



**State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services  
South Region**



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**Department of Developmental Services (DDS)  
South Region (SR) Regional Advisory and Planning Council (RAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
June 15, 2022 - 6:00 p.m.  
Guilford Free Library/MS Teams**

**Members Present:**

Leslie Bridges-Parent, Chair; Lynne Arezzini, Vice-Chair; Carol Cooney, Secretary; Dawn DeMatteo; Brian Smith, DDS Assistant Regional Director IFS Division; Kathleen Calo, Assistant Regional Director Private Admin Services Director, Gunnar Abrahamsson, Secretary.

**Public Participation:**

Twila Skelly, Diane Martin, Pat Walsh, Sharon Maddern, April Dipolina

**Discussion:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Leslie Bridges-Parent at approximately 6:09pm. There were brief introductions of RAC members, DDS Staff, and public participants.

There was discussion and questions surrounding the issue of transportation to and from day programs in particular areas of the state, and what determines who is qualified to receive assistance or funding for transportation. This concern was raised by Mr. Walsh. Mr. Walsh also raised questions regarding how families go about obtaining Home Health Aides. Assistant Regional Director (ARD) Kathy Calo provided guidance to Mr. Walsh and offered avenues of approach to the questions he raised.

Council members offered Mr. Walsh other possible alternatives and options regarding transportation.

Ms. Maddern raised concerns surrounding her son’s ability to receive funding through DDS. There was discussion regarding Medicaid and how Medicaid can impact one’s ability to receive certain services through DDS.

ARD Calo and ARD Brian Smith provided solutions and avenues of approach to Ms. Maddern, making mention of the DDS Helpline as a starting point for navigating the agency and getting her son services.

Chair Leslie Bridges-Parent brought the approval of the May Meeting Minutes to the floor and asked for the council members to review for accuracy. No recommendations for changes were made and a motion was made at 6:37pm to approve May Meeting Minutes. The motion was subsequently approved.

Guest Dianne Martin brought up the Norwich Dental Clinic to the group. There was discussion surrounding the clinic, including conversation regarding the suspension of dental services until adequate staffing could be provided to ensure the clinic is properly staffed and services can be provided in a thorough manner. There was subsequent discussion revolving around recruitment of staff for these positions.

ARD Calo brought the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to the attention of the council and provided the following updates.

- The agency has received a significant amount of ARPA funding.
- DDS is hoping to work with providers and utilize ARPA funding to promote use of Individualized Home Support (IHS) Cluster and Community Companion Home (CCH) settings, along with use of remote supports to help DDS move away from more congregate settings to help promote more independent living for those DDS serves.
- Formation of committees for Day-Programs and Residential Programs looking at how to best utilize ARPA funding.
- DDS has been offering one-time support to providers who are facing staffing shortages.
- There is a time limit on the use of ARPA funds.

ARD Calo informed the committee that certain geographic areas within the state have been harder hit by the staffing shortages than other parts of the state. This staffing crisis is not unique to Connecticut.

ARD Smith informed the committee that there has been an increase in case management and respite staff vacancies due to the recent retirement wave in the state. ARD Smith confirmed that the agency is working to refill these positions and others as quickly as possible to minimize impacts on services.

Respite Centers are still operating at 50% capacity, ARD Smith informed the committee that there is a plan to move to 100% capacity in the beginning of August. Respite Centers will have to meet certain criteria in order to move to 100% capacity, one of which will be adequate staffing and COVID-19 testing pre-admission, along with all other health and medical protocols. Family comfort level with shared bedrooms will be another factor that can impact the ability to achieve 100%, that the agency is aware of and will work with families to address concerns as we move forward.

The meeting adjourned at 7:28pm.

**Next meeting September 21, 6:00 p.m. at the Guilford Free Library, 67 Park Street.**