

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES
May 4, 2022

The regular meeting of the Board of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) was held May 4, 2022, at the Conway Human Development Center. The meeting convened at 10:30 a.m. pursuant to the call of the Board Chair.

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

STAFF PRESENT: DDS Director Melissa Weatherton, Jeff Gonyea, Sarah Murphy, Kerry Gambill, Diane Keith, Mark Wargo, Avis Lane, Tammy Benbrook, Dale Woodall, Thomas Tarpley, Shannon Roberts, Daisy Reyes, and Kathy Guffey.

OTHERS PRESENT: Jan Fortney, Deborah Rainwater, Mel Butler, Judy Rosegrant, LeeAnn Gonyea, Rita Hoover, Darrell Pickney, and Katrina Robertson.

Ms. McCommon called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone in attendance and asked each Board member to introduce themselves and share background information. Board Chair Suzann McCommon's background is special education, and she is former human development center staff. David Rosegrant is retired Arkansas State Police. Michelle Loe, a former DHS employee with the Division of Children and Family Services, is involved in banking and community development. Linda Patterson is Director of the Phillips County Developmental Center and Delta House in Helena. Randy Laverty is a retired DHS Assistant Director of County Operations and former member of the Arkansas General Assembly. Becky Mitchum is a Speech Language Pathologist, Certified Brain Injury Specialist, and former violinist with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. McCommon called for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2022, regular meeting of the DDS Board. Mr. Laverty made a motion that the minutes be approved. Mr. Rosegrant seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The Physical Management Subcommittee met at 10:00 on this date to discuss the five-year lease extension involving 1.5 acres utilized as office space by the Forestry Commission on Jonesboro Human Development Center property. The Subcommittee moved to approve the extension. Mr. Rosegrant seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The Superintendents provided an overview of the human development centers and shared items of interest regarding campus activities, hiring and retention efforts, and construction updates. The Superintendents also expressed their appreciation of the partnership with, and activities sponsored by the Elks Lodge on each campus.

Ms. Weatherton advised DDS staff is currently working on the 2022-2023 budget. Hiring and retention efforts are going well due in part to CNA training, pay scale increases, overtime eligibility, and the addition of supervisory positions. The Governor also provided a COLA for state employees. The vaccine bonus incentive was successful rendering DDS in full compliance with the CMS vaccine mandate. Race to 100, a competition for employees at the human development centers to encourage

vaccinations, ended with Jonesboro Human Development Center as the winner. The staff was awarded a cookout on April 19th.

Through Home and Community Based Services, approximately 9000 waiver clients are served in the community. DDS spearheaded distribution of \$112,000,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds to community providers to be utilized for hiring bonuses, longevity payments and complex care longevity payments.

The Farmers Market will resume June 3rd. Sysco will donate burgers and hot dogs for the clients' lunch. The food will also be served to the public for a donation. Proceeds will be utilized for the HDC client Christmas Fund.

Construction of two of the new units at the Booneville Human Development Center is complete. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on May 18th. The Public Health Committee Hearing will also be held at BHDC on May 31st.

The DDS animated video developed as a recruitment tool which addresses the benefits of DHS employment has gone live. Conway Human Development Center is in the process of developing a similar video which targets a separate age group.

Online purchases at the Blue Umbrella will be available at the beginning of June. The store will also implement a new employment initiative. Clients who receive DDS services are eligible to receive in-store training in preparation for employment in the community with a job coach. The training program is being updated and at present there are no applicants.

Parent and advocate Jan Fortney addressed the Board to express her thanks for their service and dedication. She was complimentary of the care her daughter receives at Conway Human Development Center.


Parent and advocate Rita Hoover also expressed appreciation for the Board and staff. She offered an update on the Federal Legislation in some states to transition clients out of ICFs. Ms. Hoover previously served as a VOR (Voice of Reason) National Board member. She is currently a Board member of ICF Advocates for Choice, an organization in support of efforts for public and private ICFs to remain open. Ms. Hoover also provided information regarding money follows the person. Her understanding is that under the Build Back Better Plan there is a push to close ICFs and allocate funds for transitioning clients into the community.


Ms. Hoover inquired about Arkadelphia Human Development Center's relaxation therapy program. Superintendent Gambill outlined the Moves and Grooves class, a self-soothing program, and explained how it utilizes yoga, music, drumming, aromatherapy, etc. Ms. Hoover also inquired if the HDCs or HCBS providers would be in receipt of a portion of the surplus funds recently announced by the Governor. Ms. Weatherton advised that to her knowledge DHS would not receive these funds. However, DDS is in receipt of monies from the Medicaid Trust Fund surplus to provide an additional 3400 waiver slots. Ms. Weatherton also provided an overview of the PHE Wind Down work DDS staff have been tasked with. During the National Public Health Emergency DDS could not disenroll anyone

from Medicaid. As a result, approximately 250,000 beneficiaries must be reevaluated to ensure there are no interruptions in service.

With no further 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. Patterson seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

ATTEST:


Suzann McCommon
Chair, Board of DDS


Executive Secretary