



SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
Disabilities and Special Needs

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For more Information contact: Robb McBurney, 803-898-9723

DDSN ANNOUNCES INNOVATIVE PLAN TO STRENGTHEN SERVICES AT SOUTH CAROLINA'S FIVE REGIONAL INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITIES

Columbia, S.C. (July 15, 2021) - The South Carolina Commission on Disabilities and Special Needs unanimously voted today during the July 15, 2021, commission meeting to support the agency's most progressive plan in years to improve safety, accountability, and workplace training at the state's five regional intermediate care facilities (ICFs), commonly referred to as the DDSN Regional Centers.

DDSN Regional Center Intermediate Care Facilities are operated by the state and provide 24-hour care, supervision, and treatment to the most fragile individuals served by DDSN. The Regional Centers, located in Clinton, Columbia, Florence, Hartsville, and Summerville, are generally recommended only when all other appropriate home and community-based services aren't an ideal fit for a family's needs and circumstances.

During today's commission meeting, DDSN announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the SC Department on Aging, which operates the South Carolina Long Term Care Ombudsman's Office (LTCO). Under the agreement, the LTCO will produce content for training videos that will be used by DDSN to better train direct care staff in the onboarding process and throughout the year. DDSN hopes that the training will help to eliminate abuse and neglect cases and improve the overall quality of care of all residents, especially those with increasing behavioral needs.

"The pandemic created extremely difficult staffing challenges in our ICFs and the stress on the direct support professional (DSP) workforce from high turnover, staffing shortages, and high overtime has been immense," said Constance Holloway, Esq., Interim State Director of DDSN. "As a result of increased data collection, monitoring and gathering input from supervisors and frontline workers, DDSN is developing a set of new initiatives and stronger guidance to enhance worker satisfaction and quality of life of those served in the state's five regional intermediate care facilities."

DDSN Commission Chair Stephanie Rawlinson and other Commissioners expressed their full support of initiatives to strengthen the regional center workforce and reinforce efforts to protect the health and safety of all residents. "This Commission has a zero tolerance for



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any instances of abuse at the regional centers. The new training provided by the LTCO is welcomed and affirms the agency's commitment to facilitating positive changes throughout DDSN," Rawlinson said.

A Taskforce for ICF Reform and Improvement was also created and the members were appointed during the commission meeting. Other new initiatives include reinstating the state-wide Regional Center Family Council so that DDSN can regularly gather input from self-advocates and families to establish an open line of communication.

"The families serve as an important fidelity check on our standard of care at the regional centers. Reconstituting a statewide family and parent group will help DDSN to focus on issues of common concern at the centers and give us ideas on improving life for the families we serve," Holloway said

"I am pleased that DDSN is focusing on improvement at the regional centers and involving families in that process. The regional centers serve as a vital and necessary service to our loved ones who need a higher level of medical care than they can get at home or in community placements," said Linda Lee, President of the Whitten Center Parents and Families Council.

"DDSN is committed to making the Regional Centers a model for intermediate care facilities and the agency will do whatever it takes to make the level of care at the regional centers stronger than ever in the future," said Rawlinson.

About DDSN

The South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN), as stated in Section 44-20-240 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, has authority over all the state's services and programs for South Carolinians with severe lifelong disabilities, including intellectual disabilities and related disabilities, autism, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, and similar disabilities. Primary responsibilities include planning, development, and provision of a full range of services for children and adults; ensure all services and supports provided meet or exceed acceptable standards; and improve the quality of services and efficiency of operations. The department advocates for people with severe lifelong disabilities both as a group and as individuals; coordinates services with other agencies; and promotes and implements prevention activities to reduce the occurrence of both primary and secondary disabilities.

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