

DDS North Region
Regional Advisory Council

January 15, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Kathleen Tetreault (Vice Chair); Collette Bement Langner; Ron Langner; Mary Lou O'Connor; Lori Sandora; Annette Scully; Tammy Selinger; Elisa Velardo, DDS North Regional Director (Ex-officio member)

Guests: Pat Stavola; William Scully; Amy Blazawski (DDS); Patricia Cymbala (DDS)

Meeting was called to order at 5:05pm and began with introductions.

- Legislative Update – Kathleen Tetreault shared that she has been asked to be part of a task force that is being established to explore Supported Decision Making here in Connecticut. This would be an alternative to guardianship so that individuals can ask for a group of support to assist with making decisions regarding health, financial, etc. The bill did not pass and will not pass this session either because the goal is to gather more information about Supported Decision Making and have all of the stakeholders explore how it will be implemented in Connecticut.

Some concerns were raised and discussed regarding those individuals that need to have guardianship, and the fear that they would not be considered. There is a concern that some individuals may not be able to make decisions that are in their best interest which is why there is the need for a guardian to be appointed.

This is still early in the process and more will follow as more information is gathered.

- The ARC Family Hearing Day is scheduled to be held on February 19th from 10:00-12:30. The Legislative Breakfast sponsored by the Council on Development Services will also be held February 19th from 8:00am-10:00am.
- Elisa Velardo shared an update from Krista Ostaszewski. The legislative session is very short this year (2/5-5/6). DDS proposals:
 - 1) Technical fix – Due to the centralization of HR across state agencies, staff that are now part of DDS will be part of DAS and will need to access registry information; needs to be addressed.
 - 2) Governor's green initiatives – DDS will recommend that new settings be energy efficient. We do now have energy audits but more attention will be paid to this. This will include DDS settings as well as provider settings.
 - 3) If an individual does not have a guardian or the guardian is not available and the person needs emergency surgery, the DDS Regional Director or Commissioner's designee can authorize; looking at expanding this from only surgery to emergency treatment.
 - 4) Camp Harkness advisory members – update terminology.
- Regional Director Updates:
 - National Core Indicator (NCI) – This is a huge initiative but very valuable. It is a random sample where individuals are surveyed regarding satisfaction. Approximately 1200 calls will be made over the next week or two to ask for participants. It includes individuals in all settings. The random sample has been drawn and visits will occur. After the visits, the information is entered into a database by the national organization. Information from all states are combined and all information is provided on the NCI website. Connecticut has been very strong around health and safety, and fairly strong around employment, but not as high around choice.

- Emergency Transitional Unit – opened on January 7th. It is one of three statewide, one in each Region. In the NR it is run by RMS, called Branches, and is located in Meriden. The first person is being supported. It is for people who need emergency support for a short period of time; different from the step-down unit in that there is typically more clinical involvement needed there. The stay would typically be for a 90-day time period. The Meriden location is the only one that is fully accessible. The SR location should open sometime in the Spring. The WR had to re-issue the RFP and could possibly be open within the summer.
- Enhanced Family Support – More Family Support Workers have been hired. Previously there had been only 7 Family Support Workers, we now have 18 in the NR. The IFS workers can be accessed through the case managers or through the Case Management Helpline for those that are not assigned a specific case manager.
- ID Partnership –
Priorities:
 - Assistive Technology
 - Employment Grants – there is interest in perhaps offering the entrepreneur grant again this year
 - Support to providers
 - Integrated supports – have started to get some success stories with the program that was piloted.
 - Training on Charting the Life Course – DDS leadership will also go through the training
- Med Administration Program – Dr. Val Bagby-Young has been working with other agencies to look at how the process can be made more universal across agencies and how it can be more automated. The task force includes members from both private providers and state agencies.
- Assistive Technology Update – Amy Blazawski and Patricia Cymbala attended to share the progress regarding Assistive Technology. The Family Respite Centers are all being outfitted with smart home equipment to be able to offer demonstrations for families, providers, etc. when the centers are not in operation (Tues., Wed., and Thurs.). They will also have a Yeti tablet with access to hundreds of applications. It was described as basically a 65" iPad that can be customized for individuals. A steering committee has been developed and they would like to have parents also be involved. Providers have also been involved and will also be represented on the steering committee. Elisa will schedule one of our future RAC meetings at the Newington Respite Center so the technology can be demonstrated.

The next NR RAC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 19th at 5:00pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:57pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia Neumann
Executive Secretary