
DDS Executive Briefs

An Update on CT DDS Initiatives

June 27, 2019

Message from the Commissioner

Dear Friends,

We are thrilled to be back with a new Executive Brief and excited to share some of what has kept us away in the past few months. We write now under the leadership of a new administration and with a successful legislative session under our belts. We will share more of the particulars of session in an article further on, but want to comment here that both the administration and the legislature demonstrated overwhelming support for the individuals and families we support. Notably, the state budget that recently passed keeps the DDS budget stable for the next biennium, and will allow us to continue to offer high quality programs as we seek to expand and strengthen our continuum of supports.

To that end, I'd like to share a few updates on pilot programs and new initiatives that have launched this spring. First, under the leadership of Assistant Regional Residential Manager, Mayra Ortiz, the DDS Step Up/Down Unit opened in March and has been at full capacity since just a few weeks after its first admittance. This unit supports individuals in crisis and in need of behavioral stabilization from all three DDS Regions. Referrals to the unit may come from community-based settings (step up) or higher levels of care, such as hospital emergency departments (step down). This unit has been a critical addition to our continuum of supports -- and a huge accomplishment for our Public division, which completed planning and implementation in a matter of months!

Further bolstering our continuum of supports, the Regions have expanded Individual and Family Supports with the addition of evening and weekend hours. Regional staff have also led partnership efforts with 211, DCF, and DMHAS, which allow for more seamless transfers between appropriate levels of community-based mobile response services. In an effort to help individuals and families avoid crisis, this initiative focuses on a proactive and preventive response to the needs of the individuals we serve.

Finally, DDS continues to support and facilitate the expansion of innovative service delivery tools, including the use of assistive technology (AT). We have launched an education campaign, led by Amy Blazawski, to ensure that all individuals, families, providers, staff, and other stakeholders are aware of its availability. In addition, we have been afforded the opportunity to fund AT expansion in the provider community, through both training and the creation of "Smart Home" demonstration sites. Over the coming years, DDS expects to continue to expand the use of AT to support greater independence and improve the lives of individuals with intellectual disability.

We are so pleased to be given the opportunity to strengthen our system by expanding our continuum of available supports. We also know that none of it would be possible without a strong team guiding this work. In the spirit of reinforcing our system, we have engaged in organizational diversity work with the help of an agency-wide steering committee and external experts in the field. The next step in our work is to issue an organizational diversity assessment survey to all staff to evaluate how well our operations and agency culture support diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will take that information provided from this survey and use it to plan for changes and improvements. You will be receiving a formal invitation from me soon and I hope that you will participate!

As always, I extend my gratitude to all of the team members involved in the initiatives I've highlighted here – and to those involved in many other efforts across our agency and system. Thank you for all that you do. Wishing you all a wonderful summer!

With gratitude,

Jordan

CCH Successes

As DDS continues to promote the incredible opportunities that the CCH program offers, we would like to highlight just one recent example of success:

Angela Jones has been licensed since 1988 and has provided supports for several individuals during that time. Angela lived in Hartford for many of these years, but when she moved to New Britain three years ago Jesus happily moved with her to their new home. They now live in a sweet little house with a quiet back yard where Jesus enjoys spending time on warm weather days.

Sarah Flynn has been the Case Manager working with Angela for the past six years. Sarah recently nominated her to receive recognition at the annual North Region CCH Soiree, for the dedication she has shown to Jesus, and to Felicia who lived with her previously! Felicia has moved to another home but still shares a bond with Angela. This says a lot about the love that Angela shows to all who live in her home as family. Elise Arseneau, from Key Human Services, provides monthly support in the home. She reflected Angela's dedication as follows "Angela doesn't think of this as a job. She treats Jesus like one of her own kids. The bond she has with Jesus transcends anything she has to do for regulations. It's really so beautiful to see."

When Angela began providing CCH supports, a gallon of gas cost .91¢, a movie ticket cost \$3.50, and the average price of a new car was \$10,400. Much has changed over the years, but the love and care Angela has provided has stood the test of time.

Charting the LifeCourse Showcase 2019

In May 2019, DDS, along with our partners from the DD Council and The Arc CT, participated in the 2019 Charting the LifeCourse (CTLIC) Showcase. Attendees had the privilege of learning and sharing experiences regarding CTLIC with over 300 self-advocates, family members, direct support professionals,

service coordinators, teachers, transition coordinators, service provider executives, leaders of state developmental disability agencies, and other stakeholders.



The Showcase provided an opportunity for participants to come together, share and network about how Charting the LifeCourse has enhanced person centered planning, education, transition and employment planning, self-advocate and family networks, and long term service and support providers and systems. As one of the first states to receive the Community of Practice grant in 2012, Connecticut is regarded as a leader in this initiative.

