



CONNECTICUT FAMILY SUPPORT COUNCIL

November 14, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Location: Office of Protection and Advocacy

In attendance: Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Ann Gionet, Colleen Hayles, Karen Hlavac, Sara Lourie, Linda Mizzi, Robyn Trowbridge, Robin Wood

By phone: Sharon Dexler, Steven Hernandez, Lisa Sheppard

Excused Absence: Terry Cote, Mark Greenstein, Tesha Imperati, Mona Tremblay

Absent: April Dipollina, Maureen Smith, Renee Toper

Guest: Ada Suarez - Office of Protection and Advocacy

Call to Order: 10:00 am

Introductions

Review of October Minutes

Minutes were reviewed and a correction was needed in the spelling of one name. Karen Hlavac made a motion to accept the minutes with that correction and it was seconded by Linda Mizzi. Abstaining were Sharon Dexler, Ann Gionet, Colleen Hayles, Lisa Sheppard and Robin Wood.

Announcements

Karen Hlavac was congratulated for her election to the Board of Education in Wallingford.

Robyn announced that both Terry Cote and Tesha Imperati have resigned from the Council. Both have made significant contributions and will be missed.

Old Business

Use of teleconferencing at DDS Offices - While this is seen as needing substantial effort with minimal participation thus far, there was consensus that teleconferencing is an option that will be important for expanding membership. This has only been done for one meeting thus far with mixed results and

some start-up glitches. It was decided that it is important to make an effort to set up a schedule and establish a routine and try this again using a smaller number of DDS offices which target those where Council members are most likely to go. The primary meeting site will be in the East Hartford DDS office beginning in January 2014. Other offices identified where Council members are likely to go include Stratford, Putnam and Norwalk. Robin Wood has agreed to coordinate as before; email reminders will be sent asking Council members to commit to this in advance.

Update on ASD diagnostic criteria (UCEDD, Yale, DDS, etc.) - Ann Gionet announced that there is an early December release date anticipated and a notice will be sent out.

New Business

Annual Report - Keeping in mind this is a short legislative session, a number of ideas were generated around this year's annual report format and content as follows:

- RBA format from last year was a good way to showcase the state agency work but it might be redundant to do the same thing 2 years in a row;
- Utilize last years report and request feedback from legislators
- Consider including data every other vs. every year;
- Family stories are important; focus on what is working well;
- School climate and educational issues are important;
- Look at/review existing impact data (i.e. families, health, education, school climate)
- Multicultural issues are an essential component of looking at school climate
- Include focus on brain injuries; look at school district interventions around ABI/TBI

Discussion will continue on the Annual Report at the December meeting.

Standing Agenda Items

School Climate/Education Issues - Ada Suarez from the Office of Protection and Advocacy (OPA) joined as a guest to discuss what OPA is doing around training parents to work better with and advocate on behalf of their children with school systems. Ada is one of three OPA staff who have developed a curriculum to help parents negotiate the special education system. The training has been provided primarily to Latino families in Spanish but she indicated they could be done in English as well. One part of the training is around understanding the cultural differences in the American educational system. Ada provided a draft outline of "Understanding Special Education curriculum." She indicated this is a basic outline which can be adjusted to meet the needs of the target audience.

Ada discussed that cultural/language issues do have an impact on how school systems address children with disabilities and they often focus on the language vs. addressing the issues related to the disability. As part of the discussion it was also noted that brain injuries are under-identified and not being addressed in terms of the need for specialized services.

Council members shared resources including: Robin Wood mentioned relevant data available through a website called "Assets and Opportunity." Ann Gionet talked about data related to health outcomes, environmental impact and economics and racial/ethnic disparities which can be found on the Department of Health website particularly looking at the CT 2020 plan. Colleen Hayles discussed updates within the State Department of Education around use of common core state standards, new teacher evaluation process and guidelines around how students with disabilities and those without are to be addressed under "Smarter Balance."

Ada indicated she is available for parent training groups and Council members should contact Linda Mizzi if interested.

Membership Recruitment - Recruitment of new members is an important goal for the Council. Council members were asked to identify "pockets" of potential membership or individuals who might be interested and to email Mona, Robyn or Sara with that information. It was suggested that it might be possible to bring back some prior members who may be interested in returning to the Council after being off for a period of time. Looking at particular geographical areas of the state is also suggested, particularly Torrington, Waterbury and New Haven areas.

Adjournment

Ann Gionet made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Karen Hlavac seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 12:07 pm.

Submitted by Sara Lourie, Secretary