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**CONNECTICUT COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

**Regular Council Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, May 14, 2024, 10:03 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.**

**(Hybrid - Online via Microsoft Teams & at the East Hartford, CT DDS)**

The 249th meeting of the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities was held on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, from 10:03 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. on Teams and at the East Hartford DDS Branch.

**Presiding:**  Charles Bergamo, Vice Chair

**Recorder of Minutes:**  Donna Devin, Program Assistant

**Members Present:**  Emily Ball, Michelle Baughman, Robert Berriault, Andrew Black, Laurie Cantwell, Andy Cirioli, Emily Cowen, Lena Esposito, Michael Finley, Lynn Frith, Karen Healy, Shannon Jacovino, Rene Lambert, Ashley McClain, Rachel Mirsky, Kaitlynn Ramos, Graziela do Carmo Reis, Sierra Scott, Kathie Strout, Fran Traceski,

**Members Absent:**   Bryan Klimkiewicz, Doris Maldonado Mendez, Chair; Elena Poma, Amy Soto, Matthew Walker

**Members of the Public:** Heather Ferguson-Hull, Adrianna Ramirez, Gina Teixeira, Tara Viens, CT-N

**Staff:**  Walter Glomb, Executive Director

1. **Call to Order:**  With a quorum present, Charles Bergamo, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.
2. **Public Comment:** There was no public comment.
3. **Approval of Agenda:** Charles Bergamo, Vice Chair, asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Fran Traceski made the motion to approve the updated agenda. Laurie Cantwell seconded the motion. The agenda was approved.

1. **Approval of Minutes from March 12, 2024, Council Meeting:** Charles Bergamo, Vice Chair, asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from Tuesday, March 12, 2024. Fran Traceski motioned to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Shannon Jacovino. The minutes were approved.
2. **Comments by the Vice Chair:**  Charles Bergamo, Vice Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked Council Members for volunteering their time and giving to the community and the Council to help move forward their Five-Year Plan. He thanked Walter Glomb, the Council’s Executive Director, for his time and the effort he puts in on behalf of the Council, particularly all of his work with the grantees. Chuck also thanked Donna Devin, Council’s Program Assistant, for her assistance. And he thanked Graziela do Carmo Reis and Kaitlynn Ramos, the Co-Chairs of the Council’s Advocacy, Public Information, and Education (APIE) Committee, for their great work on the Council’s Annual Report. He recognized Doris Maldonado Mendez, Chair, for all of her work on behalf of the Council, and her deep commitment to the Council and her advocacy for individuals with developmental disabilities.
3. **Report from the Council Executive Director:** Walter Glomb, Council Executive Director, thanked Heather Ferguson-Hull and Tara Viens from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) for attending the Council Meeting. Again, he is setting aside time ahead of every Council meeting for any Council member who would like him to go over his Director’s Report with them.

Fran Traceski asked Walt about the Connecticut Health Access Alliance. Walt said the Council hired Kevin Graff from Graff Public Solutions LLC, and Innovate & Organize to work together and put together a campaign to educate the public and practitioners about accommodating people with developmental disabilities in healthcare. They are designing a website for the campaign. One of their suggestions was for an organization, Connecticut Health Access Alliance to be created. It will be mostly made up of well known advocacy organizations who believe and want to further the cause of improving access to healthcare for people with developmental disabilities, especially concerning reasonable accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Because Senate Bill Number 425, An Act Prohibiting Discrimination by Health Care Providers in the Provision of Health Care Services in the State, was introduced so late in the Legislative session, it was never called for a Senate vote. But in the public hearing for the bill, there were a dozen organizations or individuals who testified on behalf of the bill. Ten of them were strongly in favor of it, such as The Arc CT, Connecticut Legal Rights Project, the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association, and others. The Council will be reaching out to these organizations for permission to add their names to the Connecticut Health Access Alliance website. The goal is for there to be a group for the Council to work with before new legislation is announced.

Ashley McClain, Council Member, is the mom of a child on the autism spectrum. Recently, she started a non-profit program, “Linked Autism Safety Project”, where they do trainings for First Responders for individuals with developmental disabilities, including autism. Personally, she has trained over 400 First Responders in Connecticut since last November, and was just co-certified at the State Department of Public Health (DPH) for Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services. She’s been meeting with departments around and outside of the state, has partnered with almost 30 Connecticut cities and towns and is in talks with 45 more. Her goal is to bring education, awareness, and understanding of how to interact, understand communication and behaviors of individuals with developmental disabilities. She asked Walt Glomb, Council Executive Director, to reach out to her if he could use her as a resource.

Walt Glomb, Council Executive Director, and Shannon Jacovino, Council Member, have been working with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to develop a plan to improve services for individuals with high levels of need. Shannon and Walt have met with families who contacted them, whose loved ones have intensive support needs. Shannon spoke to the Council on the progress of the meetings. The people they’ve been working with have intensive behavioral needs, but they’re also looking at people who have medical needs, who due to the nature of their disability, are having difficulty accessing the services and the supports that DDS offers. This can take the form of having services, but not having the supports you have meet your needs, and not being able to move around in the system easily. This ability is limited to impossible now due to the staffing crisis. It also includes people who have funding who can’t find programs that will take them, because they have a very specific kind of medical need or intensive medical needs that the programs don’t feel they can accommodate right now.

