

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

September 22, 2021

Meeting Minutes – Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

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Members Present: Kathleen Hayes, Chair; Annette Scully, Vice Chair; Donna Clauson; Donna Cohen; Ellyn Little; Kim Little; Lori Sandora; Tammy Selinger; Elisa Velardo, DDS North Regional Director

Guests: Norma LoMonaco

Meeting called to order at 5:02pm.

- Approval of Minutes – a motion was made to approve the minutes from the May 19, 2021 meeting as written; motion seconded, minutes were approved.
  
- Legislative Update –
  - There are not many updates as the session has not started yet.
  - It was asked if the status of the distribution from Rod O’Connor with legislative updates could be verified. Kathleen asked if she could be added to the distribution. Elisa will follow up with Kevin Bronson.
  - CT DDS Families First is working on revisions to how reports are shared.
  - Not aware of any new proposals for new legislation.
  - It was agreed that the information shared from Rod will be used for tracking; anything additional will be circulated by email.
  
- Regional Director’s Update – Elisa Velardo
  - Elisa shared that the Commissioner’s presentation on Seeds of Change over the summer is available on the website.
  - Two forums have now been held for the North Region; there will be six altogether (3 daytime, 3 evening) and will include staff, providers, individuals, and families, to talk about where we are now, where we see ourselves going, and planning for the 5-year plan. A number of leadership team members that have been through the Charting the Life Course training have also been in attendance at the forums. One of the common themes that has been coming up is staffing. We are hearing from providers as well as people that self-direct that it is very challenging right now. The forums will continue statewide through the beginning of October, then all the notes will be combined from all of them. Josh Scalora and Julia Walsh will put all the topics and suggestions together to be included in the 5-year plan.
  - Two agencies have strike notices for 10/5/21 (Whole Life and Network); hoping they will be able to settle but planning for monitoring if needed.
  - Notice of Opportunity (NOO) will be going out on Remote Supports. One agency will be selected to begin the pilot. Two to ten people will be selected who are already using IHS services who may be able to benefit from remote supports when staff is not there. The pilot program will be used to identify what kind of systems and policies will need to be put in place. Remote supports would be the use of technology as an addition to in-person support when the in-person support is not available. There has to be a live person that can be accessed along with other supports. It could make dollars available to more people and it could also help with staffing issues as well. Meetings have been held with other states that have been using remote supports, and we have been invited to participate in an 18-state consortium which has been very helpful.
  
  - IDASH Update –
    - Canton is going very well; the Governor will be visiting tomorrow.
    - Bloomfield should be opening soon, possibly November or December

- Visited the HARC program on Asylum & Huntington which are four separate retro-fitted historical buildings which differs from the other programs as they are individual apartment complexes; HARC should open sometime near the beginning of the year.
- Now working with CRI who is working with a developer in West Hartford. This will not be an IDASH (which was a specific RFP with the Dept. of Housing), but it will be very similar. It will be located off of Trout Brook Drive. It is a new building that is under construction. They are planning for Spring of 2022.
- Respite is continuing at 50% capacity, which is usually 3 or sometimes 4, if there is a 4<sup>th</sup> bedroom; bedrooms are not being shared unless by siblings. Everything continues to go well, there have been no issues. People that use Family Grants are encouraged to submit requests. The South Region will be opening a 24-hour respite center in Meriden which will initially be open to people in the South Region. Regular respite hours are Thursday through Monday.
- There is no word regarding booster shots yet.
- State employees must be vaccinated and enter their vaccine data into an app by 9/27 in order to be in compliance, or agree to be tested weekly.
- Other topics:
  - Kim Little shared that the Commission on Disability will be having a booth at the Celebrate Tolland event this weekend.
  - There was discussion about some complaints that have arisen from some parents on Facebook regarding Allied. Donna Clauson shared the issues and feels that something needs to be done since these seem to be ongoing issues with the agency. Some issues that people are having are not being able to get answers, getting no response, and employees not being paid. When calling the agency, wait times have been 45 minutes to an hour. Many issues have also been caused when the system changed to digital timesheets. Elisa stated that she will share with Central Office and the other regions to see if they are having similar issues that need to be addressed and will also follow up with the Deputy Commissioner.
  - Kathleen asked members to email her if there are any topics of interest for future meetings. She also offered to share her presentation on Supported Decision Making.
  - There was some discussion regarding no longer having the option of sheltered workshops. Elisa will invite Amber Burke to join the next meeting.

A motion for adjournment was made and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 6:17 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 20, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

*Claudia Neumann*

Executive Secretary