



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services
State of Connecticut

Developmental Services Council
March 15, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Location: Meeting Held Virtually via Microsoft Teams

In attendance: Adrienne Benjamin, Fredrick Lenz Jr., Pamela DonAroma, Michael Beloff, Patti Silva, Kelly Dorsey, Christine Hainsworth-Straus, Lisa Weisinger-Roland, Adrianna Ramirez, Nicole Milo, Damion Williams

Members of the Public: None

Absent: Diana Mennone, Kevin Zingler, Brian Dillon

DDS Staff:

Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner

Kevin Bronson, DDS Director of Communications, Legislation, and Regulations

Wesaneit Tsegai, Executive Secretary

Introductions

Chairperson Silva called the meeting to order at 5:03 PM and noted that the threshold for a quorum was met.

Opportunity for Public Participation

Chairperson Silva next asked if there were any members of the public who were interested in addressing the Council under the “Public Participation” section of the agenda. Members of the public are allotted three minutes to do so.

There were no members of the public who spoke.

Dialogue

Chairperson Silva moved on to the approval of past minutes. Members voted to approve outstanding minutes:

- December
 - Motion to approve was made by Councilmember Adrienne Benjamin, seconded by Councilmember Kelley Dorsey. Passed unanimously.
- January
 - Motion to approve was made by Councilmember Kelley Dorsey, seconded by Councilmember Fredrick Lenz. Passed unanimously.
- February

- Motion to approve was made by Councilmember Adrienne Benjamin, seconded by Councilmember Michael Beloff. Passed unanimously.

Chairperson Silva next addressed the Ombudsperson report. She informed the council that Ombudsperson Shannon Jacovino was unable to send report in advance of the meeting, but would sent out as soon as possible and asked that any feedback be shared with her. The council voted to table the report until the next meeting, with the motion being made by Councilmember Fredrick Lenz and seconded by Councilmember Pam DonAroma. It passed unanimously.

Chairperson Silva next moved on to the Commissioner's Report.

- ❖ Commissioner Scheff began his report with remarks on the legislative breakfast, sharing that it was a great way to honor retired Former Deputy Commissioner and ARPA Project member Peter Mason.
- ❖ Fiscal Intermediary Transition- the Commissioner shared that after much concern expressed over the years the transition to GTI (the new FI) is nearing completion. Although it has been bumpy, DDS continues to work with OPM to improve.
 - Councilmember Christine Hainsworth-Straus shared that there has been lots of miscommunication regarding the FI transition and payment. If someone isn't paid, will there be an additional email sent to employees letting them know who to contact?
 - Number is available (Can this be included in minutes?)
 - Councilmember Hainsworth-Strauss also requested that the state make sure that the vendor has a fax, since the Social Security requests that all documents be sent by fax
 - Commissioner Scheff also shared that the delay in response has been due to the enormous volume of cases. They did not receive in the fashion they expected all of the information from the outgoing FI and that has meant a lot more manual phone calls and responses than they had anticipated.
- ❖ Additional Comments
 - [SB 432](#)- Council Member Adrienne Benjamin brought a bill currently being discussed, which would ask OPM to perform a thorough review of how all nonprofit organizations are funded by the state of Connecticut. She strongly suggested the council discuss the topic and make a statement. Commissioner Scheff shared that their objection is the way in which the language is written, as it would require DDS to make payments within 30 days of the service, and there are several issues with that. He elaborated that DDS would have to completely overhaul or move to direct Medicaid billing, which would become a problem during situations of public health emergencies, such as the 2020 pandemic.
 - Chairwoman Silva asked if DDS still employed educational consultants, the commissioner explained that DDS now has a single job title called Transition Advisor and that educational liaisons and educational consultants have been folded under this job title

This concluded the Commissioner's Report.

Chairperson Silva moved on to the next item, which was the Legislative Breakfast. She thanked all members of the council for their work and shared that it was a rewarding experience. She suggested that a subcommittee be formed to run this event in future years. asked if the council had any feedback or suggestions.

- ❖ Councilmember Benjamin shared that it was encouraging that so many legislators still stayed to speak with the families and attendees. She suggested that the council try to get a meeting with the governor. DDS Communications Director Kevin Bronson shared that while it was possible, it would be considered a public hearing which would make the process of requesting a meeting different.
- ❖ It was agreed that the council would revisit the topic in November, where they could form a subcommittee that would begin working in January 2025 in time for the Legislative Session

Chairperson Silva closed the discussion on this topic, moving on to discuss the Abuse and Neglect Family Guide. She shared that she had discussed it with Ombudsperson Jacovino, and the only thing that the council still requested being included was timelines for investigations. The Commissioner said he would speak with DDS staff to learn more.

- ❖ Councilmembers shared some concerns with the language regarding allegations and suggested that the language be modified to help clarify the procedure. The Commissioner reminded the Council that the document created was meant to be a family guide rather than a policy document. And that it was created intentionally to divide things into what DDS could tackle and include now and the things that would need either policy or procedural changes, which may include contract revisions.
- ❖ The discussion moved to the procedures within the guide like general incident reports, and how this could potentially be shared with families in way that would still maintain privacy.

Chairperson Silva moved on to future meeting topics, reminding members that there would be an ARPA Update during the April Meeting. Commissioner Scheff shared that Gunnar has left for deployment, and hoped that this would not pose a conflict. Chairwoman Silva shared that she would not be present, and it was decided the council would decide the topics for the May meeting be discussed in April. Communications Director Kevin Bronson shared that a brief Legislative update would be possible, but it is very likely that the Governor would not have signed all documents at this time.

- ❖ Topics for Future Meetings
 - Presentations
 - April- Arpa Update, Gunnar Abrahamsson
 - Resorce Management- June
 - Education/ Transitions Advisors Role Description
 - CMS Medicaid Waiver-Info Session
 - Transition Advisor Teams

This concluded the discussion items, Chairperson Silva asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion was made by Councilmember Michael Beloff and seconded by Councilmember Nicole Milo. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 6:47 pm

Minutes Recorded by:
Wesaneit Tsegai
Executive Secretary
DDS Central Office

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.