information on the Department.

The topic of sharing of information continued to arise. The Council feels it is important to reach more families. Facebook may be a good starting point to reach more people.

There seems to be a disconnect with local school districts in terms of when DDS becomes involved and when the district is responsible for school aged children. Individuals that are 21 and over are served by DDS.

The DDS WR Helpdesk is a wonderful resource for families without a case manager. Mickey stated that the DDS website is a great place for information as well as the ARC-CT and ARC-US and encouraged council members to check those sites out.

Budget Issues

Another issue that arose was the fact that funding constraints can inhibit families from receiving services. It can be discouraging for families who want to advocate and promote programs and services, but inadequate funding is a road block. The Council can advise the Regional Director on their position for suggested services and programs, but if there is no money available it seems to be a moot point.

Next Meeting & Next Agenda

For the next Agenda:

- Discussion of Election and Outcome
- Children’s Services – Fritz to have DDS staff make a presentation to the Advisory Council
- Advisory Council Statute – Membership (the Council touched upon recruiting new membership in other parts of the region).

Meeting dates for 2015

January 15	Ella Grasso	10:00 am
March 19	Ella Grasso	4:00 pm
May 14	Waterbury	10:00 am
September 17	Ella Grasso	4:00 pm
November 12	Waterbury	10:00 am

Location Addresses:

Rowland Government Center
 55 West Main Street, 4th Floor
 Waterbury, CT

Ella Grasso Center
300 Armory Road, Stratford, CT

Adjournment

No other business was discussed.

Meeting adjourned at 11: 30 a.m.

Minutes Recorded by:

Eunice B. Rivera
Executive Secretary, DDS-WR