



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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Commissioner

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
March 8, 2021**

Senators Abrams, Somers and Hwang, Representatives Steinberg and Petit and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Jordan A. Scheff and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to testify on [S.B. No. 397](#) **AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES' LEVEL OF NEED ASSESSMENT.**

This proposed bill would establish a task force to study the department's level of need (LON) assessment system.

Once an individual is determined eligible for DDS services, DDS case managers use a standardized assessment tool to assess each individual's level of need for DDS funding and services.

This web-based tool assesses an individual's needs in key areas including, but not limited to: health and medical; personal care activities; daily living activities; behavior; safety; support for waking hours, overnight support, comprehension and understanding, communication; transportation; social life, recreation, community activities; and unpaid caregiver support.

Both the LON assessment score and the information collected in the assessment is used to develop a comprehensive Individual Plan that identifies areas where the individual needs assistance to actualize his or her personal goals and that addresses any potential risks that could affect the individual's health and safety.

It is important for the department to stress that although the LON assessment is the primary tool for determining the needs of an individual eligible for DDS supports, there are further opportunities for individuals and their families to request additional funding and supports to assist with meeting specific needs that may not be measured by the LON assessment. In addition, a review of an individual's LON assessment may be requested at any time to reflect an individual's changing needs.

As part of ongoing collaborative efforts with other state human services agencies, DDS is moving towards adopting the universal assessment system that is currently being utilized by the Department of Social Services (DSS) for assessing individuals in their Medicaid waiver programs and the Community First Choice program, except for the Katie Beckett Medicaid waiver. This transition will allow for consistency in assessment evaluations for individuals receiving social services across Connecticut.

This means an individual receiving DDS and DSS services will receive one assessment across programs to determine their level of need and what services are appropriate to address those identified needs. Currently, individuals receiving funding and services from both agencies are given two different assessments. Not only does this have the potential to be disruptive for the individual, but the separate assessments sometimes result in different findings, which take time to reconcile so that an appropriate service plan can be formulated.

DDS continues to work with DSS to create a timeline for the transition to the universal assessment, however, this timeline has not yet been determined. Specifically, DDS meets with DSS and other public and private stakeholders on the Medicaid Long Term Services & Supports Rebalancing Initiatives Steering Committee on a monthly basis. The universal assessment discussion is an ongoing topic of review and discussion in this committee.

In addition, it is important for DDS to note that there are already numerous task forces that focus generally on studying individuals with intellectual disability and the programs and services offered through the Department of Developmental Services.

To this end, the department would respectfully suggest that the creation of another task force would be duplicative, as this study of DDS's LON assessment could be shifted to one of the standing task forces already in place. The department also would recommend that any study of the DDS level of need assessment system be revised to study and provide input on the existing DSS universal assessment. As part of the implementation process for the universal assessment, DDS will need to make changes within the current universal assessment tool to ensure it has the ability to measure specific needs of individuals with intellectual disability.

The department is open to discussing ways to improve the Level of Need assessment tool and would be happy to engage with stakeholders on suggested changes or enhancements. In fact, over the years, improvements and changes to the LON assessment have been implemented after stakeholder input identified areas of the LON that needed to be improved. However, in this difficult fiscal climate, the department would be unable to support any changes to the LON assessment tool that would incur a cost.

Thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding **S.B. No. 397 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES' LEVEL OF NEED ASSESSMENT.** I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time. Please contact Rod O'Connor, DDS Legislative Liaison, by e-mail at rod.oconnor@ct.gov or by text at 860-883-0727 with any questions