

Advisory Council Meeting
March 16, 2017
4:00 pm
Ella Grasso Center, Stratford, CT

Minutes

Members Present

Charles Bergamo, Lori Chiappiniello, Marina Derman, Gil Kellersman, Sue Bastien, Cindy Mancini, Karen Simon, Arlene Steinfeld, Cindy Stramandinoli

Guests

LaVerne Moore (Family Support ~ Southwest Region Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN), Brian Smith (Assistant Regional Director, DDS Individual & Family Support)

Call to Order

Chairman Bergamo called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm

New Business

Brian Smith attended the meeting in Fritz Gorst's absence. Introductions took place.

Brian shared information on Gov. Malloy's state budget proposal. Discussion on the proposed grad funding occurred. Currently the proposed budget does not contain funding for graduates for the next 2 yrs. Last fiscal year, we received an amount that didn't cover a full year and we had to stagger distribution of the funds (i.e. individuals started with one day per week, then two days per week, etc.). This process had many impacts on all those directly involved.

The approximate number of graduates statewide is about 300-400/year.

A member of the Council shared that her son was not funded when he graduated. This was a big disappointment to her because she thought the funding stream would continue without interruption. Other members of the Council agreed that there are many families that are unaware that funding will cease. Brian concurred with this, and referenced that families often apply for DDS services late and often misinterpret DDS services as an entitlement, similar to that they receive through the IDEA (Schools).

There was a comment made that legislators are "all over grad funding" and there is also a focus on the Behavioral Services Program (BSP) and concern over non-funding for these individuals. BSP covers individuals that are behaviorally challenged, aggressive, and developmentally disabled. There are 31 people that are classified as BSP.

There was quite a bit of discussion surrounding the purpose of the Advisory Council and what they will be focusing on as a group. The membership shared that they feel like many families are unaware of the Advisory Council as a group and unaware of things that may impact their family member's life (i.e. grad, ageout, etc.). Some members shared ways they feel they can reach out to families (i.e. supplying a fact sheet at fairs, sending information out through DDS case managers, etc.). There was a suggestion to have information available to families at the student's PPT (i.e. Transition Bill of Rights).

It was also stated that there is a Connecticut Statute that requires DDS to inform families about the existence of the Advisory Council. This is to be shared by the case managers to all families, during the IP process.

Transitioning as an age-out and grad were also a topic that Brian talked about, and the differences between these two groups. He stated that we have transitional staff going into schools to assist with transitioning students, and meeting regularly with our colleagues at DORS. Our transition staff has decreased due to retirements.

Brian shared that if an individual is placed through the school district for residential and day school that in most cases DDS continues with funding.

Brian also stated that he attends many family fairs and the turnout fluctuates. He also said that if the members have a need to have Brian present information to any group, to contact him. He would be happy to go out. He agreed to share a flyer at any of the forums he attends if the Advisory Council gives him one.

The 3rd Annual Connecticut Transition Symposium is being held on 6/21-6/22/17 at Gateway Community College, New Haven. Brian will forward the information through Eunice to send to the Council.

Vote on New Member

Mickey Herbst nominated Andrew Barer as a new member. The information presented was reviewed by the Council. ***Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve Mr. Barer to the Council.***

Mr Barer's name will be forwarded to the Acting Commissioner and he will receive an official appointment letter in the next week or so. Mr. Bergamo indicated that he would be calling Mr. Barer to welcome him to the Council.

Speakers for Future Meetings

Mr. Bergamo suggested a few individuals that he indicated would be willing to speak to the Council (i.e. attorneys that can discuss conservatorship, probate, elder law, financial planning, etc.). The Council agreed that they would welcome those speakers. Mr. Bergamo would set those up for later in the year. Brian also suggested entertaining having a Probate Judge come speak to the council.

May 2017 Meeting

The Advisory Council Meeting scheduled for May will be taking place with the Statewide Council on Developmental Services.

Date: May 18, 2017
Time: 4 pm or 5pm (exact time to be confirmed)
Location: DDS South Region
35 Thorpe Avenue, 3rd floor
Wallingford, CT

Other Business

The last meeting was not well attended due to the location being in Waterbury and the time of the meeting. No quorum. It appears that more of the membership can attend the meetings in Stratford at 4 pm. A brief discussion concerning teleconferencing occurred. This method does not seem to work well because if someone calls into the meeting, they have difficulty hearing. Mr. Bergamo shared that a webinar format might work. He will explore this at a later time if anyone is interested.

Citizen Comment

None presented

Adjournment

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council adjourned the meeting at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Eunice B. Rivera

Executive Secretary