

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council

Radisson Hotel, SeaTac

July 10, 2025 – SeaTac, WA

Day One

Council Members Present: Leigh Spruce, Tayshia Farra, Alex Koval, Dana Floyd, Melanie Baker, Riley Daughtery, Bridget Parkhill, Mark Harness, Noah Seidel, Robert Wardell, Melissa Dodge, Sidney Krebsbach, Julie Clark, Cassie Martin, Sandy Gruberg, Angela Randall, Katie Mirkovich, Gabriella Ewing

Staff: Brandi Monts, Christie Chiles, Brian Dahl, Emily Rogers, Phillip Rasmussen, Linda West, Kevin Vargas.

Guests: Manny Ruiz (AV), John Lemus, Nye Blades, Katie Meehan, Cherry George, Grace Huang, Betty Swieterman, Jen Chong Jewel, Luisa Parada Estrada, Ivanova Smith, Michelle Sturdevant, Rachel Paquin, Terra Jacobson, Heather Chappel, Ty Shawn

Welcome and Introductions

Leigh welcomed everyone and asked members and guests to introduce themselves and share something others might not know about them. A Quorum was established.

Minutes

The Council reviewed the April 2025 Council meeting minutes. Sydney moved and Riley seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Co-Chair and Executive Director Evaluation Report

Tayshia, Leigh, Sydney and Gabriella, reviewed the process for this year's Executive Director evaluation. Compared to the previous year, the survey was sent to a more targeted group of about 30 respondents. Primarily Council members and partner organizations familiar with the Executive Director's work.

Key themes from the 13 responses included the need for clearer distinction between the roles of Council members and the Executive Director. Also, there was a request for more flexible meeting times to accommodate members' varied schedules.

Brandi noted that both of these themes had emerged in past evaluations and remain priorities for improvement. Goals for the coming year will also include expanding partnerships with organizations led by and for people of color and strengthening Council orientation for new members.

Executive Director's Report

Brandi provided a detailed overview of federal and state developments affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and the Council's work.

Federal Updates:

Brandi reported that there is concern over Congressional cuts to Medicaid, which will likely take effect in January 2026. While Washington's leadership is expected to push back on harmful changes, such as the eligibility requirements for Apple Health and potential impacts on waiver programs remain unclear. Cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are also expected. Nationally, DD Council funding is proposed to drop from \$81 million to \$80 million, with some programs particularly Disability Rights Washington is at risk. Brandi emphasized the Council's ongoing advocacy with federal lawmakers.

State Updates:

DSHS's Developmental Disabilities Administration is undergoing major restructuring, with approximately 140 positions eliminated, including case

managers for individuals on “No Paid Services” caseloads. Some Council positions remain vacant due to these changes, though recruitment is underway.

Community Summit:

Brandi shared results from the recent Community Summit which drew strong participation. Attendees identified three top concerns:

1. A shortage of available care providers;
2. Poor quality of services received; and
3. Overwhelming lack of navigation support in accessing resources.

These findings were presented at the DD Symposium hosted by Representative Taylor, where 12 legislators engaged in discussion with the DD community.

50th Anniversary Planning:

The Council’s 50th anniversary will be celebrated April 15, 2026, at South Puget Sound Community College in Lacey. A five-month “Five Decades in Five Months” campaign will highlight milestones in advocacy, policy, and community inclusion. The planning committee is seeking historical records, photographs, and contact information for past Council members, especially from the 1990s, to support the event.

Membership & Meetings:

In 2026 the Council change its meeting structure to hold two in-person meetings (April and October) and two online meetings (January and July). The committee meetings will move to virtual meetings to be held between

Council meetings. This change is expected to save costs and increase opportunities for members to participate in legislative advocacy.

Budget Update

Brandi walked members through the status of multiple federal and state funding streams.

- **FY23 funds** are nearly fully spent, with only about \$53,000 remaining for state plan work;
- **FY24 funds** are on track, with a no-cost extension request planned to allow more time for contracted work;
- **FY25 funds** are secure and will sustain operations through at least July 2026; and
- The **Informing Families** program will absorb a \$40,000 cut by reducing print materials in favor of multilingual QR code–based digital resources, preserving staffing levels and outreach capacity.

Expansion Committee Update

The Expansion Committee reported progress in three focus areas:

- **Messaging and Communications** – producing plain-language newsletters, partner highlights, and impact reports;
- **Land Acknowledgment** – beginning relationship-building with a local tribe to ensure the acknowledgment is part of meaningful and ongoing engagement, not just a ceremonial statement; and
- **Managing Conflict** – planning a consultant-led Council training later in 2025 to strengthen constructive dialogue and cultural competence.

University of Washington

Mark Harniss presented early findings from a WADDC-funded research project examining strategies to reduce the number of people with IDD in institutional or carceral settings. The study, launched in April 2024, includes a review of national and state-level practices and will inform the Council's policy and planning efforts.

Closing Notes

Throughout the day, members expressed the importance of preserving historical context to show the value of past advocacy and the lived experiences of people with IDD. The meeting closed with reminders about upcoming committee work, continued advocacy opportunities, and the next day's agenda.

