

*DDS North Region
Regional Advisory & Planning Council
Meeting Minutes of February 17, 2010*



In Attendance: Carlos Colon, Deb Godsell, Florence Guite, Kathleen Perrier, Randy Perrier, Patti Silva, John Houchin and Linda Angelica

Absent: Sara Glad, Susan Miller, John and Lorraine Mullooly

Guest: Mary Stark, DDS North Region Transition Coordinator

Kathleen Perrier, Chairperson began the meeting promptly at 6:00 pm.

Guest speaker, Mary Stark, DDS North Region Transition Coordinator, gave a very interesting and in-depth presentation regarding what her role and responsibility is in working with schools and families. There are two Transitional Coordinators in the North Region. Mary Stark works in the Willimantic office and covers that geographic area and Janet Wagner is located at the Newington office. Janet was unable to attend this evenings meeting and is relatively new as a Transition Coordinator but has worked with the department for many years.

Ms. Stark began by explaining that the DDS is guided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires that a student's Individual Education Program (IEP) must include information about needed transition services beginning no later than the year in which the child turns 16 and updated annually. The IEP must include information about agencies that are involved in helping the student. In order to assure a smooth and successful transition the DDS case manager must understand the individual's needs prior to graduation. Families can request the assistance of a transition coordinator to help plan the student's transition. Both the case manager and transition coordinator working together can help identify and link the student to services and supports they will need after graduation. Ms. Stark's role is working with the Individual & Family Support division which is part of the resource team. Transition Coordinators average about 12 to 13 presentations talking to local schools about services and how to prepare for the transition from school to adult life.

Ms. Stark indicated that she has a wealth of information and resources to share with families and schools and shared a sampling of handouts. The pamphlets included information regarding: How does DDS assist students and families in the transition planning, what type of supports are available, what is the family's role and responsibility for vocational/day funding, what supports and services are in the community, a list of what other agencies can assist with the transition process, including web sites, Helpline information, overview of the DDS Waiver Manual, LON Assessment and Risk Screening Tool, Individual Plan, IFS Fact Sheet and appeal process. Also included is the IEP Guide which was written so families at a glance can make sure certain things are written in their child's IEP. This guide includes helpful information regarding, writing transition goals

and objectives, career awareness/employment, organization and study skills, self-advocacy, independent/daily living skills, community participation and postsecondary education. Another handout was teaching children “survival” skills for adulthood which included a checklist for parents.

Ms. Stark explained that Transition Coordinators use to start working with a student at the age of 14 but that changed to 16. This is actually how they track their students as they don't have caseloads. Coordinators track two different groups of students, 1) focusing on those graduating this year and 2) those graduating the following year. They also track the number of students and what kind of supports they need as well as what type of funding they will require. This coincides with the legislative 2-year budget. Transition Coordinators support case managers by attending PPT meetings. Money is specific for day program not employment. Families do work with our approved vendors in identifying who will support them when their education ends. This information is shared with our Central Office and legislators. Another service we provide is home visits and Person Centered Plans. We try to make sure that the PCP includes not only the school system but also family, siblings, aunts etc., in helping to identify what the student really likes and what their strengths are.

Transition Coordinators encourage families to apply for DDS services as early as possible so that they are not a surprise to us at graduation time. This year we have identified 111 grads in the North Region that we know about. One thing that is very different this year is that, in July of this year, those individuals who were not on Medicaid, Title XIX, lost case management services but they can have other services. Our funding won't start until July 1st as that is the beginning of the new fiscal year. Of the 111 grads, 38 individuals are not on Medicaid and have no case managers.

Another major change is that the IFS division created two new positions that are case management dedicated to those families who lost their case manager. A dedicated Helpline was created specifically for these families. When Transition coordinators meet with a family they talk about what happens at age 18, guardianship, social security, Title 19, and self directed supports.

Many schools do not have a job coordinator so they look at our Department for help in that area. Transition coordinators give to families a list of qualified providers, along with an Agency Interview questionnaire which helps them get started with asking questions.

Ms. Stark shared a helpful list of Acronyms in Human Services & Special Education that was put together by the CT Family Support Network and the Department of Development Services. It can also be found on the DDS website. Advisory Council members felt this was a very helpful tool to have in navigating the system.

Mary Stark can be reached at 860-456-6347 or Janet Wagner at 860-331-2040 if you have any additional questions.

OLD BUSINESS:

Meeting minutes of January 20, 2010 were reviewed and approved.

Legislative Breakfast – Finalized plans for the upcoming Legislative Breakfast scheduled for March 10th and discussed which Advisory Council members would be able to attend the breakfast. The focus this year will be to thank legislators for their continued support and to stress the importance of them maintaining services as well as the negative impact of any lost services. Kathy Perrier will begin with introductions, thanking legislators for their continued support as well as asking them to support the Governor's proposed budget. Deb Godsell agreed to be a speaker and talk about respite services. John suggested inviting other parents to attend the breakfast to thank legislators and to explain in a positive manner how DDS services have helped their family. A suggestion was made, as a reminder, to invite Rod O'Connor, DDS Legislative Liaison to attend the breakfast.

NEW BUSINESS:

Budget Update – On February 3, 2010, Governor Rell introduced her Mid-Term Budget for fiscal year 2011. The proposal recommends an appropriation for the Department of Developmental Services of \$1,002,067,459 for FY11. John reviewed the Governor's proposed budget and explained the recommended adjustments of reductions being proposed. There will be series of public hearings before the Appropriations Committee. The public hearing concerning the DDS will be held on February 18th beginning at 6:00 pm at the LOB.

It was suggested that the North Region Planning & Advisory Council host an event that would include Self Advocates, Robin Wood, as well as inviting parents to bring their children so that they can have an opportunity to speak to Self Advocates face-to-face. Local special education teachers should also be invited to attend. John will discuss this idea with the Self Determination Director, Robin Wood and begin coordinating.

Several questions were raised regarding the **Walgreen's Program**. 1) Is it true that people coming through Walgreen's training are now being told they can't be hired for one year? John explained that his understanding is that Walgreen's bases their hiring on the demand for their products. 2) A high school teacher was told that some students work 45 days with no pay while in training, in Phase 2 of training they receive \$8.25 minimum wage, and in Phase 3 they are actually paid. John will get further clarification on this from Robin Wood, Self Determination Director.

Flo Guite shared information regarding an interesting website she discovered that allows you to look at income tax information for non-profit agencies. However, the information is not kept current and in order to view this information you must sign up for it. The website is Guidestar.com.

Patti Silva will give a report next month from the Council on Developmental Services which she is a member of.

There was no public participation.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda A. Angelica
Executive Secretary