

DDS EXECUTIVE BRIEFS

An Update on CT DDS Initiatives

September 25, 2007

Issue 19

Governor Rell Celebrates Legislation Changing Name of DMR to Department of Developmental Services

During a ceremonial bill signing in August, Governor M. Jodi Rell celebrated the department's new name with Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara, families, consumers and advocates.

"Changing the name of the Department of Mental Retardation is a step that the agency, consumers, families and private providers have been urging Connecticut to take for some time now," Governor Rell said. "Our language changes and evolves, and as it does we recognize that some words or phrases, never meant to be anything other than helpful or descriptive, have come to be perceived another way. 'Mental retardation' is one such phrase. As Commissioner O'Meara has said, an agency must begin by making sure its consumers feel respected - and that begins with the name of the agency."

The change follows the passage last year of a bill calling for the department to study the idea and recommend a new name. The name, Department of Developmental Services, was selected to reflect the agency's mission - including the planned expansion of an ongoing pilot program to serve individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders - without suggesting its mission was changing or the services it provided would be altered.

Governor Rell congratulated the self-advocate groups such as People First of Connecticut, who have been calling for the name change since 1990.

"I hope that this change will set a model for our state - that it will remind us of the importance of language and the importance of the way we treat the people we serve," the Governor said. "That's a message for both state government and *all* the people of our state. Even more importantly, I hope this change will provide you, your families and your loved ones an *additional* measure of dignity and respect. It is exactly what you deserve, and it is our intention to make sure you never receive anything less."

Welcome to the New DDS Website

DDS will unveil its new website on October 1. After a year-long process of development, the new website provides a more organized process for finding information about the department.

Developed and maintained by the department's Office of Communications and Division of Information Technology, the website is part of a statewide portal software program managed by the Department of Information Technology (DOIT).

<http://www.dmr.state.ct.us/>

Please visit us at: www.ct.gov/dds to tour our new site on or after October 1.

Changes to the DDS Organizational Structure

The Department strives to maintain a focus on quality improvement at both the service delivery and administration levels. As part of this ongoing effort, the Department is in the process of implementing changes to the current organizational structure. Our goals are to:

- Maintain stability for our consumers, families and providers,
- Continue our pledge that has been in place since the early retirement incentive plan (ERIP) to stay the course and not cause unnecessary disruption to staff,
- Organize and manage the support functions of the department to efficiently enhance the services provided to consumers, and
- Continue to improve our oversight mechanisms to support quality improvement efforts.

The Commissioner's Office will be enhanced by the addition of Christine Pollio who will serve as the Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs and will supervise the Commissioner's Executive Secretary and a Legislative Affairs assistant. In addition to legislative responsibilities, Christine will be responsible for the overall coordination of the Commissioner's Office including the direction and management of a wide range of issues.

The **Quality Management Unit** will report directly to the Commissioner as will the **STS Consent Decree Compliance Office**. Over the past few years, our quality management system has become much more sophisticated and has increased our ability to use information for the purpose of quality improvement. To maintain the integrity of quality review, we have decided to separate quality inspection from quality improvement. And, to heighten our attention to the importance of quality review, the inspection / review component will report directly to the Commissioner. Dan Micari, Director of Quality Management, will also assume supervisory responsibility for the regional quality monitors and the quality supervisors. Quality improvement will remain the responsibility of the Division of Family and Community Services.

Ms. Margaret Kailukaitis will report directly to the Commissioner to assure our sustained compliance with the Consent Decree and standards established through court processes.

Financial and IT Services will provide leadership to the **Information Technology Unit**. Mark Warzecha will report directly to Vincent O'Connell, Chief Financial Officer.

Administration Services: Human Resources will become responsible for statewide management of the **Educational Support and Staff Development Unit**. Human Resources and Staff Development have historically been linked in the regional structure. Regional Staff Development will be centralized under this unit during FY 08.

Division of Family and Community Services: The Waiver Policy and Planning Unit will transfer to the Division of Family and Community Services as part of a new unit, **Waiver Management and Systems Improvement**, under the direction of Beth McArthur. This new unit will parallel the regional Quality Improvement Divisions.

Reporting to Beth will be:

- Waiver Policy and Planning: Deborah Duval
- Quality Improvement: Charlan Corlies
- Program Development: Robin Wood
- Health and Clinical Services: David Carlow
- Psychology Services: Steven Zuckerman

We have asked Charlan Corlies to develop and coordinate the new quality improvement function until she retires next April. She will work with Dan Micari and his staff, Deb Duval and the regional quality improvement directors to clarify the functions of quality assurance and quality improvement within the context of the Quality Service Review (QSR). The role of quality improvement at both the state and regional levels is critical to our ability to take the information we learn from quality reviews, analyze it and use it to address problematic situations and make systemic improvements.

Personnel Updates:

Laura Nuss has resigned her position as Director of Strategic Leadership effective August 1, 2007. She has been appointed as the Deputy Director for the Developmental Disabilities Administration in Washington, D.C. We wish her well and thank her for her leadership on waiver development, the creation of the Level of Need tool and the development of the QSR system. In light of her departure and the decision made to link the Educational Support Unit with Human Resources, the Waiver Unit with Division of Family and Community Services, Information Technology with Fiscal and Administration, and to move quality assurance under the Commissioner's direction, the Strategic Leadership Center will no longer exist as a separate division.

