



State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services

**DDS**

Jordan A. Scheff  
Commissioner

Elisa F. Velardo  
Deputy Commissioner

**South Region Regional Advisory Council (RAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
March 20, 2024  
Guilford Free Library, 67 Park St., Guilford**

**Attendees:** Lynn Arezzini, Chairperson; Carol Cooney, Secretary; Ashley Dennis; Nancy Kalal; Diane Martin; Haley Parent; Cres Secchiaroli, Regional Director; Noreen Hills, Executive Secretary

**Absent:** Kathryn Haaland, Vice Chair; Amy French; Kathryn Kimball; Erin McGuire

**Guests attending:** Heidi Earle, Jacob Earle, Guilford First Selection Matthew Hoey

**Chairperson's Report**

- Call to Order – It was determined that there was a quorum. The meeting was called to order at 6:30p.
- Introductions were made and Regional Director (RD) Cres Secchiaroli explained the role of the Regional Advisory Council.
- Approval Minutes – Nancy Kalal made a motion and Diane Martin seconded to approve the January 17, 2024 South Region Regional Advisory Council minutes. All in favor, motion passed.
- Citizen Comment
  - First Selectman Hoey asked about the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). RD Secchiaroli explained the agency's role. There were questions regarding the pay scale for private providers. RD Secchiaroli explained that the minimum wage for private providers is \$17.25 per hour. There is a staffing crisis not only in the Connecticut, but nationwide due to not enough resources, i.e. providers and staff.

First Selectman Hoey asked if DDS had a lobbyist. RD Secchiaroli explained that only the Commissioner can testify for DDS. Some of the bills pertaining to DDS are within the Public Health, Appropriations and Office of Legislative Affairs Committees. First Selectman Hoey volunteered to help with testimonials and offered to speak on DDS's behalf. Lynn Arezzini will meet with First Selectman Hoey to discuss further.

**Regional Director's Update**

- March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness month. The three South Region offices wore orange today and took pictures.
- This year's legislative session is a short session. DDS has two bills that are being discussed:
  - Dental – To expand the usage of provisional dentists in the Norwich, Stratford and Southbury dental clinics, to work with us and our population. It is hard to find dentists who will serve DDS individuals. The Norwich Dental Clinic serves over 1,000 individuals yearly and has two full time

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hygienists, one full time dentist, and one full time dental assistant. Izabella Pulvermacher, is the Dental Coordinator, who works out of Central Office to help families coordinate dental care for their loved ones.

- Tech Bill – This bill consists of technical adjustments to several areas, such as, removing the cap of eleven (11) Self Advocate Coordinators for DDS, Human Rights Committee, sharing Abuse/Neglect information with other state agencies and qualified providers, etc.
- South Region opened two new supported housing programs in February. They are run by the ARC ECT and Midstate ARC. RD Secchiaroli has visited both and is very impressed. There are other supporting housing projects opening soon in New Haven, Hamden, and an additional one in New London. The projects have approximately 10% of the tenants with disabilities. There needs to be a community room and the provider arranges community gathering events each month. The providers and individuals utilize remote technologies and technical supports.
- Four (4) new Transition Advisors have been hired for the South Region.
- Bill 5001 required that DDS submit a plan for the development of a Transitional Life Skills College (TLSC) by January 1, 2025. The plan is to have a TLSC in each region. The committee consists of the (3) Regional Directors, (3) Assistant Regional Directors for IFS, and the (3) Program Managers, along with other subject matter experts attending as needed. The committee is in process of developing a survey to be distributed to stakeholders. They have also been working on a mission statement.
- Diane Martin asked how the transition to GT Independence (GTI) is going. RD Secchiaroli explained that GTI is the new fiscal intermediary (FI) for the self-direct staff. GTI is well-established and works in many states. They pride themselves on customer service. They are the FI for all Connecticut state agencies (DDS, DHMAS, etc.). There are always issues with transitions that GTI and administration are working to correct. Diane stated that she was able to process one staff but was unable to process another.
- There has been a favorable response from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for the ability to pay parents/guardians for specific services pertaining to their child with disabilities. The projected start date is May 1. Families should talk with their Case Managers for information regarding the specific criteria needed to be approved as a paid caregiver.

### **Council Open Discussion**

- The Guilford Free Library has summer hours until 6p beginning June through September. The council had a discussion and will look for an alternate meeting sites for the July and September meetings, as well as offer the option to attend via MS TEAMS.

### **New Business**

None.

There being no further business, Lynn Arezzini made a motion and Nancy Kalal seconded to adjourn the SR RAC meeting at 7:31pm. All in favor, motion passed.

Nothing Follows //

Minutes recorded by:  
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Regional Executive Secretary

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