



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
*DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION*



**Connecticut State Advisory Council for Special Education**

**Wednesday, November 18, 2020**

**\*\*\*\*\* 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. \*\*\*\*\***

Virtual Meeting

(Conference Call Information included below)

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Jen Lussier, Jeffry Spahr, Nachi Bhatt, Mike Nunes, Brian Smith, Kim Williamson, Tom Cosker, Representative Comey, Bryan Klimkiewicz (non-voting), Jolie Medina (non-voting), Tammy Raccio (Chair), Tom Cosker (Past Chair), Susan Lemke, Marissa Mascolo-Halm, Missy Wrigley, Monica Hatton, Jane Hampton, Joan Nicoll-Senft, Catherine Summ, Kasey Considine, Doris Maldonado, Jake Shumbo, Audra Mae Talbot, Jonathan Metcalf, Rick Raucci, Monica Hatton, Goviana Morales, Ana Wittig and Sean Cronin (SDE non-voting).

**Members Absent:** Jane Goundrey, Allison Kopie, Sonia Taylor-Smith and Louis Tallarita

**I. Call to Order and Welcome (9:00 am.)**

Tammy called to order at 9:05 am.

**II. Introductions/Roles/Welcome**

Denise Drummond introduces herself and is being recommended by Steve Hernandez to serve on the SAC as the Council for Women Children and Seniors representative within the Parent Training Institute.

**III. Council Purpose and Function**

Tammy reviews for the Council.

**IV. Public Comment (9:10 am.) N/A**

SAC meetings are public meetings; members of the public may participate by calling in:

- Call-In Number: 1-866-880-0098
- Participant Passcode: 89689633

**Old Business**

**V. Consent Agenda:**

- a. September 30 Full Council Minutes. Tom makes a motion and Jen Lussier seconds.

**VI. Executive Committee Report**

- a. Meeting Updates

Tammy provides a brief update on meeting dates for October and November up to date and topics discussed. Tom adds a comment on how important it was for this team to meet weekly and work furiously during COVID matters.

b. Annual Report

i. Assignments by section

Tammy discusses the role of the Council with this report and what the expectations for the annual report have been in the past and what they expect to be for 2021 report. Also, clarifies SDE role versus SAC in reference to the report.

c. Finalized Committees

**VII. Membership Committee Report**

a. Vacancies

Catherine Summ talks vacancies and states that there are not many but specifically students needed to fill roles at this time and asks the Council to consider recommendations. Talks to Jake Shumbo specifically about a recommendation because of the link he has with the young student.

Bryan K. talks Governor appointments and advises the Council and updates the group. Bryan Smith asks Jake for his opinion on specifics and qualities to look for in perspective students when the Council is looking to refer student members.

b. Recommendations for At-Large Vote:

i. Governor's Appointment Parent or Individual

Tammy asks for a motion to nominate the members for reappointment Tom Cosker makes motion and Joan Nicoll-Senft seconds. Members are Jon Metcalf, Jen Lussier, Jeffrey Sphar, Jane Goundrey, Jake Shumbo and Missy Wrigley.

**New Business**

**VIII. Round Table**

a. Agency Updates

Bryan Smith (DDS) continuing to maintain services and talks about programs and virtual learning. Tells the council to keep services in mind for referencing to community. Lots of interagency collaboration. Hearing lots of concern about possibly going back to full remote learning stressors from parents and families. Tom Cosker asks about transition and Bryan responds and clarifies the 21 change to 22 for student services.

Nachi Bhatt (DCF) Updates on monitoring engagement of virtual learning of students in DCF care and transition programs. Concerned of health and well-being of college students with a lack of services and needs that they will not receive when shifting to online learning. Mentions from a mental health perspective these students in specific needs are growing due to the pandemic and lack on in person instruction. Bryan K. talks about interagency

collaboration that has been great. Nachi goes on to talk about attendance and reporting and tells the council about a care line report that they can have access too.

Catherine Summ (BESBE-ADS) Talks about students on caseload for the staff have gotten creative for both in person and virtual learning. Launched a program so that the educators and facilitators can connect and support one another through discussion. Impressed on how vision education professionals come together. This service is available to various stakeholders, also completed a series of 6 online trainings on online training and assessments, continuing

Ana Wittig (CAPSEF) talks about student engagement being a challenge and working with families on improving assistance to them with hybrid learning etc. Mentions when they went back to school the kids did well and are assisting

Joan Nicoll-Senft (Higher Education-CCSU) Discusses how most CT universities are going full remote from Thanksgiving on. Field placements are in place versus providing raw footage of students for use and reference. Creative things have come from this and universities are busy looking for more ways to move forward. Sean Cronin asked Joan how students have been impacted on college level? Joan responds that many of the services that are in place for K to 12 learners are pretty good and working with students with disabilities as well. She sees the same pluses and minuses playing out for both groups of learners at this time.

Kasey Considine (Disability Rights) \*\*Tom Cosker provides report\*\* He talks about splitting employees up into teams at Disability Rights of CT in order for the group to be able to split up and focus on several issues at one time. They are narrowing focus on areas that are not being covered all around CT. The work is focused on two categories, those being 1. students with disabilities students in post-secondary and 2. Transition students, ineligibility, and services are a concern.

Kim Williamson (Speech Pathology) The Speech-Language Pathologist Communities of Practice (SLP CoP) are being held twice a month on Zoom. It's a great opportunity for SLPs from different districts to get together and discuss what is happening in different districts during COVID-19. Many districts are doing different things for services, assessments, etc., due to the model of school that they are currently in

Mike Nunes (DOC) USD#1 has designed a transition unit, utilizing our school social worker, Adriano Calabrese. He stays involved with special education students as they transition out of DOC. He attends PPTs, provides additional transition resources and communicates with LEA's during the process. He also will accompany me to TTF and transition COP meetings.

