

**DDS South Region  
Regional Advisory and Planning Council  
Meeting Minutes  
May 20, 2020  
6:00 PM  
(via Teleconference)**

**Members Participating:** Chair Leslie Bridges-Parent, Lynn Arezzini, Robin Brewer, David Cassano, Carol Cooney, Barbara Deindorfer, and Thomas Dailey, DDS South Regional Director

**Public Participation:** Ms. Erin McGuire

**Scribe:** Jolie Crescimano-Goss, DDS Executive Secretary

**Chairperson's Report:**

- **Call to Order and Introductions** – Chair Bridges-Parent called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM. Following, all made introductions.
- **Citizen Remark** – Ms. McGuire asked for information on next steps as her son prepares to transition from school to adult services. Mr. Dailey discussed the role of the DDS Helpline and DDS employment and day services. He encouraged Ms. McGuire to continue to work with Helpline staff during this time.
- **Approval of Meeting Minutes** – *Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the April 15, 2020, meeting.*
- **Field Activity Report** – In an agreement and coordination with the federal Office of Civil Rights, DDS, DPH and the Governor's Office; DPH has issued an order to allow patients with disabilities in hospitals (as defined in the order) to have a designated support person with them to support their disability related needs. For a copy of the order, visit <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/20200609-DPH-Order-regarding-patients-with-disabilities-in-health-care-facilities.pdf>.

**Regional Director's Updates:** DDS is beginning to look at reopening options for day and employment services. DDS families were asked to participate in a reopening surveyed to assist the department in identifying concerns and priorities around reopening plans.

As difficult as it is DDS continues to carry-out no visitor restrictions. The DDS community has been fortunate overall due to limiting the transmission of the illness through the ban on visitors and closure of congregate program settings.

DDS respite centers remain closed due to the pandemic. The respite centers have been offered to providers to use for quarantine purposes.

DDS continues to distribute PPE to Employers of Records for direct-hire staff via curbside pick-up.

DDS offices are open, but with a skeleton crew. Majority of office staff continue to telework to the extent possible. Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of offices and pool vehicles is underway.

IPs and LONs are going forward.

PRAT is meeting regularly.

DDS is hiring a total of 21 case managers statewide. The majority will be assigned to the South Region due to the number of case manager vacancies in the region attributable to retirements.

The DDS Emergency Transitional Housing Programs in Norwich and Wilton are on hold until the department has information on next year's budget. The forensic integration program is also on hold. Plans for the Meriden Respite Center are moving ahead.

Discussion ensued on expanding restrictions at group homes. Mr. Dailey stated that it is yet to be determined. DDS' number one priority remains the health and safety of individuals and staff.

Discussion centered on how DDS might deal with congregate day settings given the complexities involved in restructuring such programs, i.e. locations, groupings, transportation. DDS is collaborating with providers and families for ideas, i.e. smaller groupings, CLA day programs. Director Dailey will comment more on process/ideas for moving forward at the next meeting.

**New Business:** Council members shared personal stories and the experiences of their loved ones during the pandemic. Many have found the virtual services and activities being offered by providers to be quite helpful.

**Council Open Discussion Topics:** In response to an inquiry about how providers are doing on the financial front, Director Dailey explained that things are stable for now. Provider funding may be extended for closed day programs beyond 12 weeks. Next year could be problematic if more assistance is not approved at the federal level.

Discussion ensued on paying family members to care for loved ones during the pandemic. Very few approvals went through. A summary of approval criteria will be shared with the Council.

**Membership:** Ms. Erin McGuire expressed interest in joining the Council. At the Council's request, and on their behalf, the Regional Director will recommend her appointment to Commissioner Scheff.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

*Jolie Crescimano-Goss*

Jolie Crescimano-Goss

Executive Secretary

DDS South Region

**Next Meeting:** June 17, 2020 / 6:00 PM / Teleconference