

West Region Advisory Council

Minutes

Via teleconference

4:00 p.m.

April 15, 2021

**Participants:**

Chuck Bergamo, Marina Derman, Lori Chiappenello, Mickey Herbst, Fritz Gorst, Gil Kellersman, Karen Simon, Arlene Steinfeld, Cindy Stramandinoli

1. CALL TO ORDER –

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 pm

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETINGS MINUTES –

***Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the Minutes of March 18, 2021.***

3. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE–

Mr. Bergamo reported that the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities will be adopting their new 5-year plan next week.

There may also be an application (available in May) for anyone who may wish to apply to be on the Council.

4. REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE –

The vaccine rollout took place a few weeks ago at the Kennedy Center and LARC. It was well attended, and we received great feedback and positive reviews from many families. Ms. Simon echoed those sentiments and stated that she feels DDS did a wonderful job in making this happen with a quick turn around time. Staff on hand were very helpful and supportive. She expressed that she was very grateful this clinic was offered, and she was impressed.

Fritz shared that the Department's focus has been on the vaccine clinics and ensuring that the information got out to families in a timely manner. The partnership in the West Region was with Griffin Hospital. The South Region partnered with Yale Hospital and the North Region worked with Hartford Healthcare.

There is a clinic taking place this week 4/14-4/17/2021 in Naugatuck.

Several Day Programs are reopening. Different agencies are opening; some are not opening yet. Each agency is doing their own thing.

DDS is gathering data on individuals that have gotten the vaccine and keeping track if they get sick. Also, if anyone in a group home gets sick, the entire group home is tested.

Fritz gave an update on where we are with positive cases. Hospitalizations are down.

We keep a list of all staff that going into our office for contact tracing if needed. Fritz does not allow staff to use drop-in offices. No one is allowed to use anyone else's work space. We've only had a few cases where a staff person was ill requiring us to deep cleaning a few office spaces. DDS Human Resources keeps track of all staff that have tested positive and ensures they are clear before they return to work.

A question arose as to whether staff are required to take the vaccine. At this point, the Department is encouraging staff to take the vaccine, but it is not a requirement. Fritz shared that the Department has been sharing videos that describe the benefits of taking the vaccine.

DDS has not been giving the vaccine to anyone under the age of 16.

## 5. NEW BUSINESS

Legislative Bills: A question whether there are any pending legislative bills that we should be concerned about arose. Fritz shared that there is nothing pressing that we have our eyes on.

Private Agency Staffing: Mr. Herbst inquired if we have had any issues with private providers hiring staff. Fritz indicates that some agencies may be experiencing some difficulty with hiring staff because some people are afraid of COVID and aren't working.

## 6. OLD BUSINESS

Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) - There was a question about whether mileage forms are going to change to the EVV system. At present, there is no discussion of changing to the EVV system. Paperwork for mileage is still required.

Staff ID badges – Fritz explained that the Department explored providing IDs for staff hired through the Self Determination program. The Department cannot provide IDs as the staff who work under the fiscal intermediaries are not employees of the State of Connecticut – DDS.

Mr. Bergamo explained that he uses a type of ID badge that provides information on his daughter and he will share with the group if they choose to use something similar.

A discussion about local police departments and notifying them of family members with ID ensued. Ms. Stramandinoli stated that as part of the emergency preparedness project, a form has been developed which includes all information on an individual that could be helpful to EMS, police, etc. Ms. Chiappanello will share a copy of the form upon request.

## 7. PUBLIC COMMENT

No one from the public participated in the meeting; therefore, no public comment.

8. NEXT MEETING –

May 20 - 4pm via teleconference; invitations will be sent out via Outlook.

ADJOURNMENT

***Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council adjourned the meeting at 4:40 pm.***

Respectfully submitted by:

Eunice B. Rivera  
Executive Secretary, DDS West Region