

**DDS West Region
Advisory Council
September 18, 2025
Via Microsoft Teams
4:00 p.m.
Minutes**

Participants:

Bergamo, Charles
Chiappiniello, Lori
Herbst, Mickey
O'Brien, Shannon
Steinfeld, Arlene
Simon, Karen

Public

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

Call to order and approval of the Agenda

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was called to order at 4:08 pm and the agenda was approved.

Review and Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Minutes of May 15, 2025 were approved.

Chair's Report

None

Regional Director's Report

- Request for Proposals (RFP): Shannon shared an update on the statewide Request for Proposals (RFP) that she was Chairing. She shared that one home in the West Region was awarded and the home that Ms. Bastien inquired about at the last meeting (medical home with tracheotomy supports) was not bid on. There was zero interest from vendors in the other two regions for any of the homes available in those regions.

Due to the lack of interest from the providers, the homes were put out for bid again. The timeline for the new RFP was shared with the Council. There is a specific interest from DDS to have a vendor take over the available medical home so that individuals can be removed from the hospital and placed in a group home instead.

- Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN): Central Office will now be overseeing this contract. Kevin Bronson (Director of Communications) will be collaborating with CTFSN on workshops and community outreach with families.

- Statewide Regional Advisory Council (RAC) Meeting – The date for the statewide meeting was shared: November 20, 2025. It will be held on Teams. The specific time will be shared later. Shannon asked Mr. Bergamo to provide a general update for the WR RAC at the meeting and Shannon will share an update on the presentations that were held this past year.
- Statewide RAC Bylaws: Kevin Bronson is working to standardize the RAC Bylaws statewide. All of the regions have different bylaws so Kevin is working to develop a document that can be used by all regional RACs. This will be shared soon.
- Direct Support Person (DSP) Campaign – Mary Pat DiCarlo has reached out to multiple organizations (Tech Schools, Job Corps, etc.) to present on the DSP campaign. She will be invited to the October RAC meeting to share results of her efforts.
- Public Division – Public programs are still transitioning to the region. Shannon shared that staff shortages are being reviewed and recruitment efforts to merge some positions is happening to address these shortages. Staff are being mandated and overtime is high because of the shortage.
- Day Program Provider Fair at Lower Fairfield Center (LFC) – A provider fair was recently held at the LFC to offer information to interested families on day programs available in the lower Fairfield County area. It was well attended and lots of providers and families participated.
- Shannon asked the RAC if they were interested in offering suggestions on future speakers for upcoming RAC meetings. A suggestion was offered to have someone come to the RAC meeting to update on passed legislation that impacts the DDS. The speaker could also speak on proposed legislation and potential cuts and possible effects to our population. Shannon agreed to ask Jill Kennedy (DDS Legislative Liaison) to the upcoming October meeting. It was also requested to have someone speak on different eligibility criteria and how that impacts individuals. Shannon agreed to ask Kevin Bronson (DDS Communications Director) to also join in on the October meeting.
A request was made by Ms. Simon to try to coordinate social groups that could share recreational opportunities. Ms. Adriana Ramirez from the Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN) agreed to further explore this suggestion and thanked Ms. Simon for the inspiration to coordinate this. She also feels there is a need for this resource.

Old Business – none

New Business –

- Mr. Herbst shared that the State of Connecticut has a new stipend to support for childcare to families. He expressed that this would be very helpful to families and it would also help in making individuals available to work with our consumers while their children are cared for with this stipend.

Public

- Adrianna Ramirez (CTFSN) shared a link on the new funding available for free childcare.
- She shared that the One Voice Conference has been scheduled for April 30, 2026. More information will be forthcoming. [Gov. Lamont launches program to make childcare free for thousands of families <https://share.google/0Z4bXChwnmSICcPTd>].
- Yury Cruz (CTFSN) shared a quick overview of the upcoming workshops available through CTFSN. She agreed to send the information to Eunice Rivera who would pass along to the RAC. Information shared in the meeting chat is available below:

Free Spanish Playgroup in partnership with T.A.F.A (Torrington Area Families for Autism) is coming up on Thursday, October 6 from 6:00 pm-7:00 pm. The playgroup is designed for parents and their children with special needs and/or special healthcare needs. All ages are welcome! Our playgroups do not age out so please join us and make some social connections.

In addition to the game room, there are tables with additional activities for older children, as well as board games.

Optional Activities:

- Thursday, October 9 - Sensory Bottles
- Thursday, November 6 - Pumpkin Decorating
- Thursday, December 4 - Christmas Spheres

Time : 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Where: T.A.F.A 932 E Main St Suite 2, Torrington, CT 06790

Registration is required: <https://forms.gle/n1XyvoVdT2fePhx5A>

Motion to Adjourn

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 4:55pm

Next meeting

Thursday, October 16, 2025 via Teams

Respectfully submitted by,

Eunice Rivera, Executive Secretary

DDS West Region