

Digest

Consolidation of Agencies Serving Persons with Disabilities

BACKGROUND

- Connecticut has had a long history of maintaining single-purpose agencies to serve clients with disabilities.
- Previous attempts to merge/consolidate agencies serving disabled populations in Connecticut have achieved only limited success.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF CONSOLIDATION

- There are a number of reasons to consolidate agencies serving disabled populations in Connecticut, as outlined below:
 - The majority of other states provide services to disabled populations through a large umbrella agency like a health and/or human services department.
 - Both the private and public sectors continue to use a variety of ways to downsize and improve efficiencies, including consolidations.
 - Recent fiscal and personnel reductions, and the introduction of the Core-CT in Connecticut make this an opportune time for consolidation.
 - A merger reduces disparities in ability to provide administration/support service in the individual agencies.
- There is no consistently used standard of what percentage of staff or funding should go to administrative/support functions. Using five percent of total staff dedicated to administration as a reasonable standard, the committee finds:
 - A reduction of approximately 100 positions should be possible in a new consolidated agency with centralized administrative functions.
 - Resulting total administrative cost-savings should be about \$8.5 million, based on a median salary and benefit figure of \$85,025 for each administrative position.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- The committee's public hearing was attended by dozens of advocates and agency heads; all testified in opposition to a merger.
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- Following the public hearing, two less-sweeping options to consolidation were developed and considered by the committee.
- The committee concluded that benefits to a full agency merger outweigh its drawbacks and adopted the following consolidation recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION

Consolidate the Departments of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Mental Retardation, Board of Education and Services for the Blind, and Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired into a single agency. This merger would include all programs currently administered by these agencies.

Program review staff recommends that the consolidation model be a categorical one, and the resulting new agency be called the Department of Developmental and Rehabilitative Services. It shall have one commissioner and one deputy commissioner and each division (five categorical service divisions and the administrative division) shall have a division director. The division director shall be a managerial position within classified service.

Major modifications of relevant statutes (i.e., Chapters 174; 319b; 319i; 319mm (Part II); and 814a) will be required to reflect these organizational changes.

Steering Committee: The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management shall direct the implementation of the consolidation. There shall be a steering committee to develop an implementation plan. Each of the following organizations and entities shall have a representative on the steering committee appointed by the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management from names submitted by each agency or organization:

- **The State Employees Union Bargaining Coalition;**
- **The state Management Advisory Council, an organization of state managers outside of collective bargaining;**
- **One representative from each of the current departments or bureaus recommended for consolidation;**
- **One representative from an advocacy organization representing each of the client groups involved in the consolidation;**
- **One member of a contracting service provider who is not an advocate of one of the client groups; and**
- **One member from a business in the private sector or from an organization representing business and industry interests.**

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: The implementation plan shall be developed by January 1, 2005, and submitted to the legislature's committees on appropriations, human services, public health, and government administration and elections. The implementation plan shall include the steps for consolidation outlined to begin by February 1, 2005, and completed by December 31, 2005. Each step shall be assigned to one of the state agency representatives

on the steering committee, as designated by the full committee. That agency representative shall have the authority to form implementation teams made up of personnel in the current agencies and support agencies like Department of Information Technology, appropriate and relevant to achieving the assigned task. (For example, one team might be responsible for facility and space needs, while another might be assigned to reengineering a client database to serve the new agency). The implementation steering committee shall select and prioritize the steps in the plan and determine dates for completion, which shall be included in the plan.
