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Governor M. Jodi Rell | Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara | Deputy Commissioner Kathryn du Pree

April 2010

Message from Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

Dear Families,

It seems like it has been awhile since we were able to communicate directly to your doorstep. During these difficult economic times, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) has been working hard along with the Governor and State Legislators to balance the state budget and in doing so have cut back on such things as mailing this family newsletter. But, over the past year and half some changes have occurred in our department that we feel our families should know first hand.

In June 2009, DDS had over 390 employees retire as part of a Retirement Incentive Program (RIP). After our colleagues retired in the end of June, the department had lost some valuable people and had to make some adjustments to our services. As part of those adjustments, DDS established an Individual & Family Support (IFS) ***Help Line*** in each region to assist those who are eligible for services from the department, but are not eligible to receive case management services. As with all change, it can be challenging, but I wanted to personally assure the families affected that we have a group of dedicated DDS employees managing the ***Help Line***. Our goal is and has always been to keep the lines of communications open with our families especially when there is an urgent matter at hand. The ***Help Line*** is being monitored by our administration and we will continue to work closely with all of our families.

As we move forward, we are encouraging all DDS families to provide an e-mail address either to their case manager or to the ***Help Line***. We are hoping in the near future to communicate via e-mail with important issues. It is also important to remember that our web site at www.ct.gov/dds is constantly updated with new information.

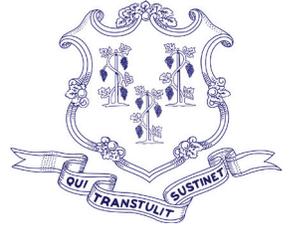
I would like to thank all of our families, consumers, providers and staff for their continued understanding during these times and know that we are dedicated to providing the best supports and services as possible.

DDS Individual and Family Support Help Line

In 2009, DDS established an Individual & Family Support (IFS) ***Help Line*** in each region to assist those who are eligible for services from the Department, but are not eligible to receive case management services. The ***Help Line*** is only intended to assist individuals who:

- Have already been determined eligible for DDS services through centralized eligibility intake, and
- Do not have a Case Manager because they are not on fee-for-service Medicaid. They may have Husky, other managed care or private insurance only.

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North Region

156 Founders Plaza
255 Pitkin Street
East Hartford, CT 06108-3223
860.263.2500

South Region

104 South Turnpike Road
Wallingford, CT
203.294.5049

Southbury Training School

P.O. Box 872
Southbury, CT 06488
203.586.2000

West Region

55 West Main Street
Waterbury, CT 06702
203.805.7400

**DDS Central Office | 460 Capitol Avenue |
Hartford, CT 06106 | 860.418.6000**

Joan C. Barnish | *Director of Communications*
(860) 418-6044
joan.barnish@ct.gov

Dianne Gill | *Administrative Assistant*
(860) 418-6091
dianne.gill@ct.gov

DDS Help Line *continued from previous page*

The IFS **Help Line** is staffed by a competent team of professionals and support staff. Staff respond to calls during normal business hours (Monday through Friday) 8:30 am – 4:30 pm and facilitate access to DDS family support services for those who do not have a DDS case manager. Examples of assistance that will be offered through the **Help Line**, upon request are: completing applications for IFS grant funds, use of DDS respite centers, referrals to DDS family support team staff, assistance in applying for benefits and entitlements, answering general questions and referrals to other agencies or community programs.

Information available through the IFS **Help Line** may also be found on the DDS website at www.ct.gov/dds. We encourage you to visit our website or call your Regional IFS Helpline below for assistance.

North Region 1-877-437-4577

South Region 1-877-437-4567

West Region 1-877-491-2720

Jamie Louchen Honored by Special Olympics



Jamie Louchen, (center) DDS Self Advocate Coordinator was presented the 2009 Spirit of Life Award at the Special Olympics 2010 Hall of Fame Dinner. Mr. Louchen was escorted by Sergeant Kerwin Anders (left) of the Torrington Police Department to receive his award from highly acclaimed Special Olympic athlete Loretta Claiborne. (right)

DDS West Region Office Moves

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) West Region Freight Street Offices moved to a new location in December 2009. The office is now located in downtown Waterbury at 55 West Main Street on the fourth floor of the Rowland Building.

If you plan to visit the new office we suggest that you park at either metered spots near the building or in the Bank of America parking lot. The bank lot is below their building on Center Street and if you use the bank lot, DDS will validate your parking receipt.

