

West Region Advisory Council

Minutes

Via Teleconference

4:00 p.m.

March 16, 2023

Participants:

Chuck Bergamo, Marina Derman, Lori Chiappenello, Gil Kellersman, Shannon O'Brien, Mickey Herbst, Arlene Steinfeld

1. CALL TO ORDER –

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 pm

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETINGS MINUTES –

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Council voted to approve the Minutes of January 19, 2023.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S UPDATE–

- Mr. Bergamo reported that Bill 5001 is in the legislature to potentially change the definition of who receives services and to move towards the developmental disability definition (which is more in line with the developmental Disability Act). He shared that there are a number of states that do not use IQ to determine eligibility for services. There's also a number of other positive changes in this Bill that will benefit the ID community (i.e. transportation, employment services, some good things for providers and recruiting some career path components). It has potentially a chunk of money for the residential waiting list. There will be studies done to determine if this will be adopted. This Bill has been approved by Human Services and has been referred to appropriations.
- Sue reported that House Bill 5765 is also under review. This Bill will allow parents or caregivers to be paid without relinquishing their guardianship. This bill has been approved by Human Services and it's been referred to appropriations.
- There was discussion on membership.
 - Roger was one of our members and we have not been able to reach him. The Council needs to have someone on the membership who is served by DDS. Shannon agreed to seek someone out who could potentially be on the RAC.
 - Mr. Bergamo also stated that the RAC members should also be thinking about finding a replacement for themselves. Each person is supposed to serve a term and then a new member is supposed to replace them. He said that this might be his last years serving on the Council; however, he will try to find a replacement for himself before he leaves the Council. Also, anyone that is not officially a member of the RAC can participate as a member of the

public if they choose to. The only thing they won't be able to do is participate as a voting member on the Council. Meetings are announced on the State of Connecticut Meeting Schedule website. ([Connecticut State Agency Public Meeting Calendar](#)).

4. REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S UPDATE –

- Update on the Connecticut State Department of Ed Grant. Letters went out from our Central Office to everybody on the Helpline to notify of the opportunity to apply for grants that could be used for therapies not covered by insurance, music, horseback riding, tutoring, educational enrichment, summer programs, camp extended school year.
- Vacancies - We're making headway. When Shannon first took on the position there was a wave of retirements. We had 12 case manager vacancies and that is down to 6 right now. This has given us the opportunity to move people off the helpline where we were kind of being stalled because of the mass exodus.
- We are hiring a Director of Quality for each region, which is a position we had many years ago and they did away with it. This position will be overseeing incident reports, abuse/neglect with providers and other quality issues to ensure policies are being followed.
- We have ARPA funds (money available to providers) to move people to less restrictive settings. This will provide opportunities for people on the emergency list, wait list, and aging caregiver initiative.
- Southbury Training School – DDS has purchased a 6 bedroom home in Watertown for families to be able to see a setting where their family member could potentially live so they can move out of the Training School.
- Staffing continues to be an issue. Families and providers are struggling to staff their programs and find coverage for the care of their family members. Nursing coverage has also been a problem at the respite centers (specifically Lower Fairfield). Some stays needed to be cancelled because there is no nurse available to provide medical care during the respite stay. We are looking to contract out a nursing service to assist with this issue. Mr. Bergamo shared that he watched a webinar that offered training to families who need to provide medical care to the loved ones and that cannot secure medical staff. This is the link: [Paid Family Caregiving for Children with Medical Complexity and Disabilities | Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health \(lpfch.org\)](#).

Mr. Herbst shared his perspective on how immigration could possibly help address staffing shortages. He feels that people from other countries might be very willing to come to the US to work in the jobs that we are having such difficulty filling. He stated that he has shared this idea at different meetings.

- Aged Caregiver (formerly elderly care giver) We started out giving funding to 72-year-old caregivers and we are now down to 68 years old caregivers.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- No new business

6. OLD BUSINESS

- Lori inquired if there were any programs that offer PT/OT therapy for group setting. Shannon was not aware of any. However, Mickey shared that he is aware of PT services that are given at Star, Inc.
- Mr. Bergamo asked Shannon is there is the ability to receive funding for recreational services as part of their budget (ie. Gym membership, bowling, etc.). Shannon stated that these types of requests have come through PRAT and have been approved based on necessity (i.e. weight management, driver's lessons).

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment

8. NEXT MEETING –

- April , 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