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# DDS Executive Briefs

## *An Update on CT DDS Initiatives*

September 7, 2018

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### **Message from the Commissioner**

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Dear Friends,

While a bit overdue, we are happy to be sharing the newest Executive Brief. As you read in the last edition, we had a number of exciting initiatives crop up this spring, which we've been working hard to bring to fruition this summer. Our ID Partnership Advisory Committee has met several times and is well on its way to defining priorities for this fiscal year. We've also been working with providers and sister agencies to implement the wage increase for our partners in the private sector. At the same time, we have been planning for the establishment of a publicly operated step up/step down unit to assist individuals in need of behavioral stabilization, as well as formation of a mobile crisis response system to more promptly respond to needs in the community. Finally, we have launched several new initiatives aimed at broadening our continuum of support options. Notices of Opportunity have been released for CCH development, new and alternative housing prospects, and an expansion of the Project SEARCH employment program.

While the team at Central Office has spent the summer on this important work, I have been fortunate to spend a fair amount of time conducting employee town hall meetings out in the Regions. I have very much enjoyed my summer tour for a whole host of reasons. First, it was a great opportunity to socialize ideas and progress on various initiatives, including the ones outlined above. Second, it is always a pleasure to see the faces of so many staff, to hear their stories, their struggles, their successes, and help bridge any remaining gaps in communication between Central Office and the Regions. Lastly, and importantly, I am able to gather concerns from staff on the front lines of our agency and hear suggestions on things that can improve our system. While comments vary from office to office, the most prevalent feedback was on our new and improved Individual Plan.

So what did I hear?

The good: it is nice to see the individual back at the center of the plan. The visual nature of the plan helped many; some individuals who participated in limited fashion in prior years were more engaged this year. The new tools will help to drive meaningful outcomes.

The bad: it seems to take longer to complete. Some people with more limited communication skills had a hard time engaging. Change is hard. Everyone needs more training and how the tool is used should be more consistent.

What will we do in response? Well, many things and most of them soon. Change and transition to new tools most often elicits just these kinds of responses, so we are not in uncharted waters. First up, we owe families an announcement about the plan change. If you have not yet received the announcement to pass on, the letter is linked on our website [here](#). We will be doing additional training for all. We are discussing developing brief videos to demonstrate how meetings can be facilitated differently, and how the plan and process should be tailored to the individual's specific style. We will be tracking our success with the plan and publishing results as to its effectiveness. This will allow us to determine what we may need to change or do differently down the line.

I appreciate that regardless of where I heard feedback on the new IP, everyone was willing to persevere through the change. Please know that agency leadership is committed to supporting you through it.

As always, thanks to everyone involved in these and the many other efforts across our agency and system. I look forward to our continued work together to support and improve the lives of individuals with intellectual disability.

With gratitude,

Jordan

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## Special Olympics 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

In 1968, Kevin Wheeler was 12 years old and living at the former Mansfield Training School. That year, he participated in the inaugural Special Olympics games.



This year, he was invited to participate in the torch lighting ceremony in Hyannis, MA to kick off the Special Olympics 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.



Through his participation in the Hyannis celebration, Kevin made such an impression on the family members of Eunice Shriver, they invited him to attend the festivities in Chicago, as well. He attended both events with his escort, DDS' own Elisa Marcoux.

Thanks to both Kevin and Elisa for representing DDS and Connecticut for these milestone events!

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## NASDDDS Appointment

This spring, our very own Commissioner Scheff was elected to the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services. One of the four Board Members-at-Large, he will serve a three year term, helping to administer the affairs of the association and

establish all organizational policies. He looks forward to joining the leadership ranks of this esteemed national body.

## Aspiring Leaders

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On June 21, 2018, Sean Bannon and Tammy Garris completed the Aspiring Leaders Executive Development Program. This program focuses on developing the critical skills needed for effective leadership and culminates with each participant's presentation of a capstone project proposal to address an agency need.

Tammy's capstone project focused on reducing the number of reviews completed through Utilization Resource Review. The goal is to increase efficiency in the process while ensuring that appropriate supports are in place.



Sean's capstone project explored expanding the Department's reporting capabilities to give employees access to needed information, in a user-friendly format, in order for employees to complete their job duties more accurately and efficiently.

Please join us in congratulating the most recent DDS graduates of the Aspiring Leaders program!

## QSR Adjustments

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DDS launched the revised Individual Plan (IP) on July 1, 2018. The purpose of the improved tool is to maximize individuals' participation and input into their individualized plans.

