

DDS West Region
Advisory Council
June 16, 2016
Minutes

Ella Grasso Center,
300 Armory Road, Stratford, CT
4:00pm

Present: Charles Bergamo, Lori Chiappiniello, Marina Derman, Fritz Gorst, Mickey Herbst, Karen Simon, Cindy Stramandinoli

Citizens who signed in: Lynn Arezzini, Sue Bastien, Alice Evans, Carmen Fraguada, Laura Gibson, Emilia Gilbert

Call to Order:

Meeting called to order at 4:05 pm

Approval of Minutes

Cindy Stramandinoli made a motion to accept the Minutes; Marina Derman seconded the motion. Minutes passed unanimously.

Facebook Page

Mr. Bergamo gave an update on the new Regional Advisory Council Facebook page. Chairman Bergamo suggested to the group to provide their email so that he can send them a Facebook invite. He also informed the group that his son is very good with technology and using Facebook and that he would be working on the site over the summer and we should be fully operational by September.

Chairman Bergamo gave an update on ABLE accounts which falls under Sec. 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. The act allows people with disabilities and their families to set up a special savings account for disability related expenses. Earnings on an ABLE account are not taxed and the account funds are not considered assets for Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Medicaid or other federal benefits. Current law makes savings difficult for individuals with disabilities. Individuals face the loss of benefits if they have a savings account or assets over \$2k for SSI and \$1500 for Medicaid. See attached for information on ABLE.



ABLE.pdf

Currently, the State of Connecticut has not set up any ABLE accounts, but Connecticut residents can use ABLE in states where it has been set up. Fritz mentioned that they are currently working with some individuals in the WR who have come into some money and the DDS business office is setting up an ABLE account for these individuals through the program in the State of Ohio.

Directors Report

Fritz spoke about the budget and there are still some details that need to be worked out. There are still no definite decisions on FY17 age outs and grads. The State and the Department are still moving forward with closing the Meriden campus and the Ella Grasso Center.

Under **Senate Bill 294** there is new language on the Advisory Council and how DDS has to inform families annually of the Advisory Council. Case managers will be informing families of the Regional Advisory Council and when the meetings are scheduled, held and where the Minutes are posted on the internet.

Public Comments

Several people in attendance spoke about the dissatisfaction of the DDS budget and several are in support of the EGC not closing.