

Advisory Council Meeting
June 22, 2017
10:00 am
Lower Fairfield Center, Norwalk, CT

Minutes

Present

Andrew Barer, Susan Bastien, Charles Bergamo, Marina Derman, Fritz Gorst, Mickey Herbst, Gil Kellersman, Karen Simon, Cindy Stramandinoli

Call to Order

Chairman Bergamo called the meeting to order at 10:05 am

Review of Minutes from Last Meeting

The Minutes of March 16, 2017 were reviewed. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council approved the Minutes.

Welcome of New Member to the Board

Mr. Andrew Barer was welcomed to the meeting. The Council Members each went around and introduced themselves. They each shared some information on their family members that are served by DDS.

Mr. Bergamo gave Mr. Barer a quick overview of the Advisory Council and what they have been doing. The group has been trying to do some outreach to get more families information on the RAC. Mr. Barer shared that he will request that his wife assist with some social media platforms to get out information. The group was pleased that Mr. Barer has a marketing background and can assist in this manner. They are hoping to get information out and serve as a resource to families.

Mr. Bergamo reiterated that he would like to get some speakers to come present to the RAC on topics that may be of interested to the RAC and families.

The Council suggested that the membership include an individual served by the Department as is outlined in the Connecticut General Statutes. Fritz explained that we had a member that was also a Self-Advocate Coordinator (SAC) and the member was unable to continue in this capacity due to also being a state employee. Members suggested that Fritz inquire why this is a conflict and requested that he pursue reinstating a SAC to serve. Fritz also agreed to send an email to Case Management Supervisors to invite them to present names of anyone that might be interested in serving on the Advisory Council.

As an aside, there was a brief discussion on the Community First Choice Program and how detrimental it would be to families if this program were discontinued. Members of the Council encouraged each other to contact their local legislators to speak on this. Ms. Derman agreed to share the names of contacts with the RAC membership. She will send the information to Eunice Rivera via email.

Discussion of the Joint Advisory Meeting

The Minutes from the Council on Developmental Disabilities Minutes were distributed and briefly discussed. Members from the West Region Advisory Council felt that it was a very productive meeting and felt that the meetings of all Councils should happen more frequently. Fritz shared that the meeting in

May will now be a statewide meeting of the Council on Developmental Disabilities in conjunction with three regional Advisory Councils.

Directors Update

Fritz gave a brief update on the budget. He shared that there is no approved budget in place at this time. As we get any information we will share it with the Council. If a budget is not passed by the end of the fiscal year, the Governor will likely only pay the essential bills (i.e. salaries, gas, utilities) and there will be no special projects.

Fritz also told the membership that the conversion of public homes is also temporarily on hold. This injunction means that the positions that were to transition to cover vacancies in the region is also on hold.

Money for graduates has not been approved yet. Fritz explained how in years past we were allocated a small amount of funding and started individuals in a day program one day per week and progressed into 3 days per week then a full week until full funding was allocated.

Other Comments

- There was discussion about how the school system pays for residential placement and continues to pay for residential placement vs. students who graduate from school and aren't offered a residential placement when school finishes at the age of 21. Many families are not informed of DDS services. There is a disconnect between the school system and DDS. Members of the Council feel there should be a better way to communicate information to families. They feel that creating a flyer and disbursing it would assist in passing important information along to families.
- Creative Housing Group – the South Region has an active subcommittee on Creative Housing. The WR RAC would like a member to get involved in this subgroup and share information with them. Ms. Simon agreed to follow up on that.
- Transition Coordinators: Fritz shared that we haven't been able to fill these positions as staff retire. The Individual and Family Support Division is covering this.
- Public Division – Crescentino Secchiaroli (Director of Public Operations) will be assuming the West Region Public Division beginning August 4, 2017. This is part of the transition for the public divisions statewide to be centralized.
- There was a suggestion to add additional meetings to the schedule. There are 6 official meetings in the year. Mr. Bergamo may suggest additional meetings throughout the year as may become necessary. It was decided that once the budget has been confirmed that an additional meeting can be held if the membership would like to meet. Mr. Bergamo will advise the Regional Director's office of a proposed date.

Public Comment

No public comment

Adjournment

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council adjourned the meeting at 10:47 am.

Respectfully submitted by:
Eunice B. Rivera
Executive Secretary