

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

January 18, 2023

Meeting Minutes – Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams (meeting was recorded)

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Members Present: Richard Rothstein, Temporary Chair; Donna Cohen; Kim Little; Elyn Little; Lori Caughlin; Tammy Selinger; Stacie Silva-Gordon, DDS North Regional Director (ex-Officio member)

Guests: Cynthia Lichtsteiner; Susan Prihar; Adrianna Ramirez; Melissa Mills

Meeting called to order at 5:06pm.

Mr. Rothstein began the meeting with introductions.

- Open Forum for Public Participation – no comments
- Legislative Update:
  - Legislature went into session last week and it has gotten busy.
  - Session begins in January and ends in June for this year.
  - This is when new bills are introduced; any legislator can put forth a bill which is called a concept bill.
  - Mr. Rothstein shared a few bills identified so far in the Public Health Committee and in the Human Services Committee. The committees will begin to have their regular meetings and will decide which bills will start moving forward.
  - SB82 – proposal to eliminate the income and asset limits for the health insurance for working persons with disabilities so that people could pay a small percentage of income so that they are eligible for Medicaid services.
  - SB 169 – first bill that is starting to move; concept is to implement a strategic plan to reduce the wait time for services; committee decided that they would draft a more comprehensive bill around the concept
  - HB 5926 – the autism community would like to see DDS services expanded to cover people with autism who don't have an IQ under 70
  - SB 208 – to expand daily access to low cost or free transportation throughout the state for people with disabilities to help them work and have a better life
  - HB 5001 – probably most significant – to provide support and services for people with intellectual disability by ameliorating the wait list for Medicaid waiver programs and implementing programs to maximize federal support; looking to deal with the waiting list for people with disabilities
  - HB 5443 – to eliminate the “excess” funds that providers are left with at the end of the year that typically needs to be returned.
  - HB 5445 – an act proposing to eliminate administrative burdens for Health and Human Service providers
  - HB 5446 – indexing state funding for nonprofit services so rates would increase year to year as cost of living goes up
  - Should be able to testify this year with no COVID restrictions
  - Commissioner Scheff to be reappointed as Commissioner
  - New DSS Commissioner is Andrea Barton-Reeves
- Regional Director's Update:
  - Stacie Silva-Gordon shared that the in-person forums for families and individuals have been cancelled due to the rise in COVID numbers. They will be rescheduled as virtual meetings. The virtual meeting for the North Region is scheduled for February 1<sup>st</sup> from 6:00p-8:00p. Registration is required which can be done on the DDS website.

- Deputy Commissioner Elisa Velardo will be continuing to facilitate the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday Forums from 3:00-4:30p. The ones that have been held have been very informative on topics of Assistive Technology, Remote Supports, and Community Companion Homes. All of the past ones can be viewed on the website. Members are encouraged to look into them to hear from individuals receiving services from providers and families discussing how they feel about using these types of services. The next one will be held on January 24<sup>th</sup> on Self-directed Services. February 28<sup>th</sup> will be on residential transformation and the ARPA funding. March 28<sup>th</sup> is about employment transformation and again how ARPA will assist with this. April 25<sup>th</sup> will be on technology for optimal independence, and May 23<sup>rd</sup> is on Individual and Family Supports and Respite Services. Any of the forums can be joined from the website. If anyone has any topics of interest to suggest, they can be sent to Stacie who will share with Elisa.
  - Stacie also shared that the North Region has been very excited to work with providers who are participating with developers to have cluster developments which are in the community and are integrated. Both Bearwoods in Avon and Lavender Fields in Bloomfield are open and have been doing great. There are now four others that are in the works.
    - FAVARH – Farmington
    - CCARC – New Britain
    - Turning Leaf – Asylum Ave., Hartford
    - MARC – South Windsor
  - People can now sign up for email updates on particular topics of interest on the DDS website (e-Updates)
  - ARPA – DDS has been encouraging agencies to submit plans on transforming services and how they can serve more individuals.
  - Notice of Opportunity – a Notice of Opportunity has been issued for individuals living with their families or independently with in-home supports. It is an Assistive Technology Grant which will assist with purchasing technology, having assessments, doing training, etc.; equipment needs to be purchased by 5/1.
- Report from Council on Developmental Services -
    - Rick Rothstein reported that the Chair has returned on the Council; Vice Chair is now one of the past Chairs; Rick is the Secretary
    - One of the primary focuses will be the Abuse & Neglect reporting process
  - Officer Nominations
    - Rick Rothstein had agreed to be temporary Chair until January. Will discuss election next month.
  - Motion to adjourn was made by Lori Caughlin; seconded by Kim Little. Meeting was adjourned at 6:10 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

***Claudia Neumann***

Executive Secretary