

West Region Advisory Council

Minutes

Via Teleconference

4:00 p.m.

May 19, 2022

Participants:

Chuck Bergamo, Marina Derman, Fritz Gorst, Mickey Herbst, Karen Simon, Arlene Steinfeld

1. CALL TO ORDER –

The meeting was called to order at 4:07 pm

Members were advised that moving forward all virtual meetings would be recorded.

2. ROLL CALL –

Each participating member of the Regional Advisory Council introduced themselves.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETINGS MINUTES –

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the Minutes of April 21, 2022.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT –

Mr. Bergamo shared an email with the RAC which outlines the proposal for guardians of DDS individuals in Connecticut to be granted the opportunity to become a paid caregiver. At present, guardians cannot be paid to provide care for their loved ones. Mr. Bergamo explained that he would be asking the other Chairpersons in the NR & SR to come onboard with this proposal so that there is a consensus that the current policy be changed to allow guardians to be paid. The Council is in favor of asking Fritz to move this proposal forward through DDS so that this can go through the proper channels to be approved by the legislature. There was a suggestion to have this request also approved by the State Developmental Council also. This proposal will need to get legislative approval, etc. Fritz agreed to draft a memo to send to Krista Ostazewski requesting a formal review of the WR RACs recommendation.

There was discussion that paying a guardian would not cost more; it would simply be shifting dollars to the guardian to provide care. There is currently a staffing shortage so allowing a guardian to be paid would help resolve staffing issues. Some parents are being forced to quit their jobs to provide necessary care for their family member. The group also discussed where there could be a conflict of interest with billing, but there could be some oversight built in like a fiscal intermediary to monitor payments to the guardian. It was also suggested that the Case Manager assigned to the case would be able to provide some review/vetting over who is an appropriate paid guardian. Some guardians do not have the physical ability to be paid so they would not be appropriate to be paid providers. In that case, they would not qualify.

The Behavioral Supports Program (BSP) was also briefly discussed and how parents stay home to provide care for their children. This was formerly the Voluntary Services Program (VSP) based out of DCF (Department of Children & Families).

5. REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE –

- **Budget:** We seem to be in good shape. No cuts to DDS budgets.
- **Transitional Housing** – the WR has a 3 bedroom cape in Wilton off of Route 7 that has opened. A WR provider agency is managing.
- **Retirements** – more retirements are happening; recently Governor has approved salary alignment with non-represented (non-union) staff. This means non-union/management would receive the same raises as union employees. This decision has made some staff rescind their retirements.

6. NEW BUSINESS

None

7. OLD BUSINESS

- **Staffing Issues:** Staffing continues to be an issue. Fritz shared that some agencies are not having difficulty staffing. Karen requested a list of providers that are accepting new placements.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

9. NEXT MEETING –

- September 15, 2022 at 4pm via teleconference; invitations will be sent out via Outlook.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council adjourned the meeting at 4:51 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Eunice B. Rivera
Executive Secretary, DDS West Region