All telephone numbers and e-mail addresses have remained the same for the staff.

For directions to the Rowland Building, please visit the DDS website at;

www.ct.gov/dds/Regions/West/Directions

New Employment and Day Services Waiver

The draft Employment and Day Supports Waiver was sent to the Department of Social Services (DSS) for their review and to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for informal comments at the end of the summer. CMS has sent us their informal comments and we are nearly finished with making the suggested changes. The DSS review is in the final stages and we believe that it will be finished by early March. Once DSS completes their review, the waiver will be reviewed by Office of Policy and Management (OPM) then posted in the Law Journal. It will then require Legislative approval before the final draft can be submitted to CMS. We anticipate that this waiver will begin by September. This new waiver is designed for people living in their own or their family homes with a good network of natural and community supports that need employment or community day services. Funding allocations will be based on Level of Need (LON) scores with a cap of \$28,000. This waiver will include the following services: Adult Day Health, Community Based Day Support Options, Respite, Supported Employment, Independent Support Broker, Behavioral Support Services, Individualized Day Supports, Individual Goods and Services, Interpreter, Specialized Medical Equipment and Supplies and Transportation.

Please contact Debbie Duval at; deborah.duval@ct.gov or 860-418-6149 if you would like more information about this waiver.

DDS COMMUNICATIONS

The next time you visit with your case manager or speak to the DDS Help Line, you will be asked to have an e-mail address added to your DDS file. The department is collecting e-mail addresses in order to develop an electronic database for communicating with individuals and their families served by the department. It can be your own e-mail or a family member's e-mail, it does not have to be the guardian or responsible persons address. Please be assured your e-mail will not be given out and will only be used to forward important information about DDS supports and services.

Information for Families on Changes to Provider Reimbursement for Employment Supports and Day Services Providers

The challenging economic environment that started last year and continues today has significantly reduced state revenues. This has led to a series of reductions in the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) budget. While the DDS public operations have received most of the reductions, the funds used to pay private providers have also been affected. Given the reductions this year and the reductions proposed in the 2011 budget, action was required to adjust the funding for Day Service providers.

The department made an important change to the payment process for providers of day service programs. DDS implemented a system of paying providers only for the services utilized by their participants as of 2/1/10. This means they will be reimbursed for their costs only on the days a consumer attends the program. Up until now, providers were paid for day service programs on an annual basis without regard to how often participants attended the program. Payments based on utilization ensure the best value for the taxpayer's dollar while providing the most service possible for individuals who are supported by the department. This is the department's priority during these lean times.

Agencies will receive a reimbursement rate for each individual participant based on the amount currently in their contract for that person. Group day services will be reimbursed on a per diem or daily basis. The per diem rate will be inflated to allow individual participants to be absent from the program for 35 days a year for vacation, sick and holiday time without reducing the present reimbursement of the provider. Each day an individual participant is absent after the 35 days will reduce payment to the provider accordingly. The provider will be fully paid for a day of service in a group day program as long as the participant attended at least two hours and 45 minutes. This recognizes that some individuals will sometimes attend partial days because of appointments or other commitments. Individual participants who attend on a part time basis in accordance with their individual plan will have a prorated daily rate based on the number of days they are scheduled to attend on a weekly basis. If the consumer participates in either Individual Supported Employment or Individualized Day programs, the provider will be reimbursed on a per hour basis for every hour of support they provide to the person.

The department encourages all individuals to attend their day program on a regular basis. Since the program has been developed to meet the individual needs of the participant, it is in the best interest of the individual to maximize attendance in order to receive supports necessary to achieve the specific goals and objectives developed for them.

We appreciate that this is a significant change for the providers of day services and are working with any of those for whom this poses an extreme hardship because of the needs of the people they serve. The department has chosen this approach to reduce its costs to absorb the reductions made to the day service account without reducing services to consumers and their families.

If you have any questions about this change, please call your case manager.

Family Support Council Meets and Greets Legislators



*Family Support Council Co-Chairs
Karen Hlavac and Robyn Trowbridge*

Echoes of children's voices could be heard throughout the State Legislative Office Building (LOB) as the Connecticut Family Support Council (FSC) held its annual Legislative Meet and Greet earlier in March. Moms and Dads, brothers and sisters and advocates all came to welcome legislators and state agency representatives. High on the agenda was the need to prioritize issues facing families raising children with disabilities and special health care needs in Connecticut. Families shared their personal struggles and how important state services are to their families. Speakers were articulate in the presentation of what is working well and what needs they would like to see the Governor and General Assembly address in the development of next year's budget.

