



# State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services

# DDS

Ned Lamont  
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff  
Commissioner

Elisa F. Velardo  
Deputy Commissioner

Minutes of February 6, 2023 - ARPA Individual and Family Engagement Transformational Committee

Location: Meeting held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Greg McMahon, Shannon Jacovino, Adrianna Ramirez, Jessica Sundell, Dr. Cheryl Ellis, Kevin Arce, Geri Kogut, Denise Palladino, Maricruz Ortiz, Joanne Malise, Lena Esposito

Absent: Geri Kogut

Guests: Kimberly Butts, Julia Oak (Deloitte), Betsy Bella (Deloitte)

1. Call to Order by Greg McMahon. Public Meeting Requirements were reviewed.
2. Minutes from previous meeting were approved.
3. Deloitte – Betsy Bella & Julia Oak -  
Deloitte did a presentation on the Current State Assessment (presentation & report attached) and an update on feedback from Individual & Family Stakeholder Sessions (information below).

## **Stakeholder Sessions**

### **Residential Session Themes**

- impact of the workforce crisis
- lack of affordable housing
- Supported Housing gives individuals greater independence while providing support and opportunities for social interaction
- Both individuals & families raised a concern about isolation and the ability to have authentic friendships as top priorities
- People are open to remote supports, but do not know the menu of what's available & have concerns about ensuring there is backup if the technology fails

### **Day Session Themes**

- Lack of transportation options was the biggest concern
- Impact of the workforce crisis
- Some feel Competitive Integrated Employment is not for everyone
- Micro Businesses provide a great way to explore wants and needs
- Individualized Day supports need to be improved

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## **DDS Self Advocate Coordinator (SAC) Session Themes**

- Having a Circle of Support comprised of family, friends to talk to when making decisions is very important
- Support for living more independently, but don't want to be lonely
- SACs are working on updating The Advocates Corner (<https://portal.ct.gov/advocatescorner>) on the DDS website to be a better resource

## **Stakeholder Sessions Comments/Questions/Answers**

- Backup is the biggest hole in the current system. It makes individuals & families very nervous when considering self-direction. It's also an issue when hiring agencies because they don't always provide backup supports. *DDS is currently working with DSS on Employment network, and there is an RFP out to address backup system for both Residential & Day supports.*
- How were people recruited for Stakeholder Sessions? *The opportunity was sent out through social media and through The Arc Connecticut and The CT Community Nonprofit Alliance.*
- How many people attended each session? *7 of the 22 people who signed up attended the Residential session, and 9 of the 32 people who signed up attended the Day session.*
- What was the diversity (racial, ethnic, age, region, gender) of the pool of individuals in the stakeholder sessions? *DDS made sure to maximize the mix of people across regions, but people were not asked to self-report race, ethnicity, age, or gender when signing up. McDowell has included some of those diversity questions on the individual & family survey they did.*
- Deloitte had also planned to so a Spanish speaking stakeholder session. Spanish speaking Case Managers did outreach to people on their caseloads. There were not enough responses to do a session, but individuals & families were given to opportunity to give feedback individually.
- Greg updated the group that a Notice of Opportunity has gone out to providers to develop Supported Housing in existing buildings and developments. The advantage of this is that it is a much quicker route than building a new development which takes years.
- Committee member Comment: There is more than one way to get data. DDS should offer different modalities to get more diversity in responses. Better to use an Appreciative Inquiry process to increase family engagement. DDS should spend time figuring out why people signed up but didn't show up.
- Committee member Comment: Based on this feedback and concerns about isolation, adding the goals of identifying a Circle of Support and ensuring opportunities for socialization should be built into every individual's plan when transitioning to more independent living.

## **Current State Assessment Presentation (See attached)**

### **Current State Assessment Comments/Questions/Answers**

- What is the purpose of this document? *Purpose was to gather information from other states, to get information about what tools and supports DDS could offer providers in the transformation process. The Executive Summary gives a great snapshot of findings.*
- What was the process for choosing states? *Looked at states that function similarly and had similar structures to CT DDS, states where experts on team noted progress and interesting plans, and feedback from the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services.*
- Committee member comment: It would have been better to look at the leaderboard. Disappointed neighboring states weren't part of the process.

- Several members from the committee including families, and DDS staff spoke in strong support of the Purple Ribbon or a scorecard concept. It helps providers to highlight their strengths and gives individuals and families information on what various providers do successfully. It was noted that accrediting bodies have components of a scorecard. Another member suggested that there could be different colored ribbons to highlight different strengths.
  - Regarding scorecards, one member of the committee questioned how a ribbon reward system could be done objectively and noted that the CT system compared to other states is very complex and overregulated. They questioned the values of rewarding the ability to do well in a complex system rather, than change the unnecessary complexities of the system that are an obstacle to person centered supports.
  - Committee member comment: Through this initiative DDS is attempting to create more defined options. This is a good thing, but DDS also must work towards a truly person driven system that can meet individuals where they are at, and support their vision, rather than define their options. *Deloitte noted that one state is doing innovative pilots.*
4. The committee was asked to review the In-Home Supports description and to send the Chairs feedback on what questions individuals and families will want answered in all support descriptions. We will review this at our next meeting.
  5. Next meeting is March 6, 2023 at 10:00am
  6. Meeting adjourned.