

# DDS EXECUTIVE BRIEFS

## An Update on CT DDS Initiatives

May 20, 2008

Issue 23

### Employment

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS), as a member of the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN), has engaged in a number of activities recently to promote employment for consumers. On May 23, 2008 from 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM at the NEAT Market Place, the department will host its “Employment First” Kick Off! “Employment First” is about the vision of making employment the first priority for people with disabilities. The event is open to individuals served by DDS and their family members, DDS employees, private agencies and community employers, and school transition employees.

Many states around the nation are adopting employment first policies. An “Employment First” vision means:

- Expecting, encouraging, providing, creating, and rewarding integrated employment in the workforce
- Working at minimum or competitive wages and benefits
- Making work the first option for working-age youth and adults with disabilities
- Including those with complex and significant disabilities for whom job placement in the past has been limited, or has not traditionally occurred.

Come learn about the CT DDS Employment First vision and how the vision will be implemented over the coming years. Presenters will include the DDS Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner and speakers from SELN (State Employment Leadership Network), Connect-Ability (CT’s Medicaid Infrastructure Grant), CT APSE (formerly the Association of Persons in Supported Employment), and the CT BLN (CT Business Leadership Network). A variety of related information and resources will also be available to session participants at Employment Resource Tables.

Watch for more information on upcoming training events. Hold June 25<sup>th</sup> for an all day employment event at the Keeney Center in Wethersfield. DDS recently shared with providers a variety of on-line training opportunities available this fiscal year. There are plans to support on-line training next year as well. For more information, contact Robin Wood at <mailto:Robin.wood@ct.gov>.

## Aging Services

On March 27<sup>th</sup> 2008, the Legislative Programmatic Review and Investigations Committee voted to study the Needs of Aging Individuals with Developmental Disabilities. The committee has assigned two of their Principal Analysts, Michelle Castillo and Maryellen Duffy, to conduct the study.

**“The study will evaluate DDS efforts to address and plan for the current and future service needs of the aging population with developmental disabilities in Connecticut. The study will focus on the methods used by the department to measure the types and costs of services needed now and in the future for elderly individuals already in DDS residential placements, those still living at home with a caretaker relative who is also elderly, and those who will be over 55 years old within the next 10 years.”**

The study should be completed within nine months, by December 2008. A Briefing Report should be submitted to the committee in September, and a short time after the briefing, the committee will hold a public hearing in Hartford. After the hearing, the analysts produce a Findings and Recommendations Report. The committee may accept, amend or reject this report. DDS or any other state agency affected by the report will be asked to submit comments for inclusion in the final report. If the study results in legislative recommendations, more public hearings will be scheduled with any relevant legislative committee(s). Agency compliance with all the study recommendations are followed for three years and reported to the committee for follow-up if necessary.

Ms. Castillo and Ms. Duffy have begun their review. They will review the department’s information systems, policies and procedures and conduct interviews with numerous stakeholders. Regional staff and providers may be contacted.

DDS’s liaison to the Legislative Programmatic Review and Investigations Committee is Siobhan Morgan, Aging Services Coordinator.

## Waiver Update

The DRAFTs of the Comp Waiver renewal application and the IFS Amendment have been posted on the DDS Website. We anticipate that the Notice of Intent will be in the May 27 edition of the CT Law Journal.

## Quality Management Services

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Quality Management Services Division, is implementing the Quality Service Review (QSR) on a statewide basis. The QSR visits began in early May for a sample of five private providers that provide only Day and/or Individual Support services. Notices of QSR are being sent to seven additional qualified providers to organize QSR visits to occur in June.

Providers have been selected for review from the department's list of qualified providers. Central Office quality reviewers from the Service and Systems Enhancement Unit will implement the QSR at a provider's service location. Individuals who receive supports at each type of service are included. Individual reviewers or a small team of reviewers will conduct each service's QSR. The service types that are subject to a QSR include:

- Day Service Option
- Group Supported Employment
- Sheltered Workshop
- Individual Supported Employment
- Individual Support, Family Home
- Individual Support, Own Home.

The QSR is designed to determine the quality of services and supports provided by providers at each type of service provided. A personal outcome review will assess individual consumer's achievements and their satisfaction with services and supports. Other review components evaluate the safety, accessibility, and support staff knowledge, for example, at the service location.

