

**DDS West Region  
Advisory Council  
Minutes  
March 21, 2024**

**Attendance:** Charles Bergamo, Lori Chiappiniello, Mickey Herbst, Gil Kellersman, Shannon O'Brien, Karen Simon, Arlene Steinfeld

**Guest speakers:** Dory Michael-Martusis (Quality Improvement Director), Ryan Patten (Planning & Resource Allocation Team, Manager)

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**Call to Order:** Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was called to order at 4:03 pm

**Approval of agenda:** Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Agenda for the meeting was approved.

**Review of Minutes:** Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the Minutes for the meeting on January 18, 2024, were approved.

**Planning & Resource Allocation Team Presentation (PRAT) – Ryan Patten/PRAT Manager & Dory Michael-Martusis/Director of QI**

Ryan introduced himself and described the PRAT Team. The PRAT Team consists of himself as a manager and directors and managers from the private division, the IFS division and self-determination are now combined as one. The PRAT reviews requests from case management in regards to the individual's needs, health and safety needs and other things that individuals are looking to obtain for their supports.

He gave an overview of the different types of initiatives that the Department is promoting. These initiatives are really helping to fund people that we usually do not have funds for. The initiatives are listed below:

1. The Older Caregiver Initiative: is for individuals or the individual's primary caregiver 65 or older looking for either residential funding for IHS, for supports in their current home or if they're looking for supports in a residential setting such as community living arrangement (CLA), a continuous residential services (CRS) setting or a community companion home (CCH). If individuals didn't have any funding, but they've been on the waiting list or planning list for years and they are over the age of 65, now would be the opportune time to make a request for funding.
2. CCH: is available to any individual looking for some type of residential support. They do not have to have residential funding prior.
3. Individual's Living in their own home: We have apartment set up and furnishings. This is for individuals looking to establish their own home. They must have residential funding secured first, though it's not for somebody without those funds and then requesting the apartment setup and furnishing funding.
4. Underserved IHS Initiative: this is for individuals with in-home supports, that could be in their own apartment or in the family home.

5. Assistive Technology And Remote Supports is another initiative that has been approved.
6. Individualized Day Initiative: allows individuals to receive up to 30 hours per week.

Ryan shared that our biggest struggle right now (with all these approved services) is the staffing crisis.

There was a comment concerning PRAT requests and how some families feel that they just get “no” as an answer. Ryan expressed that families could come back to PRAT and make requests that may now be approved if they were denied in the past. Families should go through their case manager to make such requests that will be reviewed by the West Region PRAT.

Members of the RAC asked questions about transportation to programs and one to one coverage. Overall, staffing continues to be an issue at many agencies and families continue to struggle to find care or keeping staff employed. They expressed that they are happy that funding is now available, but now we have an issue with staffing which maintains the problem of individuals not receiving necessary supports.

## **Chairs Report**

Mr. Bergamo shared that the Medicaid waivers will be amended effective May 1st to provide that parents who are legally responsible for individuals can be paid under the Medicaid waivers.

He also said that CFC is in the legislative process of directing DSS to align with CFC to have the same to pay the legal guardian and/or legally responsible individual to care for their loved one.

Mr. Bergamo said that he would forward the information to Eunice to be distributed to the RAC.

Shannon explained that Krista is preparing direction for DDS on how to do the implementation piece for guardians to be paid. She also shared that families that have any concerns or issues with funding requests being denied can submit a PAR. This will be reviewed at the regional level. If not approved at the regional level, the family can appeal to the Commissioner level.

She also encouraged the RAC to participate in the 4th Forum Tuesdays where DDS is highlighting families and individuals' stories. We've had great turnouts from families and individuals attending those, and those are listed on our website.

There was a question posed on “if the individual can't manipulate the technology but the caregiver can is that appropriate for funding.” The answer was “yes” funding can be approved to assist the consumer.

Ryan also shared that there is a new food delivery program in place (like Wheels on Wheels). Individuals are eligible for two meals per day on the food delivery program. The individual's should contact their case manager if they are interested. A question concerning whether minor children qualify was asked. Ryan will research and send the information to Eunice to forward to the RAC.

Bylaws – Bylaws from the other regions were reviewed. The statute was also discussed. The outcome of the discussion was that some of the requirements listed in the By-laws should be revised to align more with the statute. The by-laws seems to be more restrictive in terms of who can actually sit on the RAC (i.e. attorney, ARC members, etc.). As it is now, it is difficult to recruit members to the RAC. Mr. Bergamo will work on revising the by-laws and share the draft at the May RAC meeting.

Shannon agreed to contact the local ARC groups to see if anyone would be interested in joining the RAC. Karen said she would ask her group that she is affiliated with to see if there would be an attorney interested in joining. Although, the RAC decided that it might be better if we don't have that restriction in place. She would still inquire about having an attorney join.

## **Directors Report**

- The Connecticut Family Support Network is having a conference on May 2nd. Shannon asked the RAC to share this information with families, advocates, individuals.
- There will be a supported housing open house this weekend. Sunday, March 24th from 12-2pm and Tuesday March 22nd from 5:00 to 7:00pm. Eunice to forward a copy of the flyer.
- Project Search is out recruiting folks to participate. There's flyer on our website for that. In the West region, we have 3 providers that are participating, Kennedy Collective (Bridgeport, Stratford, Trumbull area), Abilis (down in the Greenwich area), and LARC in the Litchfield County area.
- House Bill 5001 - Transition Academies: DDS has started meeting to start the planning and development and submitting a plan for the transition academies. This would be for individuals in their early 20s to later 20s to come in for a period of time and learn skills (i.e. Everything from cooking transportation, money management, etc).
- The region is focusing in on critical incident and looking at trends (i.e., health and safety issues)
- Investigations – there has been a big push in the West region for timely investigations to be completed by providers. Providers have been cooperating and they seem to be coming in more timely.
- Public Health Hearings – Shannon encouraged the RAC to view some of the hearings on line at CT news as some of it pertains to DDS (specifically from March 1<sup>st</sup>).
- Shannon mentioned some new programs opening in Southington and Naugatuck at later dates, but more information will be shared as it becomes available.
- Vacancies – Shannon stated that we are back to 9 case manager vacancies in the region; we are working on refilling these positions.

**New Business** - There was a concern about a family who attempted to open a bank account and was required to bring additional documentation from the Probate Court to the bank. Mr. Bergamo shared his experience with successfully opening his account and stated he would share that with Lori.

## **Old Business**

GT Independence – there is concern from parents on the roll out this weekend. Shannon explained that DDS is aware of concerns and said we have to wait to see how this plays out.

Concerns will be addressed with the vendor. Issues have been brought to our attention so far and our regional contact has been funneling those to CO. It was suggested that someone come to the next RAC meeting from GT Independence. Shannon said we could have someone from GT come in the future, but in the meantime, we could have the DDS representative come to a meeting and the RAC agreed that would be good.

### **Opportunity for Public Participation**

No one from public in attendance.

### **Adjournment**

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 5:26pm

Respectfully submitted by:

Eunice B. Rivera  
Executive Secretary  
DDS West Region