For more information about FSC, please visit the DDS website at: www.ct.gov/dds

Respite Centers Update

DDS recognizes that individuals and families often need occasional breaks. As one way to provide these breaks, DDS operates eleven Respite Centers across the state. These breaks, in the form of out-of-home respite care, allow individuals visiting the Respite Centers to have an enjoyable time, meet new people and participate in a variety of fun activities. Meanwhile, the family is provided relief from their ongoing caregiver responsibilities. DDS Respite Centers offer pre-planned overnight and day visit stays from Thursday, 4 pm through Tuesday, 10 am. All centers are closed on Wednesdays. Respite Center stays are scheduled based upon family need, appropriate peer groupings, availability of dates and space, and existing resources. Families must complete a Respite Center Packet and schedule a pre-visit to the center prior to scheduling a stay. Respite Center stays must be requested through the individuals Case Manager or DDS **Help Line** for those individuals that do not have a case manager via a respite center request form.

Visit the DDS website at: www.ct.gov/dds for more information on the Respite Centers.

North Region Respite Center Coordinator:

Denise Riberio 860-331-2018

e-mail: denise.riberio@ct.gov

North Region Respite Centers

Newington, Putnam and Windsor

North Region DDS Help Line 877-437-4577

South Region Respite Center Coordinator

Sharon O'Neill 203-974-4270

e-mail: sharon.oneill@ct.gov

South Region Respite Centers

Meriden, New Haven and Waterford

South Region DDS Help Line 1-877-437-4567

West Region Respite Center Coordinator

Gail Gordon 203-806-8792

e-mail: gail.gordon@ct.gov

West Region Respite Centers

Norwalk, Southbury, Torrington, Trumbull and
Medical Respite Center in Stratford (Ella Grasso Center)

West Region DDS Help Line 1-877-491-2720

Husky and Fee-for-Service Medicaid (Title 19) FAQ's

Frequently asked questions relating to DDS Case Management

Q: My 10 year old child is on Husky Medicaid, why did DDS discontinue their case management services?

A: Due to a lack of case management resources, DDS discontinued case management services for individuals who were not enrolled in fee-for-service Medicaid. Husky Medicaid is not the same as fee-for-service Medicaid, also known as straight Title 19. Children on Husky have access to service coordination through the managed care provider under the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Q: What is the difference between applying for Husky Medicaid and fee-for-service Medicaid?

A: When a child is under the age of 18, eligibility for Husky is determined by the income and assets of their parent/guardian. When an individual turns 18, they are determined to be an adult and their eligibility for adult Medicaid (Title 19 or fee-for-service Medicaid) is determined by their own assets and income. To be eligible, their assets cannot exceed \$1,600 if they are disabled. Husky Medicaid is for children and fee-for-service Medicaid is for adults. All families should help their children apply for Medicaid shortly before their 18th birthday.

Q: Why is it important to apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) through the Social Security Administration before applying for fee-for-service Medicaid?

A: In the process of applying for SSI, the individual will obtain a disability determination from the federal government that will assist them in obtaining Medicaid. The Medicaid application is much smaller if the SSI disability determination document is obtained first and submitted with the application.

Q: My adult child is 19 years old and is covered on my private insurance. Why is it important for us to still apply for fee-for-service Medicaid even though we don't currently need medical coverage?

A: First, having fee-for-service Medicaid qualifies the individual who is eligible for DDS services to have a DDS case manager assigned. Second, if the individual is not on fee-for-service Medicaid (Title 19), they will not be eligible to apply for day program funding upon graduation from high school or any future residential funding from the department.

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New DDS Policy on Respectful Language

In a continued effort to promote the respect and dignity of individuals who receive services from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) or its providers, DDS issued a new policy in January 2010 concerning the use of Respectful Language by employees of DDS. The new policy applies prospectively to all DDS related written and verbal communications. The policy was shared with DDS providers as an advisory of the implementation and to encourage its providers to be cognizant of the Respectful Language policy.

The Respectful Language policy requires the use of "people first" language when referring to individuals who receive supports and services from DDS. It also requires the avoidance of language that implies the person as a whole is disabled; equates a person with a medical condition; or refers to adults with disabilities as "kids," "girls" or "boys." In addition, the policy replaces the term "mental retardation" with "intellectual disability" unless clinically or legally necessary. As standards of acceptable conduct have evolved, individuals who receive supports and services from DDS and its provider network have found the use of disrespectful or "non-person first" language to be offensive and a barrier to full integration into the community. Similar to the department's name change to DDS in 2007, the Respectful Language policy is a positive step towards the department's mission that everyone in our service system experience the respect and dignity they deserve.

