

Public Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council

Date: July 10, 2025

Location: Radisson Hotel, SeaTac

Attendance: Julie Clark (Chair), Riley Daugherty, Robert Wardell, Alex Koval, Tayshia Farra, Melissa Dodge, Mark Harniss, Gabriela Ewing (Online), Noah Seidel (Online), Sandi Gruberg (Online)

Staff: Emily Rogers, Christie Chiles (Online), Phillip Rasmussen (Online)

Guest: Katie Mehan, Department of Commerce

Overview

The Public Policy Committee convened in July 2025, with Chair Julie opening the meeting and expressing appreciation to members for their continued participation. The committee began with the approval of the April 2025 meeting minutes, which were passed unanimously following a motion by Alex Koval and second by Julie Clark.

Revisiting Council Values

The first major discussion focused on the values that will guide the Council's public policy agenda during the upcoming legislative session. These values—belonging, diversity, inclusion, independence, leadership, and respect—were originally identified through small group work in a previous meeting. This session was devoted to deepening the shared understanding of what each word means to Council members.

Key discussion points included:

- Belonging: Feeling accepted without needing to meet specific criteria.
- Diversity: Embracing people of all backgrounds and identities.
- Inclusion vs. Belonging: Inclusion can be structured; belonging is felt.
- Independence: Broadly framed as self-determination, with support when needed.
- Leadership: Both personal empowerment and organizational advocacy.
- Respect: Creating safe spaces, honoring individuality, and supporting self-respect.

Federal Context and DEI Considerations

Members raised questions about federal executive orders and their implications for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) language. While some federal agencies are pressuring programs to avoid DEI terminology, the Council affirmed that Washington State remains committed to inclusive practices and values. Members emphasized continuing to lead with those values without drawing unnecessary political attention.

Legislative Priority Survey Results

The committee reviewed survey results from 19 Council members to inform the 2026 legislative agenda. The top five priorities were:

1. Caregiver/Provider Shortage and Training
2. Access to Disability Services and Supports
3. Employment
4. Medicaid
5. Workforce Shortage (residential staff, job coaches)

Introducing a New Prioritization Tool

A new evaluation grid was introduced to score each priority across criteria like likelihood of legislative action, critical need, DDC's unique voice, alignment with the DD Act, return on investment, and bipartisan support. The Council members broke into groups for discussion. Only one group completed the evaluation—focused on Caregiver/Provider Shortage and Training—which scored high (mostly 10s) in nearly every category.

Challenges and Next Steps

The scoring process revealed a need for additional discussion and clarity. Some members wanted more nuanced scoring options; others noted that some categories require further definition. Due to time constraints, the full chart was not completed by all groups.

To address this, Emily proposed an additional virtual meeting in August or September to refine priority scores and finalize language. The goal is to adopt a final list of legislative priorities by October 2025 for Council approval and use during the 2026 session.