

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES
August 11, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) was held August 11, 2021 via Zoom. The meeting convened at 10:42 a.m. pursuant to the call of the Board Chair.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Randy Laverty, Suzann McCommon, Linda Patterson, Michelle Loe, Becky Mitchum, David Rosegrant, and Stephanie Heildelberg.

STAFF PRESENT: DDS Director Melissa Stone, Jeff Gonyea, Sarah Murphy, Jennifer Ethridge, Kathy Guffey, Kerry Gambill, Diane Keith, Mark Wargo, Avis Lane, Tammy Benbrook, Dale Woodall, Thomas Tarpley, Bryan Redditt, Kathryn Loyd Wilson, Shannon Roberts, Gretchen Baggett, and Jerry Hodge.

OTHERS PRESENT: Linda Selman, Parrie Jane, Tommy Carroll, Elizabeth Hurley-Burks, Edward Hurley, Rushton Hurley, Sally Hardin, Darrell Pickney, Rita Hoover, Jan Fortney, Deborah Rainwater, Terry Johnson, Attorney General Representative Sara Farris, and Kris Stewart of Disability Rights Arkansas.

Ms. McCommon called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Ms. Stone introduced the current Board members and asked the new members to introduce themselves and share background information. Linda Patterson is the Director of the Phillips County Development Center in West Helena. Becky Mitchum is a Speech Language Pathologist with White River Medical Center Outpatient Clinic. Michelle Loe, a former DHS employee with the Division of Children and Family Services, is involved in banking and community development. Stephanie Heildelberg, an Educator, is currently a HIPPY Field Coordinator.

Ms. Stone made a special presentation to former Board members thanking them for their dedication to the Board and the clients we serve. A plaque recognizing their years of service was read and will be forwarded to them. Current Board members, Superintendents, and staff also expressed their gratitude and invited them to remain active with DDS and the HDCs.

At this time, the election of DDS Board officers was conducted. Mr. Laverty made a motion to accept the following slate of officers; Suzann McCommon as Chair and David Rosegrant as Vice Chair. Ms. Heidelberg seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. McCommon called for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 12, 2021 regular meeting of the DDS Board. Mr. Rosegrant made a motion that the minutes be approved. Mr. Laverty seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

There were no subcommittee reports. Ms. McCommon advised new Board members will be assigned to serve on the Physical Management and Administrative Services subcommittees.

The Superintendents provided an overview of the human development centers and shared items of interest regarding campus activities and construction updates. Mr. Lavery requested information regarding protection measures begin taken as a result of the Delta Variant. All staff are required to wear KN95 masks in direct care areas. Special precautions and restrictions are also in place for homes with exposure. In addition, staff undergo hand washing training and are continually encouraged to be diligent in their efforts to combat the virus.

Attorney General Representative Sara Farris provided FOIA training for the Board (Attachment 1) and addressed questions.

Ms. Stone began her report by acknowledging COVID and staff fatigue/turnover are chief concerns at the human development centers. Incentives and stimulus payments were helpful for a period of time, but staff numbers are again in need of improvement. To address the lack of interest in HDC employment, DDS is working with Human Resources on a recruitment marketing campaign. Pay scale options are also being explored in an effort to compete with wages being offered by restaurants, general merchandise retailers, and the private sector. HDCs have also established CNA training to not only raise the level of care, but to position employees for educational advances and salary increases. In addition, on August 24th DDS is scheduled to meet with the Arkansas Legislative Committee to seek a wage increase for direct care staff, secure APRN positions, and obtain approval for new supervisory level positions which allow overtime wages.

Ms. Stone provided an overview of the Essential Worker Voucher, a federal program which covers childcare expenses for up to three years for direct care staff. She also provided an update that the estimated completion time of the onsite daycare center on the CHDC campus is 24 months.

Ms. McCommon and Mr. Lavery thanked Jan Fortney, Secretary of Families and Friends of Care Facility Residents (FFCFR), for providing the Board with copies of their organization's publication. They complimented its content and quality and voiced gratefulness for the organization's work. Ms. Fortney expressed appreciation to Ms. Stone, the Board, and staff for their continued efforts to improve the lives of HDC clients and noted that she looks forward to working with the new Board members.

With no other business, Ms. McCommon called for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Mr. Rosegrant made a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Heidelberg seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.

ATTEST:


Chair, Board of DDS


Executive Secretary