As you may know, Dimitri Triantafillakis, Regional Director, has recently announced his retirement. In addition, Ed Hoyt also plans to retire this fall. Dimitri has served as Regional Director for over seven years in both the South Central and West Regions. Ed has been an Assistant Regional Director for Private Services for 20 years. We wish them both well and thank them for their leadership, especially during the merging of the Southwest and Northwest Regions, including Southbury Training School, into the current West Region. They both will continue to serve in their current capacities until late October.

We have started the recruitment process to select the Regional Director. A search committee including parent, provider, self-advocate and DDS administration representatives will conduct interviews and recommend the top candidates to us for final selection. The search for the Assistant Regional Director will commence later this fall.

Update on the DDS IFS Waiver Renewal Application

In preparation for the renewal of the Individual and Family Support waiver which expires on February 1, 2008 DDS held four public forums early in the summer with the goal of seeking input and suggestions for improvement from waiver participants and their families, service providers and staff. In addition, input was sought from providers at the regularly scheduled <http://www.dmr.state.ct.us/>

Regional Leadership Forums, the monthly Trades meeting and at recent Provider Council meetings. Families expressed a desire for more services for children, increased respite services, and better transportation options in some areas of the state. Service providers asked for further analysis of the rates for services that involved a high proportion of indirect services that they were not allowed to bill for, as well as an analysis of the rate for Group Supported Employment. Staff were concerned about people with significant medical issues who were not getting the oversight they needed to manage their own healthcare and they also wanted to see simplification of some of the existing waiver processes and requirements.

The IFS waiver renewal application includes new service options for the children in our Voluntary Services Program (professional parent, intensive in-home behavioral support for children and behavior therapy for children) as well as Health Care Coordination and Live-in Companion services for people living in their own homes.

The Waiver Workgroup has continued to work on the rate structure and is proposing a restructure of the day service rates to include an option for billing on a daily rate rather than an hourly rate, having rates based on Level of Need with an elimination of the current staff modifier, and adjusting the Group Supported Employment rate. The group is continuing to analyze the services that require a high proportion of indirect support.

Central Office staff have been meeting with Case Managers, other regional staff and national consultants regarding the Individual Plan and expectations for periodic reviews, monitoring and follow-up; streamlining of the Individual Budget and approval process; and improved data integration. Many changes are in process and will be implemented during the fall and early winter.

The IFS waiver renewal application will be posted on the new DDS website as well as the DSS website for public review and comment on or around October 1, 2007. Some of the items described above are not part of the actual application but are areas that the department is committed to continuing to work on in an ongoing effort to improve supports provided to the individuals we serve.

DDS Launches the CT College of Direct Support

On September 14, the department rolled out the pilot implementation of a newly reconfigured employee orientation training program, *Onboard*. The *Onboard* program combines courses from the web-based College of Direct Support (CDS) curriculum with worksite orientation and classroom-based training. Thirty new department employees received orientations to the CDS at regional offices before logging in to complete the first of eight required online courses. Several had never used computers before, but were soon able to navigate through the lessons. Over the course of three weeks, new direct support employees will be completing CDS courses on *Intro to Developmental Disabilities*, *Direct Support Professionalism*, *Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults and Children*, *Universal Precautions and Infection Control*, *Supporting Healthy Lives*, *Safety at Home and in the Community*, *Individual Rights and Choice*, and *Person-centered Planning and Supports*. Other department employees are required to complete selected courses based on their work assignments.

Incorporating the CDS into our new employee training program has enabled us to reduce

classroom-based training from ten days to six. Classroom sessions include *Intro to DDS*, *Employee Professionalism*, *Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention*, *Abuse and Neglect Reporting*, *First Aid*, *Seizures and Signs & Symptoms of Illness*, *Individual Rights*, and *Person-Centered Planning and Supports*. *Diversity* and *PMT* are also included in the six days of classroom-based training.

Eight private provider agencies are working with the MC Strategies and the College of Direct Support to establish administrator accounts that will allow them unlimited access to the CDS curriculum under the terms of DDS's CDS license. Two agencies have also indicated an interest in providing administrative support and CDS access to smaller providers on a fee-for-service basis. We encourage other providers to consider this exciting new training program.

For further information on the DDS *Onboard* program or on the College of Direct Support, please contact John Tierney at 860-418-6137 or john.tierney@po.state.ct.us.

Save the Date: Provider Waiver Event on October 25, 2007

The Provider Council will sponsor an event for private providers focused on Medicaid Waivers. A panel will present information on current national issues associated with provider participation in Medicaid HCBS Waivers. Panel members include Gary Smith, Senior Project Director, Human Services Research Institute, Portland, Oregon; Robin Cooper, Director of Technical Assistance, NASDDDS, Inc., Madison, WI; and Than Johnson, Champaign Residential Services, Inc., Urbana, OH.

The event will be held on October 25 from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM – Location TBD. Following the panel presentation, participants will have the opportunity to participate in a discussion session with the panelist of their choice. A box lunch will be served. The announcement and registration information will be sent to Executive Directors on or about October 1. Registration is limited 150 participants. There will be a \$10 fee to cover the cost of refreshments.