

From: arestias@aol.com
To: [Carvalho, Joseph](#)
Cc: cscully@thearcct.org
Subject: 2022-27 DDS Draft Strategic Plan
Date: Thursday, January 13, 2022 3:56:58 PM

EXTERNAL EMAIL: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click any links or open any attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

My name is Jane Arestia and I am from New Canaan. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the draft five-year plan developed by the Department of Developmental services. While I am pleased to know that the department has identified goals for the agency, it is more important than ever that DDS address the specific real-life needs of the individuals served by the department. I fully support the testimony given by Win Evarts, Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut and echo the feedback provided by the Arc.

As a parent and legal guardian of an individual with autism and developmental disabilities as well as a seizure disorder, this plan is critical to the future health and wellbeing of my son. Matthew will soon be 41 and has been able to live independently in Stamford with minimal supports, following many years of training and support from the schools and DDS, but those supports are critical to his being able to continue to do so. He has a paid job two mornings at the Ferguson Library in Stamford, and other days he volunteers at Stamford Hospital/Tully Center and at his agency for day services, ARI of CT. He is capable of working more than he currently does, but there is not enough support in his DDS budget to train him for more. He is able to walk or use bus/train transportation to the greater Stamford/Norwalk area, an area of strength that was built on by transportation training. Ensuring that our loved ones live in a supported and inclusive community environment is essential and the programs and services developed by the DDS must reflect this approach. The recent challenges brought about to all of us by Covid has underlined the need for individuals who are living independently to be better served during crisis times when isolation occurs.

I speak also as a Board member of ARI of Connecticut, a small but vibrant agency in Stamford which manages group homes, supports individuals living in apartments, and other individuals who are served by ARI day and employment services. I am concerned about substantial expenses not always fully funded to private providers, which creates a need for continual fundraising, which should not be going to support basic needs. Providers should be able to fully focus on delivering services, not constantly wondering if they will be funded. I am also concerned about the members of our aging population, both the individuals served by DDS and their parents.

I wholeheartedly agree with the comments of ARC that this plan should be revised to include more individualized, supported living options, resources to support person-centered planning, employment progression and affordable community-based housing options, increased training for families and support personnel, improved medical and behavioral emergency support, and increased collaboration opportunities with DDS for supported individuals and their families. I would also add if possible that DDS find a way to streamline its system and communication to both for families and providers. For example, I just learned of the plan draft through an ARC email received on Monday, January 10. The DDS draft is dated December 21. I probably would have given better feedback if I had more time to reflect than a day or two on a plan of this magnitude. Another recommendation is for more regular, direct communication between DDS and families, not via Facebook or social media, but by email directly to families, alerting them to updates on your website.

I look forward to your feedback, seeing the revised plan and the opportunity to work together in this process.

Jane Arestia

