

Questions for the Department of Developmental Services Ombudsperson Nominee

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Department of Developmental Services, Ombudsperson ([CGS § 17a-210a](#))

The developmental services ombudsperson receives complaints affecting individuals under the care of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) or agencies with which the department contracts for services and recommends to the DDS commissioner ways to resolve these complaints. The ombudsperson also works collaboratively with individuals, families, state agencies, municipalities, the General Assembly, and other stakeholders to help people access information and resolve their challenges related to DDS services and supports.

Questions

1. You were last before this committee in 2022 when you first became the DDS ombudsperson. Since that time, how has your work evolved and what would you say are the most important insights you have gained serving in this role?
2. Looking to another term in this role, what is your vision for the office and what are your major objectives for a second term?
3. Between 2018 and 2020 the number of cases your office handled decreased by more than half (from 1,090 in 2018 to 438 in 2020), presumably, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Has this trend reversed and approximately how many complaints did your office receive in 2025? Do you have the staff and resources to adequately respond to these complaints?

4. A [recent report](#) issued by DDS pursuant to [PA 25-89](#) cited more than 4,000 abuse and neglect allegations of people with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) made to the department and 15 related deaths in 2024. Of these allegations 43% were substantiated and, presumably, there are also instances of abuse and neglect that were not reported. What do you think is driving this level of abuse and neglect and what can be done to address it? What percentage of complaints the ombudsperson's office receives are about abuse and neglect, and does that percentage track with the increases seen in allegations made to DDS (which increased from 2,627 in 2019 to 4,246 in 2024)?
5. What role does the ombudsperson play in the process of reporting and investigating abuse and neglect? Do you advocate for specific actions or safeguards to be put in place to ensure that providers promptly take corrective action after allegations have been substantiated?
6. The Human Services Committee favorably reported a bill ([HB 5558](#)) this session that requires DDS to release individual investigation reports to parents or guardians unless those people are, or live with, the alleged perpetrators. These reports are currently released to parents or guardians only upon request with roughly 150 of them released in 2025. Is a lack of transparency around abuse and neglect and related investigations an issue that your office frequently hears about from those reaching out for ombudsperson services?
7. In the most recent annual report available on the DDS ombudsperson website, summarizing the office's work in 2024, you noted that Connecticut has a disproportionate number of people under guardianship compared to other states. What factors do you think contribute to that and what should be done, if anything, to address it?
8. While the statutory mandate of your office is to support people with IDD, you also assist many people with other disabilities and members of the public. What percentage of contacts would you say fall into the latter categories and does your office have the capacity and resources to handle this expanded role? Do you feel those complaints should be directed elsewhere?
9. People often report that the DDS system is highly complex and difficult to navigate. Your role involves not just resolving issues for people, but also teaching them how to advocate for themselves and independently resolve issues and access services. Can you share with the committee some of your successes and challenges in performing this aspect of the role?
10. The office's [2024 annual report](#) also notes the vast array of agencies, organizations, offices, committees, work groups, and individuals you communicate with in order to carry out your role. While you have the expertise to navigate this vast system of providers and administrators, presumably, most people who contact your office do not. What can the legislature do to streamline DDS service delivery and make them easier to access and navigate for the people they are meant to help?
11. Like many states, Connecticut currently faces serious challenges staffing facilities and securing appropriate treatment providers for DDS clients. In which areas do you believe this staffing shortage is most acute and most in need of urgent action by the General Assembly?

12. The ombudsperson's role requires you to be impartial and not favor any particular side, position, or person in a dispute or misunderstanding regarding DDS. That said, people contacting your office often present with very compelling needs. How do you strike that balance and remain neutral in getting them help and finding solutions?
13. Have changes in law or funding at the federal level impacted the people that you serve and, if so, in what ways and how is your office working to address them?
14. There have been several initiatives in recent years to rebalance the state's long-term care system and help people to transition from institutional care into community-based settings. DDS has followed suit, shifting placements away from campus settings and into community living arrangements, community companion homes, and in some cases, family residences. How successful have these initiatives been and should more be done?

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