Robin Wood, the force behind CT's adoption of CTLC, received a Star award from Dr. Sheli Reynolds from the UMKC Institute of Human Development. This much deserved recognition for commitment to CTLC comes at a bittersweet moment, as we congratulate Robin on her upcoming retirement!

Transformation to an Electronic Face to Face Era!

DDS continues to promote the use of assistive technology to improve the available supports and quality of life of individuals supported by DDS. Two individuals benefiting from the recent introduction of Electronic Face to Face supports wanted to share their story:

We are two individuals that live in our own apartment in the Danbury community. We truly enjoy living in our apartment and we love our independence. We get up every morning and go to work just like many of our friends and family members. Some days are good at work and some days not so good. Just like many people. And just like many people we too need people in our lives to help us with some things.

Although we are independent in many areas there are some areas that we might need a staff person to be in our home to assist us with something. However, this might not be the case all the time and not even every time. There are many times that we just might need a gentle reminder or a small conversation, without having or even wanting someone in our home.

When our teams had our Individual Planning meetings and the idea of Electronic Face to Face was brought up as an option we thought it was a wonderful start for us. How nice would it be to be able to continue to grow and be independent however, the small things (to start with) that we might be able to "work through" and not have someone physically be in our home and many times we do not need that level of support that at times only enables us.

Electronic Face to Face Services will teach us to do things on our own and problem solve on our own with minimal direction. If we can call our staff or staff call in to us and face time us to give us reminders, prompting, cues, and help us come up with some solutions, maybe counseling, it will encourage us to continue to grow our skills and be less staff dependent. We would probably start to feel empowered. That is what we are hoping for what we want. We do not want people to always answer our problems but give us a little assistance and let us find the solutions.

We are hoping that we can become less dependent on our team /staff and more comfortable with using our own skills. In addition to this, we are hoping it would leave more time available for the times we do need our staff to be with us for the things that we cannot do on our own and do need their assistance with like maybe our medical appointments, and recreational activities.

We are hoping that this will be a great start.

Let us Face to Face!

Aspiring Leaders

On June 20, 2019, Nick Jerard and Kathy Calo 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.



Nick's capstone presentation introduced EMMA – an Electronic Mail Management Assistant. This system uses agency data to generate automated email messages alerting stakeholders of key information. The first slated pilot project will use EMMA to notify DDS case managers and private providers of Medicaid changes to individuals supported by DDS. It is projected to reduce the wait time of notification from multiple weeks to one day.

Kathy's capstone presentation discussed a recent systems change for the CCH program. In order to maintain the viability of the program, Kathy worked with staff at DDS and DSS to ensure that statutory changes were made during the 2019 legislative session to allow for a change to the payment structure.

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

Best Practices for Medicaid Applications

The DDS Medicaid Operations Unit would like to remind all interested parties of some best practices around preparation of Medicaid applications.

All initial applications can be sent to DDS.Waiver@ct.gov. All renewals must go to the DSS Scanning Center at DSS ConneCT Scanning Center PO Box 1320 Manchester CT 06045-1320. Please keep a copy of all the documentation sent to the DSS Scanning Center.

Every time a renewal is submitted, please attach the most recent bank statement(s) and months' worth of pay stubs, if applicable.

For individuals that have lapsed off of Medicaid for over 90 days, a new application must be submitted. Please attach bank statements and paystubs (if applicable) from the month the medical closed to

present and submit to the DDS.Waiver@ct.gov inbox. Only medical may be backdated, not cash. If an individual's cash has been closed for over 30 days, a new application needs to be submitted.

For providers - If you have any questions or are having issues with individuals' Medicaid benefits, please send an email to DDS-DSS.Issues-Provider@ct.gov. Please include the individual's full name (no nick names) and DSS ID#. If it is of an urgent matter, please add on the subject line "Urgent."

An example of urgent emails would be; an individual whose prescriptions are being denied by the pharmacy and is in dire need of their medical prescriptions, is in need of immediate medical attention and need their medical reinstated, or has an upcoming important medical procedure that cannot be rescheduled, etc.

Aging Matters: Creating My Bucket List!



On May 3, 2019, DDS, DORS, the CT Coalition on Aging and Developmental Disabilities, and the CT Chapter of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities presented a conference on supporting older adults to remain empowered and engaged.

After opening remarks from Commissioner Jordan Scheff and DORS Commissioner Amy Porter the conference delved into such topics as, "The Best is Yet to Come" By Stefan Deutsch a Certified Psychotherapist and founder of Creative Aging Inc. in NY. In addition, attendees received a high tech virtual tour and presentation from Kristopher Thompson, Smart Technology Specialist from NEAT at Oakhill, "I want to Live in a Smart Home." After lunch the group explored "Aging with Grace and Style" presented by Janet G. Ragno LCSW from Windham Hospital Healthy Aging Center and finished the day with some self-care

by participating in Zumba presented by Stacie Silva-Gordon. Conference attendees learned, explored, laughed and experienced a very inspiring day with some new tools on how the system can support older adults to be empowered and live stronger as they age.