DDS Launches New Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness Video



The Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS) recently unveiled its new Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness Video Training Program. The first of its kind in the country, the training is designed to provide education in fire prevention and safety procedures to 15,000 public and private employees and be available to over 20,000 families and consumers.

The Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness program was made possible through an Assistance to Firefighters “Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program” administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This was developed in cooperation with the Connecticut Fire Academy and the University of Connecticut Health Center. The video training was designed to train staff through an on-line video course that is accessible on the DDS website at www.ct.gov/dds and through the department’s on-line College of Direct Support Training Curriculum.

“This program is designed to advance awareness and educate all of the stakeholders whose health and safety depend on a practical understanding of the dangers of fire and other hazardous emergencies,” said DDS Commissioner Peter H. O’Meara. “The program enhances our consumers’, families’, staffs’ and first responder’ awareness of assisting individuals with disabilities during emergencies. We are extremely grateful to have the support of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program through FEMA.”

In addition to the employee training videos, DDS unveiled a Fire Safety Training for individuals and families served by the department. Also, available on the DDS website, the video assists consumers in basic fire prevention, preparing for an emergency and using R.A.C.E., Remove, Alert, Confine and Extinguish. As part of the program for families, over 10,000 DDS consumers will be receiving a “File of Life” magnet for their refrigerators. The “File of Life” is a voluntary program designed to help local first responders to quickly obtain in an emergency, necessary medical history, support needs, and emergency contact information about the occupants in a family home or individual apartment. Included in the file, is a medical form that can be updated every six months with the most important information.

For more information or to view the video training, please visit the DDS website at www.ct.gov/dds or for any questions, please e-mail the DDS at dds.firesafety@ct.gov.

Title 19 FAQ’s *continued from page six*

Applications for fee-for-service Medicaid should be submitted as soon as the child turns 18 so that proper transition planning can begin for the individual with DDS. Once you are eligible, you may keep your child covered on your primary insurance, and the fee-for-service Medicaid would be secondary.

Q: My adult child with a disability is employed and has been told they do not qualify for Medicaid because their income is too high. What other programs can assist them with obtaining medical insurance?

A: Medicaid for the working disabled (known as “S05”) allows an adult individual with a disability to make up to \$75,000 per year, have some personal assets and still qualify for Medicaid. The amount they are required to pay for their insurance is calculated on a sliding scale. Individuals with S05 Medicaid are eligible to have a DDS case manager. Contact the **Help Line** in your region if you need assistance.

Direct to Families

Department of Developmental Services
460 Capitol Ave
Hartford, CT 06106

We Walk together
Over the Span
of a Lifetime...

DDS Commissioner Inducted into Special Olympics Hall of Fame



Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara receives award from Special Olympics Connecticut Chairman of the Board David Cassano (left) and President Beau Doherty (right)

“Special Olympics Connecticut (SOCT) could not have a better friend than Commissioner Peter H. O’Meara...he changes the lives of our athletes every day,” said SOCT President Beau Doherty. “He is a staunch supporter of sports, urban initiatives and is one of our best ambassadors in promoting the work that we do.”

Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Commissioner Peter H. O’Meara was recently inducted into the Hall of Fame at the annual SOCT 2010 Hall of Fame Dinner. Receiving the Susan Saint James Award for Leadership, Commissioner O’Meara was joined by six others honored for their various contributions to Special Olympics. In addition, all recipients were the first to be inducted into the Shriver Society. The Shriver Society was organized to recognize those people who have made a positive and lasting impact on Special Olympics Connecticut. This Society, is named in the honor of the Shriver family. The goal of the Shriver Society is to ensure that this valuable collection of talented individuals will always have a meaningful place in Special Olympics Connecticut.

“I am extremely honored to receive this award,” said Commissioner O’Meara. “DDS plays a small role in helping Special Olympics, it is the volunteers, families and the athletes who join together to change individual lives. I have watched athletes compete all over the state and in Ireland for the World Games. It is extremely heart warming to see families cheering on their loved ones as they cross the finish line and the volunteers cheering even louder.”

For more information about Special Olympics, please visit their website at: www.soct.org