

DRAFT

DDS North Region Advisory & Planning Council

September 21, 2011

Meeting Minutes

Present: Kathleen Perrier, Nancy Bilyak, Sara Glad, Deb Godsell, Steve Robson, Claudia Neumann

Guests: Jacqueline and Nate Kitchen

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. A brief recess was taken to enjoy food that was provided by the Council for the first meeting back after the summer break.

OLD BUSINESS:

- Draft minutes from meeting of May 18, 2011 were reviewed. Deb Godsell motioned to accept minutes as written and Sara Glad seconded. Minutes were approved as written.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Regional Director's Updates
 - Steve Robson was introduced as the Interim Regional Director who has been filling in after the retirement of John Houchin in June. Mr. Robson will be here until October 13, 2011. He explained that after Dr. Houchin left, the Regional Director position was abolished along with all other vacant positions. The Department is currently working to get approval to be able to refill the position as well as the Regional Director position in the South Region. The South Region position became vacant when Mary McKay, who was the SR Regional Director, was asked to become the Interim Deputy Commissioner when Kathryn duPree retired. Mary McKay is also planning to retire on October 1st so the Deputy Commissioner position will be vacant as well. These positions will be requested to be refilled, however, since the Regional Director position will most likely not be filled prior to October 13th, the North Region will be covered on a rotating basis by the members of the Executive Management Team.
 - Budget
 - Mr. Robson explained that \$135 million was pulled back from all State agencies. This means DDS needs to come up with \$9.2 million which is approximately 6%. In this region we have 72 vacant direct care positions which is causing us to incur overtime. Some of the cost savings will be accomplished with the further closure of some residential programs so that staff can then be redeployed to help reduce the overtime costs.
 - Positions identified to be requested to be priorities to be refilled are case manager positions and the Regional Director position. Currently we have 12 vacant case manager positions due to retirements and one promotion.
 - Grads will be getting money now (will not have to wait until December) for this year and grads will be funded for FY13.

- All agencies were asked to develop a Budget Option Plan which would include:
 1. Expansion (very limited)
 2. Reallocation, but must be cost-neutral
 3. Reduction Option (5%)
 4. Revenue Options

More information regarding this will be available on the DDS website.

- Mr. Robson was asked if the new commissioner has made any changes yet within the Department. Steve explained that Commissioner Macy started at a very chaotic time with all of the budget issues, layoffs, union concession, etc. so no changes have been made yet. However, he has been holding listening tours to get input about how people see the Department and what improvements could be made. He has held three meetings, one with families, one with private providers, and one with DDS staff. This information will also be used as input for the 5-year plan.
- Early Connections/B-3 was discussed. For the past 5 years DDS has been considering phasing out public services in this area and moving people to the private sector for services. Mr. Robson explained that when the layoffs were to occur, one of the focuses became the Early Connections staff since the program was to be phased out eventually anyway. Now that the layoffs were rescinded, the plan is to continue to downsize the program and move people to other vendors and use the Early Connections staff in other capacities. The thinking is that this process will occur over the next three years until services are solely provided by qualified vendors. The State would have oversight over the vendors who would have to meet certain criteria as our other private providers do currently.
- The Department is scheduled to close 5 homes this year statewide which were in the budget. The North Region will be closing 2 homes. Most families of the individuals in these homes have opted to use portability and have moved to the private sector.
- The Putnam Respite Center will be moving to 1340 Stafford Rd. in Storrs. It will be opening on Thursday, October 6, 2011. Deb Godsell shared her concern that there is no fence at the new house and that Dr. Houchin had said he would ensure that there would be a fence. Mr. Robson will look into the status of the fence.
- Christine Pollio is looking for input and any suggestions for possible new legislation. She can be contacted directly.
- 5-year Plan – No one from the North Region was able to attend the statewide meeting on 9/8 that was held regarding the 5-year plan, however, there is still time to provide input until mid-October. The Council will also be doing a webcast and the information regarding this will be on the DDS website, as well as dates for two hearings that are being held at the Legislative Office Building. The minutes from the 9/8 meeting of the statewide Council can also be found on the website.

- Other
 - The calendar of Council meetings for 2012 will be developed by Claudia Neumann and discussed at the next meeting. Meetings will continue to be the third Wednesday of each month and automatically moved to the fourth Wednesday should there be inclement weather.

- Public Participation
 - The guests who were present at this evening's meeting, Jacqueline and Nate Kitchen, attended the meeting hoping to get information about services. Their family has not been receiving services from the Department. The process for eligibility was explained and it was strongly encouraged that they apply for services. Mr. Robson will insure that someone from the DDS staff will be in contact with them to assist with the eligibility and LEA process.

The next NR Advisory & Planning Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 19, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.

On motion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m. by Kathleen Perrier.

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia Neumann

Claudia Neumann
Administrative Assistant