Elisa Velardo, the Deputy Commissioner at the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and other people in upper level management were very open to the conversation. The families provided a vision of what their loved ones need and what they feel other people’s loved ones need, who are facing these obstacles in the system. For the past 2 months, the DDS has been holding weekly meetings with experts throughout the agency and using the document that the families created to create pilot programs. They plan to do 3 pilots, one in each region, starting with day and employment programs. Their goal is to start programs that have more access to clinical and nursing supports where the people providing supervision have a much higher level of training. This will enable them to train the staff and manage issues as they arise. Collection of data would be greater than what is currently gathered in most DDS programs.

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is also planning to do a pilot around transition for people who have intensive support needs. Right now the proposal for the day and employment pilot is in the hands of DDS senior management, and the Council waiting to hear back. But I’m really pleased with the progress we’re making and how open DDS was to having these conversations and hearing directly from families. I’m very pleased DDS made it a priority. The Deputy Commissioner was very clear that she wanted us to have these internal meetings and wanted them to move forward quickly, and wanted a report and recommendations from the group. Shannon will keep the Council informed of the programs progress.

Walt Glomb, Council Executive Director, is very happy the parents came forward. These are parents who have adult children with severe needs, whose parents want them to be living their best life. They are challenging DDS to make this happen, and are pursuing the topic of support for other people who aren’t eligible for DDS services. These issues merge into the area of workforce development that the Council is working on, and more experts in the field are needed to address these needs.

Walt Glomb, Council Executive Director, talked about how the Council was called in Public Act 23-137: An Act Concerning Resources and Support Services for Persons with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability, to work with the State Governor’s Office of Workforce Strategy to help build a Human Services workforce pipeline. Walt is recruiting other partners to focus on this issue and believes the State Department of Labor (DOL) should also be a part of it. The Council has some freedom to engage people on policy issues.

The workforce, especially the workforce professionals, the Personal Care Assistants, etc., are scattered around different state agencies, funded through a variety of programs, and have different job descriptions. Many of them are doing the same type of work, but each department has a different process of certification. There is a shortage of these kinds of workers. People need to find out why people coming into the workforce aren’t choosing this type of work and what can be done about it.

Walt put forth the question “Can we do something to professionalize this workforce more and provide multiple credentials?” For example, the person doing supported employment would need special training that a Personal Care Assistant wouldn’t be required to have. Whereas, a person who served individuals with intensive needs might need some additional training. How can a larger qualified pool be created for this workforce, and how could more workers be attracted to the field? Shannon Jacovino thinks unions and providers could be major players in solving this problem. She’d like the Council to play a role in encouraging and pushing for these conversations to happen since it is a crisis.

The day after the Council Meeting Walt Glomb, Council Executive Director, is spending the day with the Executive Directors of other state Councils on Developmental Disabilities for the states of Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. A major purpose of the meeting is an introduction to Jill Jacobs, the new Executive Director of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD). She is the former Commissioner for the Administration on Disabilities. Walt created a presentation for her and will be happy to share it with the Council.

1. **Report by the Executive Director on the Fiscal Year Council Budget:** There is severe water damage at the Council Offices and staff will be working remotely until renovations are completed.The budget is on track and staff continue to look for opportunities to save money and cut back on costs whenever possible.
2. **Council Committee Reports:** The Executive Committee will be meeting in August or sooner if needed.

Fran Traceski, Legislative Policy and Planning Committee (LPP) Chair, said he and Walter Glomb, Council Executive Director, attended the National Disability Policy Seminar in April in Washington, DC. Ten people from Connecticut area agencies, including the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) were at the conference also.

Fran gave a brief review of the state Legislative session. The next steps for the Committee are getting ready for the next Legislative session. The 2024 session will be a long one and the group wants to be prepared for it.

Fran Traceski, Governance Committee Chair gave an update on the Committee. The group is working on 2 tasks, reviewing the Council’s bylaws and developing an updated draft of them for approval by the Council, and the performance review of the Council’s Executive Director.

Graziela do Carmo Reis, Co-Chair of the Advocacy, Public Information, and Education Committee (APIE), said the Committee has been discussing ways they can inform communities about the resources that are available to assist them with the education process. Graziela; Walt Glomb, Council Executive Director; and Kaitlynn Ramos, Co-Chair of APIE, met with folks at the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to talk about adding a page on the website about the Council’s partners and their projects and programs. The group would also like to develop a handout for it.

Walt Glomb, Council Executive Director, said he expects the letters to be sent out for Council Membership from the Governor’s Office now that the Legislative session is over.

Charles Bergamo, Council Vice Chair, and Proposal Review Committee Chair, gave an update on 1915c Waivers. A meeting with the new Liaison at the Department of Social Services (DSS) is being planned in the future. He will report back to the Council after the meeting.

1. **Adjournment:** Charles Bergamo, Council Vice Chair, asked for a motion for adjournment. Fran Traceski made a motion for adjournment. Michelle Baughman seconded the motion. The meeting concluded at 12:20 p.m.