Rick Raucci (Public School Teacher) Educators working to engage this new normal both with students with special needs and without. District is working to keep in person learning programs specifically going for special education students. Less people in school location because of the pandemic making it comfortable for some students to switch to in person for from online learning. Rick also talks about twelve schools in CEIC and goes on to mention that teachers are struggling with engagement and both with needs and without working to provide additional supports and teachers are working on health and safety. Concerns on teachers being affected by COVID and as a result student would not receive instruction. Bryan talks about the state's concerns on this in all districts and knows the pressures on teachers at this time.

Marissa Mascolo-Halm (Center for Children's Advocacy) Provides a quick update on how the Council work benefits the agency she works with and how they are happy to hear the updates from the agency stakeholders on working out online and in person learning while addressing

Steve Hernandez (Parent Training Institute) talks about the next legislative session will look different but it is robust and talks about priorities and pressures be continued because there is work going on with the Governor pertaining to budget for service to be.

Jane Hampton (CPAC) Talks about remote learning and how the IEP implementation plan is voluntary and the people who are not aware that that info is incorrect students not getting the services and districts thinking there is no need for services that are voluntary. Also hears a lot about parents being pressured to return children to school before the rise on COVID related cases here in CT.

Sue Lemke (ConCASE) Talks balance and instruction, in person or online learning. Contact racing new to the educators and the concerns about gaps widening relative to general and special education. Equity and Access themes are important and parents' concerns with parents who have not been able to have PPTs and a new wave of referrals.

b. Parent Updates (after break-10:20 am.)

Missy Wrigley (Parent) Things are going well but has concerns with her youngest that son is in a program.

Jen Lussier (Parent) happy to see her son back in his program. Parent partnership piece is important and critical right now, saw that if the teams were collaborating things were better than people who did not have that connection. Parents experiencing cohort issues. Wants to further discuss in LRE group during break out group work.

Jake Shumbo (Person) Jake is in college now and that is all new to him and the transition is going well and he has been supported and his educators have accommodated his needs and have been very helpful. He is excited in general to be in higher education.

Jeffrey Spahr (Parent) talks about daughter going to Fairfield University for school psychologist and thinks it is a benefit of having a brother on the spectrum. Jeff talks about his son and his frustrations as a parent with the services and interactions that have not been provided because of COVID and how it affects his child.

Audra Mae Talbot (Parent) Talks about her frustrations as apparent and as an advocate CT SEPTO Alliance, works on establishing all around the state. Talks PATH, and about parents are having a hard time and seeing new referrals and many calls from parents who are home and now with online learning parents need guidance.

Denise Drummond (Parent) Has children and talks about hybrid learning and how it is affecting both (son on the spectrum). Wants children to interact and socialize so that was main reason for on campus living and now with that being taken away he is losing those social skills.

Goviana Morales (Parent) Concerns and frustrations with guidance and assistance not being provided in a families native language. Parent cannot participate or understand how to engage

when not provided in the languages spoken in home. Bryan responds as to what is being worked on currently as a Bureau in perspective to translating documents and how the SDE plans to assist.

Jon Metcalf (Parent) Talks about accessing services for students and parents not being able to identify needs and would like to continue the work that they

Monica Hatton (Parent) Talks about her children both full time remote learning and how it is difficult. Also mentions her needs and anxiety with mental health and how this affects parents with mental health needs. Hard for someone like her child whose needs are being missed because of how he functions. Educators making uninformed decisions for her children and she has to constantly monitor, which causes concerns.

Tammy Raccio (Parent) Talks about her children and how COVID and virtual learning is affecting her district. They will be going into hybrid learning for grades 6 to 12 and will be keeping K to 5 in building at this time. Also, talks about parents needing to leave their jobs or take time off to be able to have their children participate in online learning. With all the cases arising and where the COVID stands now she is ready to go full remote. Too much anxiety with and waiting for contact tracing and test results are causing lots of anxiety.

**IX.** Break (10/15min break 10:05 am.)

**X.** Special Education Division Director Report

Bryan presents a PowerPoint to the group and provides update on what the SDE and Bureau are currently and what is in the works versus planning phases. Will share high level FAQ. In addition, goes into details on complaints and what areas are being highlighted, finding and mediations.

**XI.** Action Items

Bryan K. to share EdSight link from PowerPoint presentation.

Tammy adds action items to be completed prior to next meeting on January 13, 2021.

- Think about student representation for SAC
- Share flyer for free conference by Council for Exception Children being held on 12/4/20
- Consider this legislation is a budget session and SAC to continue communication on priorities
- Review link on Due Process case that Bryan discussed

**XII.** Adjourn/Break (11:30 am.)

Group breaks for lunch at 11:45 am.

**XIII.** Priority Break Out Session: (12:30 pm.) Not a public meeting

- i. Special Education Policies and Procedures related to COVID-19
- ii. Best Practice Strategies Remote Learning
- iii. Least Restrictive Environment

**State Advisory Council Meeting Dates/Locations:**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>		<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
1.	September 30, 2020		1:00-4:00	Virtual Meeting
2.	November 18, 2020 (Snow Date: Nov 25)		9:00-2:30	Virtual Meeting
3.	January 13, 2021 (Snow Date: Jan 20)		9:00-3:00	TBD
4.	March 10, 2021 (Snow Date: March 17)		9:00-3:00	TBD
5.	May 12, 2021		1:00-5:00	TBD