

**DDS-South Region  
Regional Advisory and Planning Council  
Meeting Minutes  
November 16, 2011**

**Members Present:** Chair Diane Martin, Jean Brookman, Carol Cooney, April Dipollina, Lori Richardson, and Shannon O'Brien, Interim Regional Director, DDS South Region.

**Members Absent:** Michael Del Sole and Danielle Sheppard.

**Guests:** Marie Bennett, IFS ARD, Donna Franchini-Sparago, IFS Case Management Supervisor, Nadine Gilvray, Self Determination Broker Supervisor, Mary McKay, Jack Frost, Kim Wollschleager, Lauralyn Lewis, Susan Gardner.

Minutes Recorded by Jolie Crescimano-Goss, Executive Secretary, DDS South Region

**I. Chairperson's Report**

- **Call to Order** –Chair Martin called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.
- **Introductions** – All made Introductions. Following, Ms. Martin thanked Ms. McKay for her many years of service to DDS. Families and individuals served by the department have benefited greatly from her knowledge and commitment to improving the lives of people with disabilities. The Council wishes Ms. McKay well on her retirement.
- **Citizen Comment** – Mr. Frost shared that he saw Sam in an advertisement for High Hopes therapeutic riding camp on television recently. It was noted that he recently performed in the Secret Garden play held at The Kate in Old Saybrook.
- **Review of Minutes** - A review of the September 21, 2011, meeting minutes ensued. **In the presence of a quorum, and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the September 21, 2011, meeting as presented.**
- **2012 Schedule of Meetings** – The 2012 schedule of RAC meetings was agreed to as presented.

**II. RD's Report**

- **Administrative Update** – Since the Council's last meeting, a number of administrative changes within the department have been made. DDS did not receive approval for former Regional Director, Mary McKay, to return to

work in a 120-day temporary retiree worker position. To that end, Ms. Shannon O'Brien has been assigned to the role of Interim Regional Director for the South Region of DDS. Ms. O'Brien has been with DDS for many years and has held various positions, most recently serving as the Assistant Regional Director for Private Administration in the West Region of DDS. Prior to transferring to the WR, Ms. O'Brien was a residential program manager in the SR. Although her new assignment is temporary, she is happy to be reacquainted with the region and remains highly committed to her work as Interim Regional Director. Thomas Dailey, ARD for Private Administration in the SR, has temporarily transferred to serve as Interim Regional Director for the North Region. Staff throughout the department are taking on additional responsibilities to cover vacant and temporary reassignment workloads. Commissioner Macy has appointed Joseph Drexler to the position of Deputy Director. As a longtime employee of DDS holding various positions, Mr. Drexler is well versed in all areas. The department is slowly receiving permission to refill some key vacancies (i.e. case managers, case management supervisors, nursing).

- Overtime continues to be scrutinized. The SR continues to do well in curtailing OT costs.
- DDS is moving forward on the closure of public homes. The Governor's budget calls for the conversion of five homes throughout the department.
- Implementation of the STS Settlement Agreement continues. Some families have expressed an interest in moving. A vacant home in the SR (Hamden) has been identified for a group of STS residents. Minor renovations to accommodate the group are underway. We expect new development in the West Region in support of this initiative.
- Hearings on the proposed DDS Five Year plan were held. Feedback is due to the Commissioner by December 3. An excerpt from the plan, "A Paradigm Shift," was shared with Council.
- Storm Alfred resulted in the temporary relocation of 36 CLA's and 2 day programs. One family served by the IFS Division contacted the department for help. Regional staff did an excellent job of working together and coordinating the department's response to the storm. Commissioner Macy is preparing a report for the Governor on how DDS did and what it could do better. It was noted that OPA collected data on the affects of the storm on people with disabilities. A suggestion was made to train staff on the proper use of generators. Ms. O'Brien said she would raise the issue with providers at the next Leadership Forum meeting.

- The State Department of Education in concert with DDS, DPH, BRS, CT APSE, and SERC, is holding a conference entitled School Days to Pay Days: Launching into Adulthood on December 14 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Cromwell. To register, contact Yolanta Garcia at 860-632-1485 x264 or [garcia@ctserc.org](mailto:garcia@ctserc.org). Flyer distributed.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Fragile X Society of CT will be held on November 19 at the UCONN Health Center in Farmington. For more information, contact the Fragile X Society of CT at 860-233-1904. Flyer distributed.
- The CT Council on Developmental Disabilities recently announced the appointment of Molly Cole of Windsor as the new Council Director. The council, federally funded and established in 1971, promotes education for children, meaningful work for adults, community living, and self-advocacy. Press release distributed to the group.
- Ms. O'Brien asked the Council if there were specific updates they would like her to provide on a regular basis. Updates on positions and hot topics were requested. Following, discussion ensued on current staffing levels. It was noted that as public downsizing occurs, many staff are being redeployed to IFS positions.

Discussion ensued on Helpline response time. One guest shared her frustration with the inability to connect with a live person when calling the line. Ms. Bennett noted that the SR plans to revise its current procedures for handling incoming Helpline calls so that calls go directly to Helpline staff rather than a clerical person. Ms. Bennett apologized for any inconvenience and asked to speak with the guest after the meeting to address her concerns.

