

Questions for Department of Developmental Services Commissioner Nominee

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Commissioner of Developmental Services ([CGS § 17a-210](#))

The commissioner administers the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), including the operation of the Southbury Training School, developmental services regions, and state-operated residential facilities. The commissioner plans, develops, and implements programs and services for people with intellectual disabilities; develops eligibility criteria for their placement in public or private residential care; and investigates allegations of abuse and neglect of them and individuals receiving services from the Department of Social Services' Division of Autism Spectrum Disorder Services.

Questions

1. DDS is using federal funding under the American Rescue Plan Act to transition up to 300 people from group residential and day settings to more individualized community-based support as part of the "ARPA Transformation Initiative." Can you provide an update on this initiative? How will it affect providers and people receiving services? How will the department meet any long-term funding needs related to this initiative?
2. A workforce report from last fall indicated that the department had over 1,000 vacancies, and the Office of Policy and Management's most recent budget forecast showed a projected \$15 million personal services lapse for the department in FY 23. Please describe the department's efforts to fill these vacancies. As retirees depart, are there any agency efforts to retain institutional knowledge? What efforts is the department making to retain existing staff?

3. How many people are currently on the department's waitlist for residential services? How quickly do people move off the waitlist? What can the department do to increase the number of people moving off the waitlist?
4. Employment supports provided by the department generally seek to place people in competitive employment in work settings that also employ people without disabilities. Are these programs able to function in the same way during economic downturns? How might they change if the labor market softens?
5. To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic changed service delivery for people with intellectual disabilities? On balance, would you say that an increased reliance on technology benefited these populations or, has it created additional challenges? What service delivery lessons may be learned from the pandemic?
6. What is the department's role in providing or assessing transportation options available to people with intellectual disabilities? To what extent are people served by DDS able to access these services to better integrate into their communities?
7. What processes exist for stakeholders to participate in DDS policies and programs? Are there opportunities specifically for families and people participating in DDS programs to comment on and influence department policy? Please explain.
8. DDS's current [five-year plan](#) runs from 2022 to 2027. What are the plan's major initiatives? What progress has the department made in the last year on these initiatives?
9. Legislation passed last year required the department to encourage DDS-licensed residential facilities to participate in energy use assessment programs under the state's Conservation and Load Management Plan ([PA 22-140](#), § 4). Has the department fulfilled this requirement? To your knowledge, have any facility owners participated in an energy assessment?
10. Recently, a fire destroyed property at the Southbury Training School. The fire appears to have been intentionally set. What is the status of the investigation? What steps is the department taking to secure, maintain, or transfer its property?

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