



**CONNECTICUT FAMILY SUPPORT COUNCIL**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**November 12, 2015**

**Location:** Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities  
Hartford, CT

**In attendance:** Annika Burney, Laurie Cantwell, Allison Quirion, Sara  
Lourie, Linda Mizzi, Isabelina Rodriguez, Lisa  
Sheppard, Robin Wood

**On Phone:** April Dipollina, Ann Gionet, Mona Tremblay

**Absent:** Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Mark Greenstein, Steven Hernandez,  
Karen Hlavac, Jody Santoro, Renee Toper

**Call to Order:** 10:11 am

**Public Comment:** None

**Announcements**

Isabelina Rodriguez was introduced as the new representative from the State Department of Education and Annika Burney, from the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, will also become a regular attendee representing her agency.

Laurie Cantwell thanked a number of Council members who responded to a recent inquiry requesting assistance for a family. The response was informative and creative; it highlighted that this is one of the ways the Council, with its wealth of knowledge, can be of direct help to families. There was such a positive response it was suggested that this might be something we use as a "recruitment" tool to showcase the strength of the Council and also highlight in the Annual Report.

Sara Lourie handed out the new CTFSC Brochure at the ASRC Autism Resource Fair on Saturday November 7 and there seemed to be a lot of interest in the Council.

Linda Mizzi handed out the new application for Partners in Policy Making and will also be sent out via email asking for members to distribute. Linda is one of the talented faculty for this training.

On November 19, at Milford City Hall, several Republican Legislators are holding a forum around the DDS wait list. There has been a lot of public discussion around this and related concerns.

**Approval of October Minutes** – Linda Mizzi made a motion to accept the minutes as written; this was seconded by Laurie Cantwell and approved by the Council membership with abstentions from Isabelina Rodriguez and Robin Wood.

## **Old Business**

### Membership/Nominations Committee

Officers are still needed (Co-chair and Secretary) and while this is still in process, Robin Wood has volunteered her secretary to assist with minutes which will begin at the December meeting.

Recruitment of new members continues to be a significant priority for the Council.

### Family Networking Committee

The letter, which was reviewed at the last meeting was revised and sent by Lisa Sheppard (via email) to the Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN). CTFSN was chosen as the first group to be invited in part because of their prior relationship with the Council but also because they are a statewide organization which could provide a wide scope of feedback and input. It was decided that the next set of letters should be sent to the family groups that had been part of the DDS family committee which Robin Wood was coordinating last year.

There was discussion about what might encourage family groups to join a Council meeting and also the need for a schedule to assure there is sufficient time for input plus be able to cover other agenda items at a given meeting. The hope is that the Council can obtain input on and learn the following from these discussions:

1. Get a description of what the groups do, their mission, goals and priorities;
2. Identify if there are areas in which they could use assistance from and/or would like to partner with the Council;
3. Obtain details regarding any issues/concerns they have; and
4. Determine if they have any specific legislative goals or agendas that the Council could support or further through the annual reports or other legislative contacts.

It was suggested that the family groups could be given this in advance and if they cannot attend a meeting they might be able to share this information in writing. All of this information would be a great addition to annual reports and could also be included in briefings given to the legislature.

Discussion with Legislators – Lisa Sheppard reported that this is still a goal but remains on hold for the moment.

Appointments to Council – Allison Quirion is working with Mona Tremblay regarding her reappointment. Allison shared her list of legislative contacts prior to the meeting via

email but some of the legislative aides have changed making it more challenging to track down prior contacts that have been helpful in the past.

## **New Business**

### Prioritizing presentations at Council meetings

Over the next six months the following is a priority:

1. Have the discussion in January or February regarding educational issues (see October 8, 2015 minutes); the hope would be to capture the issues at one meeting with a focus on reviewing reading achievement for children with disabilities and discussion about the State Strategic Improvement Plan (SSIP). Isabelina Rodriguez discussed the State Department of Education focus around closing the reading achievement gap and getting more consistency across the state.
2. Ask Melissa Marshall to attend the meeting and discuss the “All Abilities” projects in the state.
3. Continued discussion with DCF – with particular priority on relative caregiver support needs if the families don’t come through DCF.

### Annual Report Committee

This was added to the agenda so the work can begin on developing an annual report. There was a question, given the short legislative session and an understanding that the budget is going to be the primary issue, whether the Council may want to handle this as an update vs. a full report. Ann Gionet, Allison Quirion and Robin Wood will meet and make recommendations to the full Council at the December meeting. There was also discussion but no resolution about the idea of hosting a legislative breakfast.

**Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.

Minutes submitted by Sara Lourie, Secretary