

**DDS West Region
Advisory Council
May 15, 2025
Via Microsoft Teams
4:00 p.m.
Minutes**

Participants:

Bastien, Susan
Bergamo, Charles
Derman, Marina
Herbst, Mickey
O'Brien, Shannon
Steinfeld, Arlene
Simon, Karen

Public

Cruz, Yury – CTFSN (Public)
Ramirez, Adrianna – CTFSN (Public)

Guests:

Mary Pat DeCarlo (DDS – Director of Workforce Strategies)

Call to order and approval of the Agenda

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was called to order at 4:03 pm and the agenda was approved.

Review and Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Minutes of April 17, 2025 were approved.

Mary Pat DeCarlo (DDS) – Director of Workforce Strategies

Currently, there is a staffing crisis with supports for individuals with developmental disabilities. In an effort to recruit staff and promote interest in these positions, the Department has received American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to address this critical need. Ms. DeCarlo was present to share the efforts the Department is making to assist with this recruitment.

Ms. DeCarlo presented the Council with the marketing initiative for Direct Support Professionals (DSP) in the DDS Private Agency sector. DDS has partnered with IT to develop new job board portal where positions are posted and interested parties can apply for those vacancies. This effort is being made to recruit staff to fill the large number of vacancies in the private sector workforce.

Chair's Report

Mr. Bergamo participated in a meeting about Elder Law Special Needs. He shared that New York is having the same difficulties Connecticut had with their fiscal intermediary. They have consolidated 200 fiscal intermediaries down to one. Other states are also consolidating.

Regional Director's Report

- Support Living in Cheshire – Shannon thanked the RAC for their suggestions on promoting this opportunity. As a result of the suggestions, the information was shared with the Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN) at their “One Voice” conference. It’s also in the DDS Newsletter as well as on Facebook. Referrals are beginning to come through.
- Hiring Freeze – remains in place
- Strike – several providers are threatening to strike. 1199 Union has met with the Governor. No further information is known at this time. DDS is actively planning for the strike if it happens. We send staff into the homes to monitor that everything is going smoothly.
- Intellectual Disabilities Partnership Day will be on May 23, 2025 at Camp Harkness. There will be trainings, food, tables with information. DDS will have representatives from Community Companion Homes (CCH), Self Determination, etc. at the event to provide information
- Request for Proposals (RFP) – the Questions and Answers phase is due by June 13, 2025.
 - A question was asked about how long it would take for the proposed medical home to open. Shannon stated that it sometimes takes anywhere from 9-24 months. There are numerous variables that must come together and sometimes property acquisition can be an issue that factors into a longer timeline.
- Budget – we do not have an official budget yet.
- CTFSN “One Voice” conference as held and was very successful. The event was conducted simultaneously in English and Spanish. All printed materials were also available in both languages.
 - A member of the Council asked if this event has been affected by the federal DEI cuts. The answer was “not at this time”; everything is business as usual.
 - A brief discussion about sign language occurred. Members inquired if ASL is made available in other languages. This will be further explored by Adrianna Ramirez (CTFSN).
- **Old Business** – none
- **New Business** – Marina inquired if anyone on the RAC participated in the Medicaid zoom meeting. The group discussed their thoughts on potential cuts. One of the RAC members said that the presentation was hard to follow.

Public

Adrianna shared that there will be a presentation called "Trusted Messenger" that CTFSN is hosting. She invited the RAC members to participate. She also stated that the Facebook page posts events that families may be interested in. She can also add interested parties to an email list; so, anyone interested should let her know they want to be on the email list.

Motion to Adjourn

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 5:25pm

Next meeting

Thursday, September 18, 2025 via Teams

Respectfully submitted by,
Eunice Rivera, Executive Secretary
DDS West Region