

**DDS North Region**  
**Regional Advisory Council**

March 6, 2019  
Meeting Minutes

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Members Present: Rick Rothstein (Chair); Kathleen Tetreault (Vice Chair); Donna Clauson; Joe Duffy; Collette Langner; Ron Langner; Lori Sandora; Andrew Selinger; Elisa Velardo, DDS North Regional Director

Guest: Amy Blazawski, DDS

Meeting was called to order at 5:15 pm.

Meeting began with introductions. Amy Blazawski is in attendance this evening to present information regarding Assistive Technology.

- Presentation – Assistive Technology (Amy Blazawski, DDS)
  - Amy is the Director of Self-Determination here in the North Region, who was also previously working on Employment. Now that a new person has been hired to oversee Employment statewide (Amber Burke), Amy will now be overseeing the Assistive Technology (AT) initiative for the Department. Amy shared that she has held four forums to elicit feedback from any stakeholders that may be interested in using assistive technology. She has been working on developing a mission statement incorporating what is wanted to be accomplished through the AT initiative. A PowerPoint presentation is being developed using the feedback taken from all of the forums that were held. Amy would like to include feedback from the RAC and will share the presentation by email for review and additional comments. Amy stated that we would like to see AT become one of the main parts of the planning process along with employment, and also to see Connecticut become an “AT first” state. The next step in the process will be to do some demonstrations of some of the items that are available and how they may be used.

Currently, Remote Monitoring and Electronic Face to Face are being looked at since these are waived services. No one will be forced to use AT, but we want to make sure that people are aware that technology is available.

Electronic Face to Face did not used to be allowed by a provider as a billable service, however, now it has been included. It is being used in some cases to help have contact on a more immediate basis with people who do not wish to have staff in their apartment.

A question was asked if there was anywhere available to see the AT options that are available. Amy shared that there is a website (<http://www.gari.info/>) that has a lot of information (a handout was also provided).

If anyone has any further questions or would like more specific information, please feel free to contact Amy Blazawski directly.

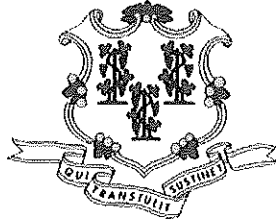
- Legislative Update -
  - There was discussion regarding the Governor's budget and the feeling is that it is very different than in the past. It is very favorable for DDS. It is basically funding what we have with the addition of 70 IDASH units and the CCH development.
  - Elisa shared that there will be some movement between two Public homes. After that occurs, a fourth respite center will be opening in Putnam. There will also be a new 7-day respite program.
  - It has been a record year for Bills that have been submitted. Over 5,000 were submitted this year. That number has been significantly reduced, however, since most have not gotten out of committee yet which means they are dead.
  - A few specific bills were discussed:
    - Bill 6739: called for minimum wage for all disabled individuals. It would affect individuals that participate in Supported Employment. There has been some public testimony, however, most was provided in writing. More were against the bill than for it; trying to explain that while it would help some, it could hurt others. There has been a good reception from both Democratic and Republican leadership.
    - HB 6365: Committee bill in Public Health. Purpose is to make the registry open so that families would be able to access the information when they are trying to self-hire someone. It is currently not available to families. Right now it is only available to DDS and FI's.
    - SB 372: Would open the Adult Family Living Services program to persons with intellectual disability. This would allow the parent or guardian to be paid to provide care in their own home. There will be testimony on the bill tomorrow morning.
  - The Council on Developmental Services will be holding its first annual Legislative Breakfast on March 13<sup>th</sup> from 8:30-10:00am at the LOB (flyer is attached).
- Regional Director's Update --
  - Elisa Velardo stated that there are initiatives now happening that have not been able to happen in the past which is very exciting. It is a very busy time.
    - The Step Down Unit is up and running and fully staffed. The capacity is for up to six individuals. If someone is in the ER or ready to be discharged but needs a little more stabilization, the case manager would submit a referral to the Regional Director and then it would be submitted for review. The first packets are currently being reviewed, however, no one has been admitted yet. The length of stay would typically be for 90 days, which could be extended, but no longer than 180 days. There are a whole range of therapists available and a team process. There are five bedrooms, and one shared bedroom. When a person is admitted, there will be very clear expectations from the beginning. There would be a period of time that there would be no contact with outside family, etc. The team will however always be involved with the family. All referrals will be reviewed within five working days.

