

**From:** Laura Fucci [<mailto:lafucci@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 29, 2016 8:39 AM  
**To:** ddsct.co  
**Subject:** DDS Five Year Plan

My name is Laura Fucci. My daughter has a dual diagnosis of autism and intellectual disability. She attends an excellent day support program; and we are fortunate that she has the appropriate supports for her needs. In addition to her “acquiring, improving and retaining skills and abilities that prepare her for work, community participation, and support for meaningful socialization and leisure activities”, she is safe and surrounded by people who accept, respect and ensure her well-being. One of the main reasons our family chose a Day Support Option rather than a Group Supported Employment Option for our daughter was that she struggles with communication and safety issues. We cannot know for certain that she understands fully what people tell her and that she wouldn’t do something, unintentionally, to jeopardize her safety. She, and those like her, is a target for predators. For those reasons, she cannot be left alone.

Under this 5 year plan, my daughter’s program will fundamentally change to include competitive employment and less support services. She requires structure and routine. She needs to be supported by people who understand her and her communication challenges in order for her to feel secure and to succeed. Without those fundamental needs being met, she will regress and her safety will be at risk. All of our families want the assurance that our adult children are safe when they’re not with us. Please don’t undercut that essential human right in the name of saving money.

“The new economic reality” statement throughout the document is a proclamation of a foregone conclusion rather than the reason to find alternative solutions to continue to cut the DDS budget into the foreseeable future. I disagree with that premise. DDS’ role is to serve and advocate for the I/DD community and that cannot be accomplished by leaving some behind.

As stated in the document, **Transitional Services** and the **Employment Strategic Plan** will focus DDS’ resources on economic opportunities and competitive employment for all supported individuals in the upcoming years. How are people with special needs supposed to compete for private sector jobs with senior citizens who can’t afford to retire, with college graduates who can’t find employment in their fields of study, with parents who need to support their children? Where are all of these jobs in “the new economic reality”? What will the DDS supports be if my daughter is fired, wants to quit? Will she have to give up her Day Program completely? What happens when the “natural supports” in the workplace fall short of expectations? Who will be responsible and accountable for my daughter’s safety?

The plan also states: “As noted, DDS staff and stakeholders are a critical element of this approach. DDS needs the full engagement and participation of all stakeholders to complete this work and **we value all partners willing to develop and change with us.**” Does that mean that DDS does not value those who disagree with their approach? Does change mean the privatization of public sector (union) jobs such as case managers who families rely on for their knowledge and advocacy? Does change mean that DDS families will face more economic hardships in the care of their adult children? Does change mean the funneling of taxpayer dollars for the care of our most vulnerable citizens to the lowest bidder?

Another section of the plan declares: “The work of the agency is, and will continue to be, grounded in a commitment to the individuals and families that we support. Despite increasing demands and shrinking resources, we strive each day to provide high quality supports to as many individuals as possible. In addition, we work to engage with individuals and families, seeking input and involvement wherever possible.” The DDS 5 year plan does not even attempt to advocate for increased funding to meet the demands of the population it serves. The message is “sorry for your troubles, but some of you are on your own”. This is wrong and unfair. Furthermore, it will only be a matter of time before those of us currently receiving support will have our children’s funding reduced or eliminated.

This “new economic reality” relies on the shrinking middle class to fund the tattered social safety net rather than find new revenue sources such as proposing an “Easy Pass” system to collect money for the millions of drivers who use our highways or to ask the wealthiest individuals and businesses of Connecticut to forego some of their tax breaks.

It’s incumbent upon DDS to provide a 5 year plan that protects and advocates on behalf of its clients without eviscerating its own departmental staff and providers. All members of the DDS community want our adult children to be happy, safe, secure and as independent as possible. I believe that all of the DDS stakeholders can find a more balanced solution to attain those goals without placing our adult children at risk.

Thank you.

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