



State of Connecticut Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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Terry's Notes, a Message from Commissioner Macy

I'm obviously well beyond the time line of what I had hoped would be a recurring distribution of "Terry's Notes" which are intended to give regular updates on DDS happenings. The pace of numerous activities including internal meetings, seven Town Hall meetings with public staff and a wide variety of meetings with private agencies coupled with a very busy legislative session has kept me very busy. Recently, this series of meetings was interrupted by a most pleasant evening with the staff and board and families of the Arc of New London County at their annual "Pirate Party". I was honored to be among their award recipients as a recipient of U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal's "Certificate of Special Recognition" for our work supporting the mission of The Arc of New London County. It's not every evening one gets to witness cannon fire from ships in the harbor. I also had the honor of being a part of the program for Vinfen's first Family Council recognition dinner. Subsequently, I participated in the Connecticut Special Olympics Summer Games opening ceremonies at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU). More recently, I was joined by Lakisha Hyatt, DDS's Director of Health and Clinical Services on a tour of FAVARH. Among our many conversations was FAVARH's development of a Healthy Living program that supports healthy choices in lifestyle and diet. We also spoke about Lakisha's participation with FAVARH's Executive Director, Steve Morris, in a Connecticut Special Olympics' initiative creating hiking/walking events. The goal of this program is to support outdoor activities that promote healthy lifestyles. I am very supportive of this new project which mirrors some of the same health initiatives begun by both The Arc and the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD). Lastly, I had the opportunity recently to participate in one of our Café to Go events. This one was held in Branford and was supported by South Region staff. It gave me the opportunity to see firsthand the amount of work that DDS staff put into each event. The topic this time was Abuse and Neglect prevention. The participants were a nice blend of public and private providers and family members.

The 2013 legislative session was very busy providing DDS with many opportunities to testify in support of agency bills or in some cases against legislation that we did not believe would further the DDS mission and vision. Summaries of DDS's legislative activities can be found on the DDS website under "Legislative Affairs". Once again I want to thank both Christine Pollio Cooney and Rod O'Connor for their many hours working with both the executive and legislative branches on a wide variety of issues.

One of the reasons it has been difficult to get a note out about my recent activities is because we have been extremely busy coordinating various great stakeholder events. I was very pleased to be a part of a recent retreat for our Autism Division. Many stakeholders who had been part of the original Autism Council and several participants in the Autism Feasibility Study Committee came to SCSU to create the basis for our Autism Division mission and vision and to begin the formulation of our four workgroups and begin implementation strategies. Again, detail on this work, led by Jennifer Bogin, is available on our website by linking to the Division of Autism Spectrum Services. We were most pleased to have the support of Governor Malloy and the legislature as implementation of the study committee's work has received \$1 million funding for

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the current fiscal year and \$1.2 million in fiscal year 2015. Legislation creating a new Autism Council was also approved this session and appointments are currently being made. The Council membership will include self-advocates, families, professionals and state agency representatives. As I expressed at a recent legislatively sponsored "Autism Day", DDS has progressed in the last two years from a small state funded program to a service that is reimbursable through a federal waiver allowing expanded membership. The hard work of the Feasibility Study Group has designed the foundation for new supports for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Work is also currently being done on a new Early Childhood waiver which will focus on three and four year olds with ASD.

Right after the Autism retreat, a Mission/Vision event entitled "Living the Mission- Tools for Person Driven Supports" was held with presentations by Michael Smull, Patti Scott and Lynn Segal. By all accounts, this was an inspiring series of presentations that hopefully helps our entire "Community of Providers" to think about how better to create person-centered supports. There were over 100 participants with 40 different providers represented. Presentation summaries and graphics from this event can be found on our website from a link on our front page under "Mission". An overview of the scope of the work that was provided by each of our speakers can be found at this link. Volunteers from the day will be creating a "next step" in this process, an application process for the mentoring opportunity that will be provided to a small group of provider agencies that wish to participate.

As many of you have heard, Connecticut was among five states in the country to be awarded a national grant to explore innovative ways to support families. The Supporting Families Community of Practice effort will begin with a kickoff event on September 17, 2013. The response to our call to build a "State Team" has been overwhelmingly positive. Currently, there are more than 100 people interested in participating including families, self-advocates, providers and DDS staff. Anyone interested in this event should contact Dianne Gill at Dianne.gill@ct.gov. This project is the result of a partnership between The Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities and DDS. DDS is extremely pleased to be working with the Council on a project of national significance. Additional information on this can be found on the front of our web page under "Latest News".

I was very pleased to participate recently in a one day conference on Healthy Relationships. The purpose of the training was to familiarize DDS managers with the Healthy Relationships curriculum used by Connecticut's Planned Parenthood and DDS to teach individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities how to have and be part of healthy relationships. The program was a joint effort of our Self Advocate Coordinators and Planned Parenthood. This presentation was provided to DDS managers but other trainings are being prepared for additional public and private sector staff. My appreciation goes to Beth Aura Miller, Amy Blazawski and Greg McMahon for their continuous work on this project.

Speaking of self-advocates, I was pleased to once again participate in the People First Annual Conference on a recent Saturday morning. This is a great spirited event that was created by a partnership with The Arc Connecticut and DDS staff.

We were honored to have Governor Malloy join us at two recent events, the opening of Camp Harkness and the signing of Public Act 13-90, a bill that transfers 800 acres of farm land at Southbury Training School from DDS to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. Pictures of the bill signing are on our website under "Latest News". This was a project that Commissioner Revczky and I have been working on for many months. The Governor's visit to Camp Harkness was to not only note the opening of this year's summer season but to survey the significant repairs that were completed as a result of our multiple storms, the worst being Sandy. More information is available under "Latest News" on the DDS website. Camp Harkness also just celebrated its 60th Anniversary. Deputy Commissioner Joe Drexler and I joined Stan Soby, Chairperson of the Harkness Advisory Council to mark the event on Saturday, July 27th.

Keeping our promise to review all of our major systems, a team of psychologists and DDS administrators have met several times to consider alternative ways to review medication regimes. The product of those meetings was the development of a "white paper" that has been distributed to a reader's group. This group is a mix of providers and clinicians from throughout the state all of who have a history working on this issue. After I receive everyone's comments we will be convening a work group to consider next steps.

DDS just recently published the results of our National Core Indicators survey. 2011 was the first time Connecticut had participated in this national survey in several years. The results will be displayed on our website. Not only will one find the national results but an analysis provided by Tim Deschenes-Desmond. As will become self-evident, we score very highly in a few areas and very poorly in others. We score highest in the categories of "health and safety" and "pay for work and good benefits." However, we score poorly in most all measures of "Choice". My appreciation goes to a large group of dedicated DDS staff who just now are finishing this year's survey. This is an enormous undertaking that requires DDS staff from around the state to add this to their work load and conduct personal interviews. I will begin a conversation on our "Choice" scores in the near future.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that there are a lot of exciting initiatives happening around the state and I want to encourage anyone who is interested to please check our web site for more information. Both the Community of Practice and the Living the Mission, Tools for Person Driven Supports offer enormous opportunities for helping us fulfill our Mission/Vision and moving DDS out of group models and toward individual supports. I would also like to suggest that we are always looking for contributions of "Living the Mission" stories. Please check out what is posted in our "Mission pages" and consider making submissions.