



CONNECTICUT FAMILY SUPPORT COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2015

- Location:** Camp Harkness, Waterford, CT
- In attendance:** April Dipollina, Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Ann Gionet, Steven Hernandez, Karen Hlavac, Allison Quirion, Sara Lourie, Linda Mizzi, Lisa Sheppard, Marcus Rivera, Mona Tremblay and Robin Wood
- Absent:** Laurie Cantwell, Mark Greenstein, Jody Santoro, Renee Toper
- Guests:** Julian Tremblay
Jonathan Zane
- Call to Order:** Retreat began at 9:52 am
Council meeting officially began at 12:30 pm

Retreat: The Annual Connecticut Family Support Council Retreat was held in the morning with a presentation by Jonathan Zane, Child Welfare Trainer from the Department of Children and Family's (DCF) Training Academy. Jon provided a handout to Council members and discussed DCF's new initiatives involving partnership with families and the use of teaming models. There was also discussion around staff training and supervision. The presentation provided opportunity for questions and relevant and lively dialogue.

Public Comment: None

Approval of July Minutes – Karen Hlavac made a motion to accept the minutes with several spelling corrections noted; this was seconded by Linda Mizzi and approved by the Council membership with abstentions from April Dipollina, Allison Quirion, Marcus Rivera and Mona Tremblay.

Old Business

Bylaws - The Council had received the final version of the CTFSC Bylaws thirty days prior to the meeting. Karen Hlavac made a motion to accept the Bylaws with several typographical corrections to be made; Linda Mizzi seconded the motion and the Council membership approved the new Bylaws. Sara Lourie will send a copy out to all members.

Committee Reports

Membership/Nominations – Linda Mizzi provided copies of the latest draft of the Brochure which was reviewed and suggestions were made for a final set of revisions. There were many comments on the professional look and compliments given to all of the Council members who worked so hard to get it to this point. Linda is requesting any final comments as soon as possible so this can be finalized and printed and available for the conference in early October.

Family Networking – Mona Tremblay reported on the Committee meeting in July; an email was sent to the Executive Committee and read to the Council at the meeting as follows:

“We had our first phone conference meeting today (July 16, 2015) to begin discussing the objectives and priorities of our newly formed Family Networking Committee. Ann, Sylvia, and myself, were able to begin talking about some logical first steps. Some of the topics we discussed today included:

- *The importance of increasing the voice and influence of families on the Council by inviting representatives of various family groups across CT, to share their stories and experiences at Council meetings on a regular, scheduled basis. The idea of quarterly participation was suggested.*
- *The importance of recognizing that we should embrace our newest parent members with positivity, encourage their participation and input on all levels of Council activities, and mentor them in a more favorable way.*
- *Consideration of this Committee developing a short, one page survey, to utilize in our outreach efforts, to learn more about what families need, want, receive, what would help them the most, and what are their biggest challenges?*
- *Disseminate the survey via email list serves, in person, (via Council members), at parent and family groups, etc.*
- *The importance of having the completed Parent/Family Membership brochure, to utilize broadly in the community, at other committees current Council members sit on, in schools, at health centers, at various family groups, etc.*
- *Consideration of Council members speaking at various groups across CT, talking about the CTFSC, and the importance of the work we are charged to do. At these venues, we would disseminate brochures, and ultimately, surveys, to keep us current on the state of family support in CT.*
- *Ann and Sylvia agreed to gather information, concerning exploring appropriate family leadership contacts across CT, to invite to our table.*

- *Mona agreed to create a draft “letter of invitation,” within the next 7 days, to be reviewed by the Committee, via email, and ultimately, sanctioned by the Executive Committee for dispensation.*
- *There was a collective consensus to consider inviting only one family group at a time, and using the CT Family Support Network, as our first targeted group.”*

After this information was shared, Council members agreed that these were all great ideas and felt the focus needed to be on getting input from parent voices representing all areas of the state and from a number of different groups. There was definite interest in a survey to identify, prioritize and communicate unmet need.

New Business

Participation in October “Build a Great Life” conference - April Dipollina handed out flyers for a conference celebrating the 25th anniversary of the ADA and the 40th anniversary of the IDEA which is being held on October 2 and 3, 2015. Information had been sent to Council members via email around CTFSC participation in a Saturday break out session which will afford groups an opportunity to describe what they do and provide conference attendees an idea of what the CTFSC does; this may have the added benefit of reaching out to some potential new members.

The hope was to have at least 2 Council members available for this break out session; Lisa Sheppard planned to be there and was asking for some other volunteers. Sara Lourie will send out information via email for those who aren't at the meeting to determine who is available, who may already be attending the conference and/or willing to represent the Council at this event.

Focus for the Coming Year – Lisa Sheppard updated the Council on efforts to reach out to Connecticut legislators. She is suggesting that as one focus for the next year, the Council identifies one or two key legislators and a meeting is held involving at least 2 Council members (preferably family/advocates) for the purpose of:

- Introducing the CTFSC
- Providing information about the vision/mission of the Council
- Identifying ways in which the Council can assist the Legislature in the area of family support; and
- Build a better bridge between the Council and the Legislature.

This is recommended as a first step prior to inviting a Legislator to a meeting.

Steven Hernandez and Allison Quirion both volunteered to go with Lisa Sheppard to such a meeting. A number of legislators were suggested as potential “champions” who may be interested in this collaboration. Lisa agreed to work on organizing this and will coordinate with Steven and Allison.

Another priority mentioned for this next year is to assure that the legislatively mandated agency members are represented, several of which are not at the present time.

Announcements

Marcus Rivera discussed the ongoing parent survey being conducted by the State Department of Education; it remains open until mid-September and Marcus will send out the information via email to Council members as a reminder to promote parent participation and utilize this opportunity for input.

Linda Mizzi handed out a new Disability Resource Directory for Council members to disseminate.

Robin Wood mentioned the new DDS reorganization which is described on the DDS website which Council members are encouraged to review.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm (Karen Hlavac made a motion, seconded by April Dipollina and approved by Council membership).

Minutes submitted by Sara Lourie, Secretary