

West Region Advisory Council

Minutes

Via Teleconference

4:00 p.m.

January 19, 2023

Participants:

Chuck Bergamo, Marina Derman, Lori Chiappenello, Gil Kellersman, Shannon O'Brien, Karen Simon, Arlene Steinfeld

Guests: Tim Braziel, Tyrone McConnico, Trever Rogers

1. CALL TO ORDER –

The meeting was called to order at 4:08 pm

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETINGS MINUTES –

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the Minutes of October 20, 2022.

3. INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTORS (ARD)

- Introductions took place:

- Mr. Tim Braziel is the new Assistant Regional Director of the Private Division. He was formerly the Manager of the Community Companion Homes Program/DDS West Region.
- Mr. Tyrone McConnico is the new Assistant Regional Director of Individual & Family Support. He comes from the North Region where he worked in IFS as the Behavioral Health Clinical Manager. He worked with the Respite Unit and also supported the Helpline.

- Each member was given an opportunity to ask questions of the new ARDs.

- Ms. Simon inquired about staffing and explained her struggles with getting qualified staff to support her son. Shannon offered Ms. Simon the opportunity to discuss her concerns in a separate meeting. Ms. Simon agreed to contact Shannon at another date. Shannon explained that staffing continues to be a hardship for providers across Connecticut and nationwide.
- Ms. Chiappiniello inquired about respite. Mr. McConnico provided a brief update on the Meriden Respite Center and stated anyone interested in respite supports can discuss with their Case Manager. Shannon provided an update on the Step-Down Unit (SDU). She shared that the SDU is almost always being fully utilized and the greatest challenge is discharging individuals once they have completed their time at the SDU. Referrals continue to be made to the SDU. It's a valuable resource.
- Ms. Derman asked Tyrone if he would be getting involved in the SELN (State Employment Leadership Network) Project. He said that once he gets more acclimated with his role, he is sure he will be participating in that.

4. EMPLOYMENT PRESENTATION –

- Trever Rogers presented on Customized Employment. He gave a slide show presentation on how the program works and how individuals can become involved in pursuing this. He shared that individuals that are interested in participating in this can contact their Case Manager. Customized Employment is geared towards finding out specifics for job seekers and “customizing” a job that they would be successful in based on their desires and what they like to do. The full presentation will be available on the DDS website. Trever also shared that he would be sending the information to the RAC members via a link in the Teams chat and/or via email.

5. CHAIRPERSON’S UPDATE–

- Mr. Bergamo provided an update on the status of the policy that he is looking into concerning paid guardians. He shared some examples of ways that a guardian can become a paid caregiver. He has done extensive research on this subject and hopes that families can benefit from proposed changes to allow guardians to become paid caregivers. During the pandemic, guardians were allowed to be paid and that has since changed. Now, a guardian must seek prior approval to be allowed to be compensated for caring for their family member. More information to follow on this subject. Mr. Bergamo will be emailing the RAC members more information on the waivers related to this.

6. REGIONAL DIRECTOR’S UPDATE –

- Shannon stated that she is working with the DDS Helpline staff to revamp the system so that phone calls are returned in a timely manner and that cases come off the Helpline and get assigned to Case Managers.
- She added that she is still getting familiar with the region. She will be visiting another WR Respite Center this weekend.
- The Elderly Caregiver Initiative continues to be moving along. Elderly caregivers are being granted funding to assist them.
- Positions are being filled:
 - A Transition Advisor has been hired for the Helpline.
 - Case manager positions continue to be filled. Temporary Worker Retirees have been hired to return as Case Managers to assist during this transition.
 - Emergencies continue to be a struggle. There seem to be more emergencies now than in the past.
 - The Transformation Project with ARPA funding continues to unfold.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- No new business

8. OLD BUSINESS

- No old business.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment

10. NEXT MEETING –

- March 16, 2023 at 4pm via teleconference; invitations will be sent out via Outlook.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council adjourned the meeting at 5:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Eunice B. Rivera
Executive Secretary, DDS West Region