

DDS North Region
Regional Advisory Council

February 19, 2025

Meeting Minutes – Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams (meeting was recorded)

Members Present: Kim Little, Chairperson, Donna Cohen, Cindy Lichtsteiner, Shannon Klenk, Ellyn Little, Mary Lou O'Connor, Adrianna Ramirez, Rick Rothstein, Annette Scully, Tammy Selinger, and Stacie Silva, DDS North Regional Director (ex-Officio member).

Members Absent: Kathleen Hayes, Sue Prihar, and Lori Sandora.

Guests: Stacy Dawes, DDS Health Services Director
Gloria Jones, Director of Health & Clinical Services
Patricia Orozco, Director of Assistive Technology

- Call to Order
Chairperson Kim Little called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
- Approval of Minutes – January 15, 2025

Motion to accept the minutes of the January 15, 2025 RAC meeting as presented.

The motion was made by Annette Scully and seconded by Tammy Selinger.

The motion carried unanimously.

- Presentations: Health Oversight and Empowered Choices

DDS Regional Director for the North Region, Stacie Silva, began with introductions; all attendees introduced themselves. Three participants were invited to talk about Health Oversight and Empowered Choices.

Stacy Dawes, DDS Health Services Director, explained how to best support individuals coming to the Department of Developmental Services. When an individual comes to the department, the Nurse wants to be involved in the IP process to be able to capture the Individualized Plan of Care and to have the input of the individual and/or their loved ones. They want to get to personally know who is the individual that they serve and find out what is it that they like to do, what their goals are, what their dreams and plans are. Once all that information is gathered, there's an assessment done by the Nurse to know what the individual's strengths and weaknesses are; what can an individual do for themselves? The goal is to keep them as independently as possible for as long as possible. Therefore, whatever skills that they may come in with, the Nurse try to allow the individuals to participate in their care as much as possible. The assessment consists of the Nurse going over their medications, every individual will have a self-med assessment and a participation of their self-med assessment. Whatever services the individuals have when they come in, the Nurse keeps that in place and kind of develop the plan of care and then educating the staff around the plan of care; what's in place for those individuals on their task and whatever they need to take care of them.

Ellen Little asked if she could continue to take the medications by herself once she moves into residential. Ms. Dawes responded that she'll be able to communicate that to the Nurse during the self-med assessment to develop a plan. Ms. Kim Little asked if the self-med assessment would take place when her daughter moves into residential placement. Yes, said Ms. Dawes and explained that everyone in residential would have a med-assessment. The self-med assessment is done at the time of admission and then on a yearly basis just to make sure that nothing changes.

Gloria Jones, Director of Health & Clinical Services shared information on the process that DDS has for Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders and why is that important. She explained that the Connecticut General Statute and the purpose of that is so that the Commissioner of DDS can make sure that no medical decisions that will change the effect of whether we do CPR or not do CPR. She explained that many times medical providers or hospital really don't know the individual is served by DDS. They don't know what their needs are; therefore, DDS wants to make sure that they take care of the individuals that are served by DDS when it comes to DNR orders. There are several things that are important to know. Why is a DNR important? Because DDS we really want their individuals to be able to make the decision for life saving measures on their own, preferably in advance of an emergency. She asked, what would you like to happen if something were to happen medically to you? If your heart were to stop? If you didn't have a blood pressure? If you had no pulse, what would you like and what are your wishes? That process happens through the Case Manager, said Ms. Jones. DDS wants to know from individuals what are their needs, what is it that they want, what works best for them. It's a community, she said. It's a family and DDS want to make sure that they are meeting all the individual's needs. DDS want to protect their individuals from different providers or hospitals making those decision for their individuals. The want to make sure that they can review all of the questions that come up. How does that happen, asked Ms. Jones. She explained that DDS request from the individual's medical providers specific medical information to find out why they think and why they agree with either the individual or their family members as to why they want to pursue the DNR order. DDS evaluate the information that is sent to them to be able to help make that determination with the individual. The discussion starts with the individual, family member, and Case Management. The decision is up to individuals and their families. The DNR process could happen anytime; it could happen during an annual review just having the discussion what would you like for end-of-life measures? What are your wishes? DDS wants to make sure that their wishes are written down and kept on record should an emergency come up, DDS be able to support those decisions if that time should come. It is very important for discussion to come up at the quarterly meetings if there's any changes such as change in legal guardian. Also, changes can be made to the DNR order that's in place at any time.

Ms. Ramirez asked if there's a mechanism for keeping updated information or any changes. Ms. Jones responded that the DNR order is discussed at quarterly meetings. However, there is a document that they track every year, and it gets updated. Ms. Dawes also added that in all regions, the Regional Health Service Directors also keep a statewide database for all individuals with a DNR that is kept on file.

