



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

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A Note from Commissioner Macy
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You've all heard me speak about my statement that this administration is about "putting the people we support and their families, first and foremost in everything we do and how we do it." In the coming weeks you'll be seeing this same concept restated into "People and Families First!!!" Im looking forward to the positive conversations this will help promote about how we all work together to provide the best services possible.

On the subject of good collaboration, I'd like to thank everyone who took me up on my suggestion that we find new ways to work together across public and private settings to find the best solutions possible for those we support. I am happy to report that I'm hearing from a variety of sources that this is in fact happening. The last few weeks have been busy with family forums and self advocates gatherings and legislative victories.

On the legislative side, my congratulations go out to Christine Pollio Cooney and Rod O'Connor for their hard work throughout the legislative session. They were successful in getting all four of the Departments bills passed including: "An Act Concerning Revisions to Statutes Relating to the DDS Including the Utilization of Respectful Language when Referring to Persons with Intellectual Disability", "An Act Concerning the Sexual Assault of Persons Placed or Receiving Services Under the Direction of the Commissioner of Developmental Services.", "An Act Concerning the Department of Developmental Services Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder Services" and "An Act Concerning the Sexual Assault of Persons Placed or Receiving Services Under the Direction of the Commissioner of Developmental Services." While all these bills were equally important, the Respectful Language legislation drew high praise from the Self Advocate community.

I had the pleasure of multiple meetings with self advocates recently including the People First Annual Conference a few weeks ago. The Conference gave me a great overview of issues that self advocates are concerned about. We had an extensive "open mike" session. I was so impressed with how self assured and well versed speakers were on so many issues.

The DDS Self Advocate Coordinators monthly meeting was amazing! Some of the Self Advocate Coordinators were very familiar faces and some were new to me. As I have spent a lot of time with self advocates from around the country and with my former agency, I thought I was pretty well informed as to what was going on. None of these experiences prepared me for the presentations I was given on the scope and depth of their work or on their "Healthy Relationships" Position Paper. As is typical of the quality of their work, they each spoke eloquently about their job as a Self Advocate Coordinator and then about the many facets of their Healthy Relationships Initiative. My many thanks and deep

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admiration go out to Carlos Colon, Carol Grabbe, Genna Lewis, Jamar Cherry, Varian Salters, Joyce Rivers, Jamie Louchen, Jossie Torres and Ivan Villa. What great work each and everyone is doing! I need also to thank the support that Beth Aura Miller, Robin Wood and Greg McMahon are providing this awesome group.

Early in the month, I spent a morning with our Individual and Family Support ARDs. I was very impressed with the scope and depth of services they and their staff provide. It was clear that they have a high degree of dedication to our thousands of families and are constantly seeking to find ways to provide better more responsive services.

I've completed two of my Families Listening Tours. Many ideas were shared by families in the South and West Regions. High on all lists were the need for better communication and information about services including more Case Managers. Our Help Line and Birth to Three services were very well received, a real life line to many. The need for in home supports including professional supports was well documented as was the need for school transition services. I look forward to our North Region visits and the next series of family and then providers (public and private).

This past weekend I had the honor to be invited to be on a panel for the Family Empowerment Task Force Conference. The very well attended event was held in the Old Judiciary room at the State Capitol Building. The panel included representation from the Office of Policy & Management, the state legislature, Connecticut Community Providers Association, Arc CT and CT Nonprofits. The panel made brief presentations then fielded a host of questions from a very well informed network of family members.

I've also concluded some 'Meet & Greets' in Wallingford and Norwich. In Wallingford, it was great to see some very familiar faces and meet so many staff who I have not had contact with before. I also got to attend the Region's Family Forum where a wealth of technology was on display. The Norwich Office was this week and while I knew some staff, most were new to me. While there I had the opportunity to see the impressive array of art work hanging in the cafeteria. It underscored the many abilities of the people we all help to support. I wanted to thank everyone in both offices who took the time to come out to say hi and offer good wishes. I very much appreciate getting the opportunity to meet everyone.

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