



State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Ned Lamont  
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff  
Commissioner

Elisa F. Velardo  
Deputy Commissioner

Minutes of April 20, 2023

ARPA Residential Transformational Committee Meeting

Location: Meeting held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Peter Mason, Heather LaTorra, Kathy Bobenski, Carly Bobenski, Brian Holmes, Mary Pat DeCarlo, Pamela Fields, Lori Coughlin

Guest: Julia Oaks & Betsy Bella (Deloitte)

Absent: Tammy Venenga, Kathy Calo

Introductions Peter Mason, called the meeting to order at 2:08 pm.

Peter reviewed the rules for public meetings

Minutes from April 6 , 2023 - Brian Holmes made a motion and Heather LaTorra 2<sup>nd</sup> to accept the minutes and the motion carried

Update by Julia Oaks from Deloitte Consulting LLC

- Betsy discussed how all the transformational pieces are in motion and Transition Plans are being submitted.... received 15 plans.... regions are approving.... providers can move forward as they wait for approval
- All providers should have received an email of STEP Plan Phase 2. Budget sheet has more info; there will also be additional info coming in the next couple weeks
- They are working on documents to encourage innovation, thinking and collaboration.
- Developing FAQ's for DDS staff and DDS case managers
- Tech assistance will continue
- There will be provider trainings available in the next couple weeks
  - Strategic Transformation Planning
  - How to use funding for long term residential solutions
  - Day program deep dive into service and opportunities.
- May 18<sup>th</sup> there will be an info session on STEP for Providers
  - Overview
  - Similar to the one for DDS staff and Case Managers
- Reviewed the Transforming Communities Document -
  - Heather talked about the confusion with the wording of incentives for emergency wait list placements. Peter will work on getting that reworded to ensure there is no confusion.
  - Pam mentioned that the definition of resources is helpful
  - Mary Pat Likes the Layout.
- There was a discussion on concerns that long term support of challenging people is not guaranteed; Peter reiterated that it is controlled by the economy and legislation- so there are no guarantees, but DDS is

committed to the process. Each provider will decide for their agency and DDS will continue to move forward with the process. Always looking at what is best for the people we support.

- Peter E stated the Transforming Communities Document was set up nice but he also acknowledges the issue with long term stability
- Brian stated that this lack of long-term stability confirms the fears his wife and him have about future services.
- Peter reiterated that the future growth and current demographics of group homes, especially the way they are structured now, are unsustainable as well. A majority of the students coming out of the school system into adult services are not looking for group home placements.
- There was a discussion about the recent legislative decision to only give providers 1% and this was not going to help the issue. Peter stated that there was a lot of money given to increase staffing rates. The providers state there was no funding for overall cost increases even though the state has a huge surplus. Peter mentioned that there is still a lot of work the legislature needs to do with the budget and things can still change with the final amount allocated for providers.
- Mary Pat asked how the Transforming Communities document will get out to Providers. Deloitte responded that it will be a supplement to the information sessions. Mary Pat stated that the more visible for all the better.
- McDowell update done by Peter Mason
  - Newsletter was not received by some families; the issue has been fixed going forward
  - Flyer coming out in the next couple weeks for families by mail
  - Forums are continuing. Looking to include the new videos on success stories and a one-page question and answers.
  - Another Newsletter in early June
  - AT Conference July 22 in Rocky Hill
  - AT Tech Camp for families to try Assistive Technology in July at Camp Harkness

#### DDS Updates:

- DDS hired Patricia Cymbala as the Director of Assistive Technology
- There is also a Housing Director position being filled. It will concentrate on housing issues and supportive housing
- Rewarding work continues to upgrade the website for self-hired staff.
- Employment Network RFP should be up and running by the end of the month
- A larger network will include DSS in July and emergency backup systems

#### FAQ's

- Handed out questions regarding providers and individuals to the committee members. The members are asked to read through and give input to Pam and Peter M. Would like to publish a week from Friday.

#### Other issues

- Meetings going to one time per month...all agreed

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Next meeting date May 25th, 2023. Minutes submitted by Pam Fields.

