

DDS North Region
Regional Advisory Council

February 21, 2024

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

Members Present: Kim Little, Chair; Lori Coughlin; Ellyn Little; Adrianna Ramirez; Rick Rothstein; Annette Scully; Stacie Silva, DDS North Regional Director (ex-Officio member)

Guests: Rachel Keesler; Melissa Mills; Dawn Frey (DDS); Stacy Dawes (DDS)

Meeting called to order at 5:05 pm.

- Regional Director's Update – Stacie Silva
 - Funding Initiatives – The region is doing a funding initiative to provide funding for aging caregivers age 65 and older which will help to reduce the wait list for people that are waiting for residential services. Last year, when we did this, we were able to decrease the wait list by 25%. With these initiatives, we are striving to help families that do not have any services and are hoping that families will use individual home support, supportive housing, Community Companion Homes, and assistive technology services that are available. Case managers are working with families now.
 - Family Grants are available for camp, so families can work with their case manager, or the helpline case managers can assist with filling out those applications to receive funding.
 - Fourth Tuesday forums continue to be held and are very informative. It is a good way to learn about the services that DDS is providing. February 27th is the next one scheduled which will be on Self Determination at home, work and in the community. There is a link available on the DDS website. The March forum will be on 3/26 which will be on residential transformation success stories.
 - Rebranding of the Department under the State of CT – People may have noticed that our website has a different look and the name now says “Connecticut Developmental Services”. The website has been updated and is, hopefully, more user friendly. Revisions are still underway, so if anyone notices any changes that are needed, please let us know.
 - The Commissioner shared information regarding “Nurturing the Nurturer” which is a guide to parental self-care. This will be a webinar with keynote speakers and panelists focusing on personal development for parents and caregivers by sharpening their self-care toolbox. WE will be sharing the flyer that can be shared with any families that may benefit.

- Introduction of North Region Executive Management Team (EMT) Members
 - Stacie introduced Dawn Frey, Assistant Regional Director, who oversees the Private Division in the North Region. Dawn has been with DDS for about a year. Prior to coming to DDS, she was the Executive Director for a private provide agency that supported individuals in all regions of the state in both residential and day. Currently she is working collaboratively with the private providers to ensure that individuals are being supported in person-centered environments and plans.

 - Stacy Dawes was introduced. Stacy is the Health Services Director for the North Region and she basically works with private providers regarding health standards and ensuring that nursing meets standards of care. Stacy also oversees the DNR review process for the Region. It was suggested that Stacy could return at a later date to present further information regarding the DNR process.

 - Two other members of the NR EMT were unable to attend this evening. Karen Sticklin, IFS Assistant Regional Director, and Sheila Schwedler, Quality Assurance Director, will attend a future meeting.

- Legislative Update – Rick Rothstein shared that next week is a busy week.
 - Monday at 10:00am, Commissioner Scheff will be presenting the DDS budget adjustments to the Appropriations Committee at the Legislative Office Building, Rm. 2C.
 - 2:00pm a Public Hearing will be held. People can testify either virtually on zoom or in person, but registration is required ahead of time.
 - Family Hearing Day of the IDD Caucus, co-sponsored by the ARC, will be held on Thursday from 10:00-12:30.
- Open Forum for Public Participation – None
- Kim Little shared that she is a member of an organization called Creative Living Community of Connecticut that is at the point of getting ready to build their housing, or villas. They want to make sure they are following the path of DDS and following the rules, so they will be meeting with Krista Ostaszewski. Stacie also suggested that they include Elba Caraballo, Director of Housing, in the meeting. They should be in contact with them soon.
- Adrianna shared information on some conferences and workshops that will be upcoming. Claudia will share by email.
- Meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm. The next meeting will be held on March 20, 2024 at 5:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Claudia Neumann

Executive Secretary