



**CONNECTICUT FAMILY SUPPORT COUNCIL**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**May 12, 2016**

- Location:** Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities  
Hartford, Connecticut
- In attendance:** Annika Burney, Laurie Cantwell, Ann Gionet, Sara Lourie, Allison Quirion, Linda Mizzi, Isabelina Rodriguez, Robin Wood
- On Phone:** Lisa Sheppard, Mona Tremblay
- Absent:** April Dipollina, Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Mark Greenstein, Steven Hernandez, Jody Santoro, Renee Toper
- Guests:** Katie Guilmette –intern at OPA from Goodwin College
- Call to Order:** 10:10 am by Allison Quirion (Lisa Sheppard asked Allison to chair the meeting since Lisa would not be there in person)

**Approval of March minutes** – Isabelina Rodriguez made a motion to accept minutes as written; Linda Mizzi seconded the motion and it was approved by Council members present. Abstentions included Laurie Cantwell, Ann Gionet and Allison Quirion.

**Old Business:**

Follow-up on February 11 Education presentation – the presentation was reported to have been fairly comprehensive and there is no additional follow-up.

Membership/Nominations Committee – Linda Mizzi reported that the Annual Meeting of the Council is scheduled for July and elections are held at that time. Linda is requesting that any Council member interested in a Co-Chair or Secretary role should let her know. She reminded Council members that the Co-Chairs (of which we only have 1 now) are family members and the Secretary role is filled by a state agency representative.

Regarding the brochure, it was agreed that the existing one does not need to be revised; it is still current and good to use as a recruitment tool. The Committee is interested in doing an "email blitz" and a big effort to get information out to community organizations and state agency and focus the month of October on membership.

Family Networking Committee - The Committee has not had a recent meeting but there was some discussion reviewing the purpose of the committee to provide a more formal way to get input from family groups across the state.

It was also confirmed that DDS has not received any emails for the Council at this time.

Follow-up on Scheduling Presentations – Lisa Sheppard is still trying to connect with Vicki Veltry who is the HealthCare Advocate for Connecticut to see if someone can come to discuss their initiative around working with commercial insurers around coverage for children with disabilities.

There have been several different discussions about follow-up from DCF. At this time, there is interest in having discussion about what is happening in Voluntary Services. Sara Lourie will try to identify someone to do this.

There was also interest expressed in having someone from Beacon Health Options, Inc. come to discuss the HUSKY ASD program and possibly someone else from Beacon who can talk about options like respite. Sara Lourie will follow-up on that as well.

Other suggestions for presenters include: Workforce Innovations Opportunities Act which has huge implications for the school system and individuals with disabilities; Linda Mizzi can identify someone for this discussion. There was also a request to get more information about the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (new name for No Child Left Behind).

Allison Quirion raised the question of how the Council can disseminate this great information being obtained through all these presentations. It was suggested that we have a section on the DDS website where power point presentations and other materials could be posted as well as links to other webpages.

### **New Business:**

Presentation: Guests were Sandra Soucie, Director of Innovation and Impact, The Governor's Prevention Partnership and Melissa Marshal, Disability Policy Consultant. Sandra and Melissa presented on improving school climate for students with disabilities. They discussed their current efforts to develop a public/private partnership to work with organizations, communities and schools providing tools to support youth at risk with a specific focus on bullying prevention for children with disabilities.

They described in some detail the work they are doing in particular schools. One element is a train the trainer series focused on disability bias awareness and how to address bullying in a PPT – this has been offered to over 40 schools thus far. At Woodstock Academy (high school level) they piloted an "All Abilities Alliance" to increase awareness of disability issues and improve school climate by bringing together students with and without disabilities. This has resulted in the development of a mission statement, fundraising events, the addition of disability history and issues into the school curriculum and lesson plans. This has proved a great leadership opportunity for many students and the hope is to bring this pilot into other schools. Melissa and Sandra are also willing to do presentations to various groups including for parent. They have an interest in working with younger children as well as high school age. During the discussion, Laurie Cantwell gave an example of a situation that arose at her child's

school which exemplified the degree to which more education around disabilities is needed.

### **Announcements**

Linda Mizzi talked about the OPA privatization plan which is still in process but the date will be moved back and an RFI will be issued in October. Legislation was passed to abolish the state agency and develop a non-profit as of July 1, 2017. Some pieces will continue to be run by the state and most likely move to the Department of Rehabilitation Services to cover work that remains under state statute (specifically the Abuse and Neglect Division).

Ann Gionet reported that Council on Developmental Disabilities is hosting a reunion for Partners in Policy Making in October; this will be a good place to recruit new members for the Council.

Ann also announced being reappointed for second year as one of 55 nationwide Learn the Sign Act Early Ambassador.

Allison announced that dyslexia legislation around remedial reading was passed this year. The focus is on providing evidence based curriculum and structured standards to assure teachers are better prepared to teach children with dyslexia.

Robin Wood provided an update on the DDS budget situation and layoffs which continue to concern Council Members.

Robin also announced the next presentation around the results of and work done by the Community of Practice and invited family members from the Council if they are interested in attending.

**Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am

Minutes submitted by Sara Lourie, Secretary