

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES
May 6, 2020
Conference Call

The regular meeting of the Board of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) was held May 6, 2020 by conference call. The meeting convened at 10:32 a.m. pursuant to the call of the Board Chair.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Board Chair Darrell Pickney, Sally Hardin, Randy Laverty, Artie Jones, David Rosegrant, Suzanne McCommon and Dr. Linda Selman.

STAFF PRESENT: DDS Director Melissa Stone, Jeff Gonyea, Sarah Murphy, Kerry Gambill, Steve Farmer, Mark Wargo, Avis Lane, Tammy Benbrook, Dale Woodall, Thomas Tarpley, Bryan Redditt, Rhonda Morgan, Nicholas Windle, and Jenna Goldman.

OTHERS PRESENT: Rita Hoover, Deborah Rainwater, Richard Moore, and Sara Farris.

Mr. Pickney called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for participating. He also thanked the staff for their continued work during the pandemic.

Mr. Pickney called for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 26, 2020 regular meeting of the DDS Board. Mr. Rosegrant made a motion that the minutes be approved. Dr. Selman seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The Superintendents presented reports for the Human Development Centers and shared items of interest about their center. All Superintendents praised staff for their hard work, reported increased outdoor activities, innovative new on-campus activities and no cases of COVID-19.

Mr. Laverty commended the staff for the extra work being performed and extended a deep appreciation on behalf of the Board. Mr. Pickney advised the parent associations have purchased banners to be placed on campuses to show staff appreciation.

Mr. Pickney asked for information regarding the governing factors to ease current restrictions on visitation. Ms. Stone advised the Human Development Centers are licensed by the Office of Long Term Care and they worked with the CDC to establish guidelines for the HDCs. HDCs are operating in compliance with their guidelines. The hope is that restrictions will be lifted in Phase III. There is concern that clients will not understand social distancing and there is the potential for that to make matters worse. The staff is open to suggestions from parents regarding visitation. Mr. Pickney will schedule a meeting with parent groups, ask for suggestions and report back to the Board. Ms. McCommon suggested window visits as those are being utilized at nursing homes. Ms. Jones advised a window visit would be more beneficial to her daughter as opposed to a video visit.

DDS Director Melissa Stone advised the Board that she participates in daily calls with the DHS Executive Team which monitors PPEs at all facilities. She reiterated there are no client cases of COVID-19 at the Human Development Centers. Ms. Stone also thanked the superintendents for a fantastic job and noted staff are clearly taking extra precautions when they leave campus. She

advised direct care staff is receiving continuity of care pay through the federal government. The Legislature is reviewing a proposal to extend it to other staff who also encounter clients as it is a good incentive for staff to report to work.

Mr. Pickney asked Ms. Stone to address continued screenings in preparation of flu season or a possible resurgence of COVID-19. She advised that screenings and certain preventative procedures will become policy at both the HDCs and DHS offices at least through the end of the year.

Rita Hoover, VOR National Board member, commended Arkansas for no reports of COVID-19 on campus and noted that is unfortunately not the case in other states. New Jersey is pushing for testing on campus. She inquired about HDC campus testing and was advised by Ms. Stone that is a current practice. Any staff or client who had contact with the nursing staff from AHDC with positive results was tested. Clients who show symptoms are quarantined. New admissions go through an isolation quarantine process prior to being sent to a home. Families may request testing if there is a suspicion of exposure. The Governor has spoken of efforts to conduct more widespread testing at facilities and Ms. Stone will provide more information once it is received. Ms. Hoover also inquired about the number of flu cases on campus. Ms. Benbrook advised there are no recorded numbers but also noted there have been no campus outbreaks. Ms. Hoover announced that FFCFR provided appreciation banners for the HDCs. She concluded by advising the VOR Quality of Care Committee will be writing an article in response to negative articles regarding congregate care.

Deborah Rainwater, mother of CHDC resident Kirk and President of the CHDC Parent/Guardian Association, thanked the staff for their continued service. Regarding client visits, she suggested that an outside visit would work well for her son. Ms. Rainwater inquired if future COVID-19 tests would involve saliva or a nasal swab. Ms. Stone advised she would provide an update when she has that information.

Rhonda Morgan, JHDC LPN, inquired about the status of an LPN pay increase. Ms. Stone advised it was on the agenda for the March Legislative meeting, but it was canceled. Ms. Morgan also asked if the increase would be retroactive. Ms. Goldman will advise when the meeting is rescheduled, and Ms. Stone advised the increase will not be retroactive.

Mr. Pickney called for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Mr. Rosegrant made a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Jones seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

ATTEST:


Mr. Darrell Pickney, Chair, Board of DDS


Executive Secretary