DDS Joins Sister Agencies in Development of an Open Data Access Plan

Connecticut has made great strides in the promotion of Open Data to enable data sharing and collaboration in an easy to use and secure environment. Public Act 18-175 required each agency to establish an Agency Data Officer, who in consultation with the State's Chief Data Officer, will establish procedures for the timely fulfillment of data requests. Each Executive Branch agency will establish an Open Data Access Plan, creating a roadmap for the publication of public data housed by DDS in the Open Data Portal.

Working toward this requirement, DDS has already inventoried our data sources, identified which are public, which are private, and which are protected, and is in the process of reviewing data sets to identify which to consider for publication to the CT Open Data Portal. This is a natural progression for DDS, as we have worked to automate the Management Information Report (MIR), our main data

publication providing a broad-set of information across the supported population. Publishing datasets that are of high value to partner agencies, the individuals we support, service providers, families, advocates and other stakeholders is a priority of the Business Intelligence and Analytics unit at DDS. Making data more accessible and transparent is a major goal of PA 18-175. By aligning our agency data sharing priorities with the larger open data initiative in Connecticut, DDS hopes to increase the impact of our efforts to make data accessible and actionable for the people we support.

To learn more about CT Open Data please visit <https://data.ct.gov>.

Using Medicaid Claims Data to Improve Outcomes for Individuals

DDS has been working to identify when critical incidents occur in the lives of the individuals we support by analyzing Medicaid claims data. Medicaid claims data provides a comprehensive view of all covered services, including the services individuals receive from qualified providers. The data also contains comprehensive medical diagnostic and treatment information, as well as pharmacy claims.

Over the past several months DDS has worked with a vendor specializing in Medicaid Claims analytics to apply the DDS definition of critical incidents from our Incident Reporting procedure to the Medicaid claims data. By using a rapid development model with fast feedback loops we have made great strides toward seeing when incidents occur to the individuals we support.

When an individual experiences a DDS defines a “critical incident” as a significant negative life event or injury. DDS has established a reporting protocol for all reportable incidents, including critical incidents. Until recently our capabilities limited us to passive monitoring – we only knew about it if someone told us about it. To improve outcomes for the individuals we support, DDS identified that it is important to know when incidents happen, and to develop an active monitoring system to support this. The system we are developing does not rely on an external notification from a provider or family, but rather on the medical claims themselves. When we compare the claims data to our standard incident reporting data and we identify a gap, we can implement an outreach and education process to ensure the right information is being reported to the right people at the right time.

Now that we can see when an incident has happened, we need to ensure that we are doing something to prevent it from happening again. A key component of a well-functioning incident management program is an active review process. DDS is exploring the use of an automated email notification process to inform Case Managers when an incident has occurred. DDS is in process of developing a tiered-review process that starts with notifications to Case Managers for low-level incidents, and progresses to a structured incident review process by an interdisciplinary team with representatives from Health Services, the Division of Investigations, the Abuse Investigation Division, Regional Abuse and Neglect Investigation, Case Management, Resource Administration, Medicaid Waiver Administration, and Quality and System Improvement.

Social Media Content Call!

DDS social media can provide a positive platform to promote DDS related initiatives while engaging with our numerous stakeholders and the general public. If you are working on a project or simply looking for

an opportunity to highlight an accomplishment please think about utilizing our social media outlets to promote your work!

For information you would like posted, please have your director, manager or supervisor review and then email DDS.webmaster@ct.gov with a title, content and pictures in jpg format. Please specify if you would like the information posted under latest news on the DDS website, DDS Intranet, DDS Advocate's Corner, the DDS twitter (please limit to 240 characters), or the DDS Facebook page. DDS will review content prior to posting and reach out directly to the requestor with any questions. We look forward to promoting all of the department's important work!

Legislative Update

The 2019 legislative session ended on June 5, 2019. Importantly, the legislature passed a biennial budget for fiscal years 2020-2021 ahead of the final day of session. For DDS, this budget was quite similar to Governor Lamont's proposed budget bill, nearly fully funding each of our accounts for the next biennium.

Although DDS did not present a formal legislative package, we still kept busy working through the record number of bills introduced this year. DDS was also successful in passing agency specific legislation in larger omnibus bills that help move the important work of the agency forward. For more in-depth legislative updates on bills that were tracked throughout session, please visit the DDS Legislative Affairs webpage: <https://portal.ct.gov/DDS/LegislativeAffairs/Legislative-Affairs/Legislative-Affairs>.

A huge thank you to Krista Ostaszewski and Rod O'Connor for their tireless work on behalf of the agency this session!