- Enhanced Family Support (Elisa clarified that this is NOT family crisis support): DDS has hired several (the NR has 7) new Family Support Workers who work with families in their home. In a crisis situation, the family should call 911. If the emergency does not warrant calling 911, they should contact 211 and they will be referred to the DMHAS Mobile Crisis Unit. The department has been sharing information with DCF, DMHAS, etc. that this service is available so when the clinician from the crisis unit goes out to evaluate the situation and a person eligible for DDS is involved, they know that we have this service. DDS is tracking this support since it was legislative funds that were given for this purpose. All three regions will be working together. The services will be expanded to nights and weekends. There will be one Behavioral Health Clinical Manager hired for each region where the calls will be directed. When one region is not available, the calls will be automatically forwarded to another region.
- Employment – Amber Burke, who oversees the Employment division at Central Office, is beginning to develop an Employment Team. There will be one Employment person in each region under Amber’s supervision. Elisa will invite Amber to attend the RAC meeting in April.
- CCH continues to grow. Kimberly Smith, CCH Program Manager, will be retiring April 1<sup>st</sup>. We are fortunate to have an Assistant Manager and a great CCH team, and we will be refilling Kim’s position. We are working on development and have been encouraging families that are considering the CCH model to use a CCH for respite to become more familiar with the program.
- Blended services – typically people have separate day funding and residential funding and there are very specific guidelines for what is considered “day” and what is “residential”. One type of funding could not be used for the other type of service and if they overlapped, it was difficult to keep the two completely separate. There is now a pilot program that has looked at a small group (about 30 statewide) of people who have their own budget and have needs that are more fluid so it was difficult to separate “day” vs. “residential”. They are looking at being able to allow more flexibility with funding and having funds that can be used for both.
- Election of Officers – As noted in the Advisory Council Bylaws, the election of officers is supposed to occur in September. Our schedule became altered when we did not have enough members for a full Council. Once membership increased, the election of officers occurred. It was agreed that our current officers will continue until September 2019 so that we can get back to the September election and be consistent with the bylaws.
- The next meeting will be held on April 17, 2019.
- Motion for adjournment was made and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

*Claudia Neumann*  
Executive Secretary

**State of Connecticut  
Council On Developmental Services**



**1st Annual Legislative Breakfast  
& Awards Ceremony**

**Wednesday, March 13, 2019**

8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. (Awards at 9:30 a.m.)

Legislative Office Building, 300 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT  
2nd Floor Atrium

Please join us to learn more about the council and the services provided to individuals with intellectual & developmental disabilities through the State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

**Legislative Champion for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

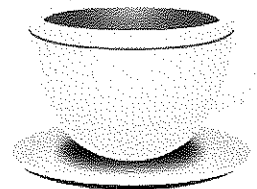
- Senator Len Fasano
- Senator Cathy Osten
- Rep. Catherine F. Abercrombie
- Rep. Kathleen McCarty

**Business Champion for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

- Highland Park Market

**Council on Developmental Services Awards for Self-Advocacy**

- Genna Lewis
- Varian Salters



*The Council on Developmental Services was established to advise and consult on issues affecting the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and its programs and services for Connecticut residents with intellectual disabilities and their families. In consultation with the Commissioner of Developmental Services, the Council recommends to the Governor and the Connecticut General Assembly legislation that would enhance and improve the quality of the programs and services provided by the department.*