



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Council on Developmental Services

Morna A. Murray, J.D.
Commissioner

Jordan A. Scheff
Deputy Commissioner

Minutes of Thursday, October 20, 2016

Location: Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Central Office, Conference Room A

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin, Chair; Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Vice Chair (via telephone); Karen Hlavac; Rick Lenz; Diana Mennone; Patti Silva; Deborah Ullman; Kevin Zingler

Absent: Jennifer Carroll; Jamie Lazaroff; Morna A. Murray, J. D., Ex-Officio; Arlene Reith; Dr. Neil Stein

Staff: Margaret Castonguay, Executive Secretary; Christine Pollio Cooney Legislative Liaison; Jordan Scheff, Acting Commissioner

Introductions

Chair, Adrienne Benjamin, called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m.

Public Participation

Jack Frost, Denise King, Rick Rothstein

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the September meeting were approved with edits.

Topics for Discussion

Christine Pollio Cooney, Legislative Liaison, gave the Council a legislative update. Ms. Pollio told the Council DDS is currently drafting legislative proposals for the 2017 session. Ideas include cleaning up the statutes to reflect respectful, person-first language when referring to individuals with disabilities. This includes reviewing some other state agencies' statutes. Related to the Council on Developmental Services, DDS is proposing changing the appointment for a person with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to a relative of a person with intellectual disability as the ASD Division transferred to the Department of Social Services (DSS) as of July 2016. Ms. Pollio discussed an issue that is being discussed with the Department of Labor (DOL) concerning providers who are required to pay workers compensation for individuals who have been fired and placed on the registry due to a substantiation of abuse or neglect. Ms. Pollio gave an overview of some additional issues that may come up during the session including the work of the Medical Assistance Program Oversight Council's (MAPOC) Complex Care Developmental Disabilities workgroup which recently met and brought up the Attorney General's opinion to Commissioner Murray re: the responsibility of local school districts to provide and pay for residential services if related to educational need. There is much ongoing discussion regarding who is responsible to fund residential placements for children. Based on a Council question about guardianship processes, Ms. Pollio said she would review the Probate Court's user guide for persons with intellectual disability and see if there is any room to improve language and make it more respectful and person-first if applicable. Ms. Pollio told the Council the DDS Strategic plan is still in draft form and would be shared with Council members prior to the public hearings which are tentatively scheduled for December.

Deputy Commissioner Jordan Scheff gave the Council an update on Lower Fairfield Center (LFC). There have been ongoing conversations with the Commissioner regarding staffing concerns which they have been working on for several months using durational positions. Plans to layoff are still going forward even though we are in the midst of staff shortages, getting durational help and keeping staff on to continue for at least six months will help with staff shortages and over time. Currently, DDS is under advisement from the Attorney General's office concerning union labor litigation. No comment at this time because we are in legal proceedings which are part of an open litigation. The Deputy Commissioner commented on the budget savings with the closures. The Community Residential account had money in it based on what the target dates would be. The Office of Policy & Management (OPM) manages the account. Given the moving targets on transition dates, DDS will have to reconcile several accounts later this year.

The Commissioner and Fritz Gorst, West Region Director, met with the families of LFC and Ella Grasso Center (EGC) listening to the families concerns and reassuring them of their options. The result was a relatively very smooth closure of the center.

The Deputy commented on DDS being part of a National Public Radio (NPR) interview broadcast where DDS held firm the position that private agencies can provide the same level of care as public does.

Deputy Commissioner Scheff gave the Council an update on the closures and conversions. Though there were target dates we have moved carefully and extended where need be to allow for thoughtful and safe transitions. Though EGC is officially closed as an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF), the administrative buildings are still being used. No residential units are left. Meriden has a small handful of people. The transitional unit is used for people who come out of prison. Also, EGC has a dental clinic. We are not decreasing dental services. Izabella Pulvermacher is DDS' dental coordinator who would be glad to come and present to the Council.

We are transitioning publicly operated programs to private providers. Our staff are making sure transitions go smoothly. There will be notices of opportunities for day programs.

The Deputy Commissioner highlighted a few of his meetings during the month. He met with the Self Advocate Coordinators (SACS) for their year-end report and accomplishments. He greatly enjoyed their refreshing perspective and appreciated their hard work in all of their initiatives in supporting the department. October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The Governor was joined by Jon Slifka, the Governor's Liaison to the Disability Community, at a ceremony at the Walgreens Distribution Center in Windsor highlighting employment ideas. Steve Morris, Executive Director at the The Arc Favarh has a wonderful program called Project SEARCH which partners with UCONN Health for young adults with disabilities. It is a national model that is offered in local communities around the country. The Intellectual Disabilities Partnership, which was formed by the legislature, meets weekly working maximizing federal revenue to fund services for persons with intellectual disability. Beau Doherty and his staff member, Debbie Horne, of the Special Olympics met with the Deputy and the Commissioner presenting DDS office wall space with pictures of athletes in action.

Chair of the Council, Adrienne Benjamin, spoke to the Council on the first meeting of the Advocacy Subcommittee Group. Adrienne, Kevin Zingler, Arlene Reith and Diana Mennone, representatives of the Council on Developmental Services met with different representative of Advocacy Groups and came up with agenda items for the committee's focus. Main themes were a unified voice in sharing common ground. The committee will meet again in November and report to the Council bringing the groups together to center around legislation to bring to the legislature.

The Council formed a Nominating Committee presided by Rick Lenz, with Jennifer Carroll and Lisa Weisinger-Roland as co-members.

New Business:

- The Council to invite Kendres Lally, Director of Investigations to present on the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report
- The Council to invite The Self Advocate Coordinators (SACS)
- The Council to invite the Regional Advisory Council's (RACS)
Council members spoke about forming a subcommittee on dental care for people with intellectual disabilities and possibly inviting Izabella Pulvermacher, DDS' dental coordinator, to present to the Council.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.