

**Advisory Council Meeting  
September 19, 2019  
4:00 pm  
Ella Grasso Center, Stratford, CT**

**Minutes**

**Members Present**

Susan Bastien, Charles Bergamo (Chair), Marina Derman (Vice Chair), Gil Kellersman, Roger McNealy, Karen Simon, Arlene Steinfeld, Cindy Stramandinoli

**Public Present**

Douglas Lavery, Kim McGrath

1. CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm
  
2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETINGS MINUTES –

***Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the Minutes of May 16, 2019.***

3. NEW BUSINESS –

- Chairman Bergamo welcomed everyone back after having the summer off.
  
- He shared that he has still been trying to arrange a Council Meeting at the Easter Seals Waterbury location. This will be a regular WR RAC meeting. More information to follow.
  
- He reported that the Connecticut State Developmental Disabilities Council (Federal Council) has a number of members that are retiring from the Committee. This group gets funded and is more structured in terms of who sits on the Council. He advised the RAC that they can go to the Council's website for more information.

4. OLD BUSINESS –

- Subcommittees/Focus Groups – Mr. Bergamo once again suggested that the West Region RAC should form a sub-committee (or two) to focus on an area of interest. The South Region RAC has focused on housing so this is an area that we probably would not want to focus on. He recommended technology. Mr. Bergamo stated that the goal of the RAC is to share information with families. Anyone on the RAC interested in putting together a sub-committee may do so. This is all voluntary on behalf of whoever chooses to lead a subcommittee and there is no funding available for the group.

There was some discussion on technology and how the NEAT Marketplace and Mid-state ARC has provided information sessions on the technology that is available to assist consumers. Members inquired if these two entities could possibly come to the WR RAC for a presentation. Fritz will follow up to arrange for a speaker.

Karen Simon mentioned that at a meeting with Commissioner Scheff that there seemed to be concerns from families about training in Self Determination. Families seem to have trouble with managing a budget and hiring staff under this model. The RAC suggested that she create a subcommittee to focus on this area. **A motion to have Karen lead a subcommittee was duly made and seconded.**

- There was a discussion on elderly family members and how it's difficult for them to manage at home with disabled family member. Fritz explained to the RAC that the Department has made a good faith effort to reach out to elderly caregivers to offer supports. Some families have declined to have their sons/daughters placed or have refused in-home supports. Cindy mentioned that she knows someone who is in need of assistance. She will get the name to Fritz and he will follow-up on this matter.

## 5. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

- Budget: The Department will be receiving their budget allocation tomorrow 9/20/19.
- Public In-Home Supports: DDS has eliminated the Public In-Home Supports Program. 33 public staff members were impacted by this. In-home supports will now be provided through private agencies.
- Step-Down Units (SDU): DDS has awarded 2 Request for Proposals (RFPs) for an agency to open up a Step-Down Unit for emergencies. One was awarded to I.C.E.S. and Oakhill. They are currently looking for properties. These agencies will provide services to the Department when there is an immediate need for a consumer to be placed.

The DDS Step-Down Unit has 6-beds available at the Hartford Regional Center in Newington. The West Region has placed two individuals there and their stays have been successful. The goal of the SDU is to stabilize individuals during a 60-90 day stay. Once stabilized they are discharged.

- Respite RFPs: There were 3 RFPs for respite homes across the State. The West Region has a home available in Wilton (off of Route 7), but this home was not bid on. The homes that were bid on would be for a provider to be ready at any given time to house consumers in need of emergency respite. The West Region will again put the Wilton home out for bid.
- Employment Reimagining Focus Groups: Amber Burke (Director of Employment and Day Services) will be hosting focus groups that will be discussing Day Services. There will be three different focus group meetings held statewide in each region. One for providers, families, and case managers.

There was some concern shared about day programs and individuals that are profoundly disabled and how their lives would be impacted by the elimination of a day program.

- Level of Need (LON) Bill: This bill will be revisited so that is more specific and not as broad.

6. NEW BUSINESS –

- A brief discussion amongst the Council members took place with an inquiry about services and supports that may be needed. Recreation was mentioned as being an area that is missing.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS –

- Douglas Lavery, CCH Provider – stated that he has been having much difficulty with payments being behind for the individuals that live with him. He expressed concern over payment timeliness and staff that do not return calls to him in a timely manner.

Fritz shared that he will be looking into this.

- Kim McGrath, CCH Provider – she shared her concern over CCH provider rates and how she is not pleased that CCH providers will be taxed on their stipends. This has never been done in the last 25 years. She said that the DDS will be meeting with CCH providers to include an accountant that might be able to answer questions.

8. MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION –

Fritz discussed some issues that will be explored and shared with the Council.

**Upon a Motion duly made and seconded the Motion for Executive Session ended at 5:53 pm.**

9. NEXT MEETING –

The next meeting will be held on October 17<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. at the Ella Grasso Center.

ADJOURNMENT

***Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council adjourned the meeting at 5:55pm.***

Respectfully submitted by:

Eunice B. Rivera  
Executive Secretary  
DDS West Region