

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES
August 5, 2020
Conference Call

The regular meeting of the Board of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) was held August 5, 2020 by conference call. The meeting convened at 10:33 a.m. pursuant to the call of the Board Chair.

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

STAFF PRESENT: DDS Director Melissa Stone, Jeff Gonyea, Sarah Murphy, Linda Scales, Steve Farmer, Mark Wargo, Avis Lane, Tammy Benbrook, Dale Woodall, Bryan Redditt, Katy Wilson, and Jeff Williams.

OTHERS PRESENT: Rita Hoover, Earlene Stoddard, Rose Seawright, Attorney General Representative Sara Farris, and Casey Davis of Disability Rights Arkansas.

Mr. Pickney called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for participating.

Mr. Pickney called for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 6, 2020 regular meeting of the DDS Board. Ms. McCommon made a motion that the minutes be approved. Ms. Hardin seconded the motion which passed unanimously. Mr. Pickney also called for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 16, 2020 called meeting. Ms. McCommon made a motion that the minutes be approved. Ms. Jones seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

During the July 16, 2020 called meeting, the Board granted approval for Mr. Pickney to request a meeting with the Governor's Office and the Department of Health to discuss visitation at the human development centers. Mr. Pickney advised that after several attempts he was unable to schedule a meeting. Instead he worked closely with DDS Director Melissa Stone to develop a satisfactory visitation plan.

The Superintendents presented reports for the human development centers and shared items of interest which included increased outdoor activities and new innovative on-campus activities. Arkadelphia HDC reported no cases of COVID-19 and advised the visitation procedure is working well. Booneville HDC reported both staff and client cases, but they continue to work to keep clients active yet safe. Conway HDC reported positive cases and are actively following Department of Health and CDC guidelines. The Conway HDC Volunteer Council will host a virtual walkathon on October 3rd. Jonesboro HDC reported no cases. Visitation began this week and is going well. Southeast Arkansas HDC noted the foundation is being laid for the new recreation center which will also serve as the center's evacuation site.

Ms. McCommon inquired about the size of the recreation center. Mr. Wargo advised he did not have specific measurements available at the time but did indicate it will be large enough for a full size volleyball court and would include showers and a warming kitchen.

Mr. Pickney asked how parents and clients are coping with the no physical contact rule during visitation. Superintendents cited no issues. Superintendents were commended by Mr. Pickney for implementing the visitation policies and added he has received positive feedback from parents. He also asked Superintendents to consider indoor visitation due to the current summer temperatures.

DDS Director Melissa Stone also commended the Superintendents for the outstanding work they continue to do. She voiced how she was pleased that the guideline amendment allowed for visitation and noted the amendment is beneficial to HDCs as well as private ICFs. She also emphasized that the policy regarding physical touch was not put in place by DDS or the human development centers. It is listed in the Department of Health guidelines. Ms. Stone has received positive feedback regarding visitation. Currently 3 human development centers are conducting visitation. The remaining 2 are being closely monitored to determine when they will begin visitation.

Ms. Stone announced that the Blue Umbrella has reopened. Employment program clients are producing high quality masks that are selling fast. DDS will provide one to Governor Hutchinson to wear during a press conference to promote the store.

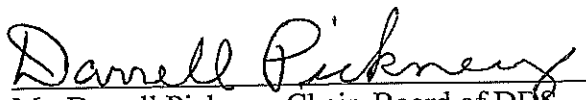
Ms. McCommon recognized Mr. Pickney for his committed involvement as a Board member. She thanked both him and Ms. Stone for keeping Board members well informed and voiced her appreciation for their dedication to the clients.

Parent, Earlene Stoddard thanked Conway HDC for allowing her to visit with her son. She noted the visit to be wonderful.

Parent, Rose Seawright asked for clarification on where the policy regarding no touching was listed in the guidance from the Department of Health. Ms. Stone advised it is on page 4 under a section titled activities. Ms. Seawright stated her interpretation of what she was told by staff at the Department of Health was that the policy regarding no touching came from DDS. Ms. Seawright added she commends the staff for their work, stated that she did have a good visit with her son, but would like to see steps taken to amend this policy. She explained the no contact policy was difficult and confusing for her son. Mr. Pickney advised Ms. Seawright he empathized with her and that he and Ms. Stone would follow up on the issue.

Mr. Pickney called for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Hardin made a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Mr. Rosegrant seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

ATTEST:


Mr. Darrell Pickney, Chair, Board of DDS


Executive Secretary