Providers receive a written "Notice of Quality Service Review," that is followed by communication to schedule an orientation meeting prior to starting the QSR activities. Providers are requested to have key staff that represent each type of service attend the meeting and to designate liaison staff for reviewers to interact with during review activities. Appropriate DDS regional staff are informed of QSR scheduling and review activities, as necessary, for provider support, review, or follow-up.

For further information or questions, please contact Daniel A. Micari, Director, Quality Management Services, 860-418-6081 – [Daniel.Micari@ct.gov](mailto:Daniel.Micari@ct.gov) or Fred Balicki, LFSS, Quality Management Services, 860-418-6088 – [Fred.Balicki@ct.gov](mailto:Fred.Balicki@ct.gov).

## Notes From The Operations Center

- Interim Guidance Procedure No. I.F.PR001 on the Abuse/Neglect Prevention Notification Resolution and Follow was emailed to qualified providers based on the providers' request for clarification of parameters relating to employee representation. For complete information, see the email. If you did not receive the email, contact Kristin Bass at 860-418-6032.
- Op Plans are due May 15<sup>th</sup>; extensions may be granted by the region.
- The department is initiating a new three-year Master Contract. This new contract will replace the current Master Contract. This will provide a procurement framework until the rate system is completed. Regions are sharing information on the technical aspects around required affidavits and the Corporate Resolution. Following the guidelines exactly is necessary for the contract to be approved.
- Look for some changes in the DDS website in the near future. Quality Management Services is reorganizing the information in the Safety Alerts to make it easier for providers to use.
- Work continues on the Fee for Services rate system for all Qualified Providers. A transportation survey is being conducted for all Day Service Master Contract Providers to identify who is transported to and from Day Programs. This will enable the department to analyze transportation as it relates to program costs as specified in the Master Contract. This information should also be helpful in explaining the impact of increased gas costs.
- New rate for Accessible Vehicles: Over the past two years, the Waiver Work Group has been reviewing the Fee for Services rates. One issue that has repeatedly been of concern to the department and the providers has been the availability of handicapped accessible vehicles. A transportation committee was developed to determine costs associated with a wheelchair van and a methodology for developing a rate for reimbursement to providers. At the last Provider Council meeting, a new transportation rate of \$.85 per mile for individuals who require accessible vehicles was presented. Individuals without any mobility needs and are transported on a handicapped accessible van would be reimbursed at the regular transportation rate. The new rate will be implemented beginning with all new budgets effective July 1, 2008. Existing budgets will utilize the new rate upon renewal during FY 2009.

## Budget

The 2008 regular session of the Connecticut General Assembly adjourned “sine die” at midnight on Wednesday, May 7, 2008.

The Governor’s Fiscal Year 2009 Mid Term Budget recommendation at the beginning of the session in February included funding for an additional 6 Case Managers. It also supported the adjustments necessary to serve children and youth who were identified to the department subsequent to the appropriation made at the beginning of the biennium. This includes 9 age outs needing day services, 19 additional school graduates and 18 age outs needing residential services. The mid-term budget recommendation also supported the growth we have experienced in the Voluntary Services Program by adding funding for 60 additional referrals. The Governor’s Budget also recommended a one-time reduction of \$1,016,000 to reflect typical delays in placement development. The Appropriations Committee maintained these recommended changes and added a 1% COLA for private providers and an additional \$50,000 for the Best Buddies Program.

Unfortunately, due to forecasts indicating declining revenues statewide, the Legislature and the Governor decided to maintain the original second year of the budget that passed both chambers last year. What this means for DDS and its service providers is that none of the changes in the above paragraph were enacted. The Governor and the Legislature have instead made a decision to hold the line on spending and live within the budget previously adopted last year. In addition, the Governor has directed state agencies to reduce fuel consumption, restrict the use of non-essential purchases and has issued an out-of-state travel ban.

On a positive note, the department’s FY 09 appropriation supports the continuation of the waiting list initiative and funding for age outs, voluntary services and school graduates at the level requested at the beginning of the 2-year biennium. Funding to hire additional staff for the newly created Autism Division is maintained and the Autism Pilot will be expanded to include participants from a new region of the state, specifically Hartford County.

DDS will continue to assist the private provider community in any way we can as you continue to be faced with the challenges of the rising costs of goods, energy, insurance and other fixed expenses.