Patricia Orozco, Director of Assistive Technology was in attendance to talk about Assistive Technology. She talked about it not just as the Director, but also as a daughter who uses assistive technology. She shared how assistive technology works in her life. She shared a PowerPoint presentation on how to use different assistive technology products together to make a very pleasant experience (see Exhibit A). She presented an overview of practical guide to assistive technology at home such as smart lights, smart window blinds, medication dispensant. Also, having a smart lock where you can either use your eye recognition to open the door or you can use your thumb to unlock the door. Ms. Orozco talked about her son, she explained that he has diabetes since he was seven years old, and an assistive technology device changed their lives. She explained that she used to get up every two hours and check on him. Once she put the device in, they slept. They set the alarm on the device so that if his blood sugar is too high, it would go off, and if it was too low it would go off as well. Ms. Ellen Little explained how she can arrange for someone to come out and help with obtaining assistive technology. Ms. Orozco responded that she could have someone come out and do an assistive technology assessment. Ms. Orozco explained that with the ARPA funds received for the assistive technology assessment they did a Request for Proposal and had 150 assessments done

the first year and 150 assessments done the second year. Individuals receiving services from DDS could have an assessment done. There are three agencies that were awarded that Request for Proposal. The individual needs to talk to their Case Manager to start the process to get an assessment. Where can you get trial items, Ms. Orozco was asked, and she responded that there are quite a few lending libraries. Connecticut Tech Act have what they call members, and they have lending libraries throughout Connecticut whereby you borrow the device and then you bring it back.

- Regional Director's Update – Stacie Silva

Stacie Silva, Regional Director thanked the DDS Administrators in attendance this evening to give presentations. She explained that the topics that came from this evening were due to one of the RAC members that asked at the last meeting how can they get their son involved in more of their medical care. The information shared this evening was very informative, said Ms. Silva.

Director Silva explained that as of February 21, 2025, DDS will be decentralizing the Public sector. There is a Regional Director in each region, and about seven years ago each region provided the oversight over the public homes. However, over the past seven years the Commissioner had the Public sector centralized under one Regional Director. The Commissioner recently has made the decision that he would decentralize it and it would go back to how it used to be. Director Silva will oversee 17 public group homes in the North Region effective February 21st.

Director Silva shared that the next Tuesday Form will be on Tuesday, February 25th from 3:00 pm to 4:30. The topic is about comprehensive medical supports in the community. There will be individuals speaking on how they manage their medical supports in the community.

Also, DDS will be featuring assistive technology demonstration at some of their respite center locations. These demonstrations is about technology that can be used at individuals' apartments or family homes.

Mr. Rick Rothstein asked if the Hartford Regional Center is going to be oversight by the North Region. Director Silva responded that the Hartford Regional Center will be oversight by Regional Director Cres Secchiaroli in the South Region. The reason for that is because Ms. Silva's experience in the field is not in Intensive Care Facilities (ICF). Therefore, to make this transition a smooth transition, it was best that Director Secchiaroli oversee the ICF as he has a lot of experience with ICF. Director Silva will oversee all the Community Living Arrangement (CLA) in the North Region.

Ms. Tammy Selinger asked about DDS having to give the ARPA money back. Director Silva responded that DDS received an extension on the time frame to utilize ARPA funding. That is correct, said Dawn Frey, Assistant Regional Director; DDS has until June 30th to utilize the ARPA funds.

Director Silva reminded everyone to email or call her with any suggestions for topics that they want to learn more information.

- Legislative Update

Rick Rothstein explained that the DDS hearing is on Friday, February 21st. Commissioner Scheff will be presenting the health section to the Appropriations Committee at 11:00 am. The public hearing starts at 4:00 pm and to speak at the public hearing, you need to register by 3:00 pm on Thursday, February 20th. The DDS budget include a 3% increase in each of the next two years. A 3% increase in

the FY beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026 and then a 3% increase the following year. The private will be able to determine how they best want to use those funds; they can use them for staff enhancements or for other operating expenses. There is some funding for emergency placements and then in the second year of the budget there is a major funding push for the waiting list. Mr. Rothstein also explained that there are bills in public hearing right now for supported decision making. Is being introduced into the DDS statutes under this proposal, to provide an alternative guardianship. Also, there is a public hearing on Thursday, March 20th in the Labor Committee regarding their annual bill to eliminate sub minimum wage for people with disabilities.

- Open Forum for Public Participation

Adrianna Ramirez shared that the CT Family Support Network (CTFSN), One Voice Conference is scheduled for April 24, 2025 in North Haven from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. This information is available on the DDS newsletter and on CFSN Facebook business page.

- Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:16 pm.

The motion was made by Annette Scully and seconded by Tammy Selinger.

The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Ether Diaz

Executive Secretary