As a part of our ongoing effort to ensure that processes remain fair and objective, the Division of Quality and Systems Improvement (QSI) is undergoing a crosswalk of the new IP and the Quality Service Review (QSR) indicators to ensure that all efforts and achievements are captured and credited. In order to transition to the adjusted QSR tool, please note that both providers and inspectors will need to use both tools until all IPs are caught up with the new cycle. QSI staff are mindful of this delicate task and will collaborate with all providers to ensure a smooth transition. As soon as the crosswalk is complete and indicators are revised, all stakeholders will be notified.

## DDS applies for and is awarded HUD Mainstream Rental Vouchers

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In the spring of 2018, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development issued a notice of funding availability for Mainstream housing vouchers. The program is aimed at assisting individuals with disabilities transition from licensed congregate care settings to safe and affordable integrated community-based housing. Another goal of the program is to create partnerships between health and human service agencies, Medicaid agencies, and housing agencies. The priorities are supported by the points awarded for stated activities, which are the points being used by HUD to select their awardees.

DDS joined the Department of Housing (DOH), the Department of Social Services (DSS), the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) in applying for these rental vouchers to benefit individuals with disabilities. The partnership is a natural outgrowth of the work these agencies already do together to promote and develop safe, affordable, supportive housing units through the statutorily required Interagency Committee on Supportive Housing and Homelessness (IACSH). Additional members of that committee include Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Corrections, Veteran's Affairs, and the Corporation for Supportive Housing.

DDS is pleased to announce that the application was recently accepted; DDS will be receiving 18 Mainstream vouchers to be used within one year to help transition individuals from group homes to apartment living. We believe that individuals should be able to choose where they live, how they are supported, and who supports them. For those choosing to move to a less restrictive, more integrated setting, these vouchers will make that choice a possibility by providing rental assistance. Although DDS received fewer vouchers than the 50 we applied for, it is our hope that HUD will continue this program and we will have the opportunity to apply for future funding rounds.

For more information contact Josh Scalora, the DDS Representative on the IACSH.

## Miss Amazing

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On August 2nd, Chelsea Bailey, Miss Amazing CT Teen Queen 2018, flew to Chicago with her mom, sister and best friend, to represent CT in the National Miss Amazing event. While Chelsea didn't win the National title, she was an AMAZING representative for CT with her winning smile and personality. She made a host of new friends from across the country with whom she has already begun to text and Instagram!



This trip gave Chelsea an opportunity to face and overcome some of her fears: she flew on an airplane and did a solo dance routine on stage! While at the event, Chelsea attended a self-advocacy forum with other attendees. There she learned this: "Your life has purpose. Your story is important. Your dreams count. Your voice matters. You were born to make an impact." Chelsea is ready to begin making that impact. She has plans to work with the other CT Queens to create a presentation about "different abilities" to share with local schools. She wants people to see that "beauty has no limits," that people with disabilities have dreams and goals just like everyone else.

Chelsea is looking forward to representing CT this year as the Teen Queen by volunteering in her community, visiting local nursing homes, helping local food banks, visiting local libraries and reading to kids, and of course attending the DSACT Buddy Walk on September 8th! Chelsea will be part of the "Queens' Court" team with her friend Alex LaVigne, who was the CT Miss Amazing Teen Queen in 2017.

## New Medicaid Reports for DDS Providers and DDS Case Management Staff

DDS launched a new reporting option in WebResDay during April 2018. In July 2018 DDS, released a second new report that shows residential providers detailed Medicaid information by Individual. The reports are updated every Thursday, but can be run at any time. All WebResDay users will have access to the report (including Agency Executive Directors and all DDS case management staff). The link below houses all instructions for these reports, and will be updated as new reports are released.

### [DDS Billing Reports](#)

Note: The reports run best in Internet Explorer.

Please contact [DDS.Waiver@ct.gov](mailto:DDS.Waiver@ct.gov) with any questions.

## eLicense

On April 18, 2018, DDS began using the eLicense application to process all initial CLA and CCH applications and renewal applications online. Providers are now able to login online and submit applications electronically instead of on paper. This has proven to be a tremendous benefit to the provider community, as they are able to process their applications with much greater efficiency than ever before. Providers are now also able to process plans of corrections with greater ease of use. On the DDS side, applications and plans of correction can now be managed by DDS/QSI users within one centralized location. This helps to minimize the management of paper files and maximize the reporting capabilities (to be developed) of having the data in one location.

Special thanks to all those who participated in the sharing of information in order to implement the eLicense application. Additional thanks to those who helped with training users, the providers that participated in the focus group and to everyone that has been using the application for their ongoing patience with learning the new application and providing invaluable feedback for improvements.