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council Radisson Hotel, SeaTac July 11, 2025 Day Two

Council Members Present: Alex Koval, Tayshia Farra, Leigh Spruce, Sydney Krebsbach, Melisa Dodge, Robert Wardell, Bridgett Parkhill, Melanie Baker, Noah Siedel, Dana Floyd, Riley Dougherty, Cassie Martin, Sandy Gruberg, Katie Nash, Angela Randall, Gabriella Ewing Katie Mirkovich, Monica Burke, Mark Harniss, Julie Clark

Staff: Brandi Monts, Christie Chiles, Emily Rogers, Phillip Rasmussen, Linda West, Kevin Vargas.

Guests: Manny Ruiz, Jen Chong Jewel,

Call to order

Tayshia and Leigh called the meeting to order. Introductions were done and confirmation of quorum was made. Council members gave a single word to describe how they were feeling after the previous days' discussions. The opening conversation emphasized a sense of purpose and the collective spirit of the Council.

Proclamation Discussion

The Council revisited the Autism Awareness Month proclamation adopted earlier in the year. Members acknowledged that while the proclamation had been created with good intentions, some in the Autism community found its

language medicalized and disrespectful. Several Council members described receiving calls that were upsetting and difficult to respond to. Sydney, who drafted the proclamation, spoke candidly about her intentions and her struggle with receiving negative feedback. Members reassured her that her work was valued and that proclamations are the responsibility of the entire Council. The discussion closed with consensus that language will continue to evolve and that the Council must remain open to learning while also standing together when decisions are made.

Election of Vice Chair

With Leigh Spruce moving into the Co-Chair role, the Vice Chair seat was vacant. Robert and Melanie were nominated from the floor. Ballots were cast both in person and electronically with Melanie Baker being elected as the new Vice Chair.

State Plan Development

Brian and Kevin provided an update on the Council's statewide survey, which had close to one thousand responses. Housing, access to services and supports, healthcare, and employment emerged as the top priorities.

Survey respondents identified significant barriers, including lack of knowledge about resources, unaffordable or inaccessible housing, limited supports, and financial strain.

Council members divided into small groups to discuss which activities should continue in the next Five-Year State Plan and what new priorities should be included. There was strong agreement that leadership training, advocacy partnerships, and informing families must continue.

Members also emphasized the importance of expanding outreach to underrepresented communities, family caregivers, preparing for emerging issues such as pandemics, addressing behavioral health and IDD, strengthening employment supports, and developing mentorship opportunities for youth.

Several members volunteered to join the State Plan Subcommittee, which will meet before the October Council meeting to carry this work forward.

Criminal Justice and Incarceration Project

Mark Harniss presented findings from the Council's criminal justice and incarceration project. The 120-page report includes historical context, statutory and case law review, and analysis of academic literature. Discussion groups focused heavily on prevention, with particular attention to the "preschool-to-prison pipeline" and the need for stronger early behavioral health supports. Members stressed the importance of educating individuals with IDD about social norms, relationships, and sexual health, as well as the need for training law enforcement and first responders. The group also discussed gaps in re-entry services for individuals with IDD leaving incarceration.

Committee Reports

Membership and Governance Committee

The Membership and Governance Committee reported on work plans, noting that committee structures may change in the coming year. The committee also discussed scheduling for 2026 Council meetings, with the idea of pairing meetings with community events such as town halls in different regions.

The committee brought forward several policies for approval, each presented in plain language and updated to reflect current practices. These actions were taken:

- **Policy 406 Council Meeting Structure and Attendance:** Alex moved and Julie seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.
- **Policy 407 Councilmember Agreement:** Riley moved and Robert seconded. the motion was approved unanimously. This agreement will now require signatures during orientation for new Council members.

- **Policy 410 Executive Director Responsibilities and Evaluation, consolidating Policies 409 and 410:** Alex moved and Noah seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Policy Committee

The Committee reported on robust discussions from the previous day. Members revisited the Council's guiding values of belonging, diversity, inclusion, independence, leadership, and respect, and emphasized how those values shape policy priorities.

Legislative updates were shared, including the creation of transit rider boards with representation from people with disabilities, changes to driver's license requirements that will improve employment access. Also, the passage of a right-to-repair law enabling wheelchair users to repair their own equipment, and legislation halting admissions to Residential Habilitation Centers beginning June 30, 2025, with full transition planning required by 2028.

Additional funding had been approved to reduce restraint and seclusion in schools and to strengthen special education funding.

Agency Reports

Monica reported that its maternal and child health priorities align closely with Council survey results, with strong emphasis on care coordination, family supports, rural access, housing, and financial supports.

Mark shared progress on the Lakeland Village records project, where 3,000 boxes of archival material were uncovered dating back to the early 1900s. These records will form the basis of a historical report on the institution, which will be submitted to the Legislature in September.

Closing and Adjournment

The Council reflected on the work accomplished. The meeting adjourned on schedule, with members reaffirming their commitment to move forward collectively.