After, Mr. Frost provided an update on the last meeting of the Statewide Council on Developmental Services. Following, he shared his support of the proposed DDS Five Year Plan.

Next, in response to an inquiry related to vacancy funding, Ms. O'Brien stated that when a vacancy occurs in a public CLA, the funding goes back into the system, while private sector vacancy funding is recycled.

#### **IV. Old Business**

##### **Creative Housing Options**

DDS staff Marie Bennett, Donna Franchini-Sparago, and Nadine Gilvray joined the meeting to discuss creative housing options, which is the focus of a forum the Council wants to host in the spring. Ms. Martin explained that the goal of the

forum is to raise families' awareness of the lack of traditional group home placements and introduce them to the concept of creative housing options.

Ms. Bennett discussed Great Expectations: Preparing Your Child with Developmental Disabilities for Employment Success. The booklet, adapted for CT with permission from John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development in New Jersey, is designed to provide the inspiration, tools, and understanding families need to help their child prepare for a fulfilling and constructive role in the workforce and the community. DDS expects to receive a shipment of printed copies in the next week or so. Council members will receive a copy of the booklet at the next meeting.

Ms. Bennett noted that an individual who spoke at a conference she attended on Enhancing the Lives of Families When Parents have Learning Difficulties impressed her. She suggested the Council research the possibility of his speaking at the forum or having copies of his presentation available to those who attend. Ms. Bennett will gather additional information for the Council consideration. Another option for outside speakers is the Hennis Family. Joe and Marilyn Hennis are nationally renowned speakers who have presented at conferences throughout the United States. They are an excellent example of how "possibility thinking" can be used to develop creative education and adult services for people with severe disabilities. They have found great success with the establishment of a co-op to provide and manage services for their severely disabled daughter. Ms. Bennett will try to get a copy of one of their presentations for the Council's review.

Ms. Gilvray stated that there are families within the SR who have been quite creative. She believes one family in particular would be interested in sharing their experiences with other families firsthand. Ms. Gilvray will follow-up with the family to ascertain their interest in participating.

Next discussion ensued on the Continuous Residential Supports model (CRS), which allows individuals to pool their money. Although the model may be more beneficial than traditional self-direction, it is not a waived service at this time and; therefore, not reimbursable.

Ms. Franchini-Sparago noted that it is important to support health and safety in creative living environments. One way to accomplish this is with technology. Rest Assured is a company out of Indiana that provides remote supervision services. Technology solutions should be explored further.

Ms. Cooney asked how she could further explore some of the above-noted options for her 30 year-old daughter. Ms. Franchini-Sparago said this would be done through the case manager and the IP process.

Ms. Brookman suggested DDS develop a family friendly roommate database that families could use to identify compatible roommates. She suggested DDS develop a compatibility questionnaire to be completed by families wishing to be added to the database.

Attendees questioned what the department was doing to get the word out on the paradigm shift. DDS is beginning to reset the tone. The new Commissioner is pushing the paradigm shift in his daily activities and in the proposed Five Year Plan. He is looking to establish partnerships and to guide families toward creativity through the creation of a new Individual and Family Advocate position. He is also a strong proponent of Self-Determination, which was conceptualized as paid and natural supports.

Continuing on with the discussion of creative housing options, it was noted that natural supports/community supports are an integral part of the process. Some meeting attendees expressed frustration with regard to natural/community supports in that many families do not have natural supports to rely on or they live in areas where community supports are lacking. Discussion focused on ways of increasing community supports. The need to improve communication between agencies and school districts was again raised. The disconnect between the two further frustrates DDS families that have suffered the loss of a case manager due to budget cuts. Families feel helpless and alone and do not know whom to turn to in spite of the services offered by the Helpline. Mrs. Wollschleager expressed her need for more guidance and assistance from DDS and her son's school in planning for him. Ms. O'Brien and Ms. Bennett requested to speak with Mrs. Wollschleager following the meeting to discuss her concerns further. Ms. Dipollina and Ms. Brookman volunteered to work together to strategize on bringing school districts to the table to address the issues raised.

Chair Martin will arrange a meeting with DDS staff Marie Bennett, Nadine Gilvray, and Donna Franchini-Sparago to begin planning for the forum on creative housing options. Council members April Dipollina and Lori Richardson volunteered to participate in planning the forum as well.

Ms. O'Brien raised the possibility of inviting Commissioner Macy to the Council's January meeting to speak on issues raised during the meeting. If so, the council should develop a list of topics that they would be interested in having him speak about prior to the meeting. Ms. O'Brien will contact the Commissioner to share the Council's interest in having him attend the meeting and then follow-up with Chair Martin to discuss next steps.

## **V. New Business**

**Council Vacancies** – A the conclusion of the meeting, Ms. Gardner and

Ms. Lewis affirmed their interest in joining the Council. The Regional Director's office will recommend to Commissioner Macy their appointment to the Council. Ms. Gardner and Ms. Lewis can expect to receive an appointment letter from Commissioner Macy in the coming weeks.

**VI. Next Meeting Date:** The next regularly scheduled meeting of the DDS South Region Advisory and Planning Council is January 25, 2012, at 6:00 p.m., at the Henry Carter Hull Library in Clinton.

**VII. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by:

*Jolie Crescimano-Goss*

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Executive Secretary, DDS South Region