



## CONNECTICUT FAMILY SUPPORT COUNCIL

### July 11, 2013 Meeting Minutes

**Meeting Location** - Office of Protection and Advocacy, Hartford

**In attendance:** Jennifer Carroll, Wade Chartier (representing the Birth-to-Three ICC as a parent), Terry Cote, April Dipollina, Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Colleen Hayles, Steven Hernandez, Sara Lourie, Linda Mizzi, Lisa Sheppard, Robyn Trowbridge, Robin Wood, Lara Shepard-Blue (public guest)

**Excused Absence:** Sharon Dexler, Ann Gionet, Karen Hlavac, Tesha Imperati, Miriam Martinez, Renee Topper, Mona Tremblay

**Absent:** Mark Greenstein, Maureen Smith

**Call to Order:** 10:11 am

**Introductions** made of Committee and public participants.

**Public Comment:** Lara Shepard Blue joined the meeting in her role as Organizer for SEIU Healthcare (New England Health Care Employees Union) and indicated she is visiting advocacy groups with a focus on parents of children with developmental disabilities.

#### **Announcements:**

1. Sylvia Gafford-Alexander gave an update on the new DSS on-line initiative which just began and represents a significant change in the way calls and cases are handled by the agency.
2. April Dipollina handed out a flier for the July 27<sup>th</sup> Friends of Camp Harkness fundraiser to benefit the Harkness Fund; the camp was particularly hard hit by storm Sandy.
3. Update on legislative appointments:
  - a. Robyn Trowbridge was formally re-appointed to the Council by Speaker Sharkey to January 2015
  - b. April Dipollina was also re-appointment to the Council by Speaker Sharkey.
  - c. Robyn reported that an aide in the Speakers Office pulled up the legislative database for the Family Support Council and explained that

whenever there is an election, even if there is not change in the elected official, Council members need to seek re-appointment letters. There is some leeway if they fail to send the letter immediately so that Council members aren't coming on and off frequently. The bottom line is that all Council members need to request re-appointment letters; legislative staff has been helpful in getting this done in the past. Robin Wood is the contact person at DDS to coordinate this with Council members because DDS does keep records with this information.

**Review of June Minutes:** June minutes were reviewed. Terry Cote made a motion to accept them as written and Linda Mizzi seconded and the motion was passed.

**Annual Meeting:**

1. Election of Officers - Karen Hlavac was nominated for Co-Chair but did not accept the nomination; as a result nominations from the floor were requested. Nominations from the floor included Tesha Imperati and Terry Cote who both declined. Terry Cote nominated Lisa Sheppard and Robyn Trowbridge to continue as Co-Chairs and they both declined. A motion was made to extend the current terms of Lisa and Robyn until September to allow the nominations committee to identify other individuals who are willing to take on this role. Motion was passed by the full Council in attendance. Sara Lourie was voted on for Secretary.
2. School Climate - Lisa Shepard summarized Workgroup activity to date, including the recommendation to shift focus from older youth to younger children (preferably starting as early as pre-school), identifying where expertise exists, and collecting information for the full Council for discussion, further exploration and follow-up. One hope had been to bring a national speaker on the topic to the Council Retreat in September.

Steven Hernandez added some information about Dr. Mark Brackett and his Emotional Intelligence model; Dr. Brackett was identified as a potential speaker who is nationally known. His model involves starting with the education system in order to develop empathy and communication skills at a young age. Steve discussed this being more of a methodology than a program which allows the school system to decide specifics that will work in their setting.

Dr. Brackett is involved in national initiatives including one event being planned in conjunction with the Lady Gaga Foundation and is also talking about ways to impact cyber bullying through Face book. Steve feels it is very important that Dr. Brackett meet with and hear from parents and encouraged the Council to bring him to the Retreat in September as a speaker. Steve was going to provide some additional information about this (conference information, recent article in the CT Mirror and a biography).

Extensive discussion followed and many questions were raised including but not limited to:

- The importance of reaching families and how this or any model in the schools can help parents to learn and reinforce this in the home;
- How to assure that children with special needs are addressed (and particularly under this emotional intelligence model);
- How fidelity to the model and program success are measured and assured;
- What is included to assure that educators are educated around the special needs of children with disabilities;
- How to address concern about teachers who bully children with special needs and the need for teacher training and self-awareness; and
- How to assess school district readiness to implement this (or any other) model; how receptive are they to hearing about success in other places.

For the retreat, it was agreed to have Dr. Brackett come with a clear understanding of those areas the Council wants to make sure are covered (using the list above).

There was general consensus on the need for the Council to focus on outcomes. Some suggestions in response were: recognizing excellence in school districts/individual schools, making sure this is a focus of the annual report, include the new Office of Early Childhood on the Council, reach out to CPAC, and focus on getting information to agencies that provide services but also to families to decrease isolation.

### **Old Business**

1. Annual Report distribution follow-up - Five corrections were identified to be made. Linda Mizzi and Robyn Trowbridge will work on finalizing. The letter to Rosa DeLauro still needs to be written. A copy for the Lieutenant Governor and the State Library were also identified as needed.
2. Use of Teleconferencing at DDS Offices - Teleconferencing will resume for the October meeting and a reminder will be sent out closer to the date.
3. Update on ASD diagnostic Criteria (UCEDD, Yale, DDS, etc.) - no update available at this time.

### **New Business**

Annual Retreat in September - The Council's Annual Retreat is scheduled for Thursday September 19 from 9 to 2 at Camp Harkness (in the same lodge as last year). The food will be catered and April is coordinating. Additional information will be sent closer to the date.

### **Standing Agenda Items**

1. DVD/Family Stories Subcommittee - (Sub-Committee is Mona Tremblay, Robin Wood, April Dipollina and Robyn Trowbridge) - April indicated that she has two families ready to start and the next step is for Robin and April to meet with the intern at DDS who is assisting.
2. Partnership Grant - Robin Wood discussed the national meeting she attended in Missouri which was the kick off event for the 5 states who received the grant. Connecticut's team is interested in obtaining as much input as possible, get new people involved and identify the "baseline" for family support in Connecticut.

An application to participate has been sent out to advocates, providers, etc; DDS has already received 75 applications in response, a third of which are family members. Robin handed out the application and indicated it is on the DDS website and Council members are free to share this information.

Robin reviewed important themes:

- The need for greater partnering between family and self advocates;
- How to change the thinking from "caring for" to "caring about" people through the development of stronger relationships, networks and circles of support;
- Have a vision for an "uncharted" life in which community and family supports are identified, families connect with other families and in-home supports are improved; and
- Focus across the lifespan.

Robin added that while this is broadly focused it will have an emphasis on individuals with developmental disabilities. The state team will have approximately 50 individuals and meet four times per year. The stakeholder group could be quite large and will meet two times per year. There will be subcommittees that emerge from this larger group allowing for greater participation. Lisa Shepard will be the representative on the team for the Council.

3. A proclamation from Governor Malloy was read and presented to Jennifer Carroll to honor her dedication, commitment and hard work on the Council and on behalf of children and families with special needs throughout the state.

**Meeting adjourned at 12:02 pm**

**Next meeting:** Annual Retreat September 19, 2013

Minutes recorded by Sara Lourie, Secretary