

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council
Full Council Meeting Minutes
April 16–17, 2026

Location: Hampton Inn, Lacey/Olympia
4301 Martin Way E
Olympia, Washington, 98516

Present: Robert Wardell, Sydney Krebsbach, Alex Koval, Leigh Spruce, Katie Nash, Letha Fernandez, Melanie Baker, Melissa Dodge, Sandi Gruberg, Megan DeSmit, Connor Casseday, Noah Seidel, De Anna Winterrose, Bridgett Parkhill, Katie Mirkovich, Tammy Bowen, Monica Burke, Kris Pederson, Dana Floyd

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

Guests and Support: Anthony Nash, Manny Ruiz, Ny Blade, Samantha Bredinger, Matt G., Shawnda Slope, Matt Ojennes, Aiyana Elmi, Nicole Paulis, Kacie Smarjese, Heather Chappell

Welcome and Opening Business

Leigh Spruce called the meeting to order and welcomed Council members, staff, agency partners, and members of the public attending both in person and virtually. Council members introduced themselves and shared reflections related to springtime, family, hobbies, and community activities. Several members spoke about enjoying warmer weather, flowers beginning to bloom, sports seasons starting, and spending time with family. Community members and guests also introduced themselves and shared their connections to disability advocacy and services.

The Council reviewed the meeting agenda. Alex made a motion to approve the agenda, and Sydney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Council then reviewed the previous meeting minutes. Staff noted a correction changing an incorrect reference to 2025 so that the minutes accurately reflected 2026.

Riley moved and Alex seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes with the correction. The motion passed unanimously.

Land Acknowledgement

Kevin Vargas provided the land acknowledgement on behalf of the Council. He recognized the traditional lands of the Coast Salish peoples, including Duwamish, Suquamish, Puyallup, Nisqually, Tulalip, and Muckleshoot Nations. Kevin acknowledged the enduring presence and contributions of Indigenous communities and spoke about the Council's commitment to supporting equity, justice, and inclusion in its work.

State Plan, Advocacy, and Community Discussion

Throughout the meeting, Council members and staff discussed the importance of preserving stories and historical perspectives connected to developmental disabilities services and advocacy in Washington State. Brandi and Council members discussed the important role counties have played in developing innovative local programs and supports. Discussion included county developmental disability advisory boards, local property tax or "millage" funding that supports disability-related services in some communities, and ways these local efforts have contributed to community-based supports across the state.

Council members also discussed the importance of sharing personal stories as part of advocacy work. One member spoke about experiences being isolated in school settings as a child and suggested that personal stories could help educate others about the impact of exclusionary practices on students with disabilities. Members reflected on the importance of using lived experience to inform systems change and public understanding.

Budget and Informing Families Overview

Brandi provided a detailed overview of the Council budget and federal funding process. She explained recent uncertainty involving federal DD Council funding and described how court rulings ultimately restored funding that had initially been threatened by federal administrative actions. Brandi discussed how the Council uses different funding categories, including salaries and benefits, contracts, travel, grants, and indirect costs.

Brandi also discussed the Informing Families program and explained how the program helps the Council meet federal matching requirements. Historically, the work had been contracted through The Arc of Washington, but the Council recently transitioned the program to be managed directly by Council staff. Members discussed the community coordinators working across Washington, including rural communities and culturally specific communities, and discussed ways to improve outreach and support.

During the budget discussion, members asked questions about the scope of work for Informing Families coordinators and requested additional information about how services and outreach are structured in rural communities. Brandi welcomed additional feedback and ideas for making budget information more understandable and accessible for Council members and the public.

Program Performance Report Presentation

Kevin Vargas presented an overview of the Program Performance Report (PPR), the Council's annual federal reporting document. Kevin explained that while the report can be lengthy and technical, its central purpose is to answer a simple question: whether the Council's work is making a meaningful difference in the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families. Kevin reviewed how the report documents activities, funding use, and progress connected to the State Plan.

Committee Breakouts and End of Day One

At the conclusion of the Day One Full Council meeting, staff provided instructions for committee breakouts. Members who had not yet selected a committee were encouraged to observe either committee meeting.

Day Two

Opening and Council Reflection

Leigh Spruce reconvened the Full Council meeting and confirmed that a quorum was present.

Sydney Krebsbach delivered remarks reflecting on her service as a Council member. Sydney shared her experiences as a self-advocate and discussed her advocacy work both in Washington and previously in Alaska. She reflected on joining the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council in 2021 after moving to Spokane and discussed how serving on the Council strengthened her leadership and advocacy skills. Brandi thanked Sydney for her service and recognized her contributions to the Council over the past several years.

State Plan Approval for Public Comment

The Council discussed the proposed 2027–2031 State Plan and the process for releasing the draft plan for public comment. Staff explained that the public comment period would provide an opportunity for community members, self-advocates, family members, providers, and partner organizations to review the draft plan and provide feedback before final approval by the Council.

Discussion included the importance of accessibility, outreach to diverse communities, and making materials available in multiple formats and languages whenever possible. Members discussed the need for meaningful public engagement and ensured that comments received during the public comment period would be reviewed and considered carefully before the final State Plan is brought back to the Council in July.

Council members also discussed strategies for increasing participation in the public comment process, including outreach through partner organizations, translated materials, community networks, and online engagement.

Riley moved and Alex seconded a motion was made to approve releasing the draft State Plan for public comment. The motion passed unanimously.

Agency and Partner Updates

The Council then received several agency and partner updates.

Kris shared an update from the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA).

She announced that the agency would continue officially identifying itself as the Developmental Disabilities Administration moving forward. She explained that while some older terminology and labels may still appear temporarily during the transition process, the agency intended to consistently use the DDA name.

Noah provided an update from Disability Rights Washington (DRW). He discussed the organization's current priority-setting process and encouraged participation through DRW's public surveys. Noah also shared information about several open staff positions, including leadership positions within the organization.

He reviewed legislative work completed during the session, including work connected to community protection legislation, zoning and housing legislation, and policing-related issues. He also discussed a new DRW Long-Term Care Resident Rights Program designed to support people living in long-term care settings who may be facing discharge or eviction.

Additional discussion focused on DRW's ongoing work related to the state transitional facility. Noah described concerns identified through visits and conversations with youth and families connected to the facility and noted that articles about the work had recently been published. He also discussed ongoing collaboration with DDA and other agencies regarding transitions back into community settings.

Katie Mirkovich from the Division of Rehabilitation (DVR) provided an update regarding Order of Selection procedures. She explained how DVR prioritizes services when funding and staffing limitations prevent immediate service delivery to all eligible individuals. Katie described how individuals with the most significant disabilities receive priority for services and explained that wait list movement is based on application dates.

Council members asked questions about the impact of Order of Selection on students participating in school-to-work transition programs. Katie offered to provide additional information and follow-up contact information regarding those concerns.

Angela from the Health Care Authority (HCA) shared updates related to school-based services expansion and the Rural Health Transformation Project. Angela discussed a federal grant supporting expanded Medicaid-funded physical and behavioral health services within schools. She also discussed ongoing rural health initiatives intended to improve healthcare access in less populated parts of Washington State.

Committee Reports

Membership and Governance Committee Report

The Membership and Governance Committee reported on its discussion of the committee work plan and ongoing governance responsibilities. Topics included Council member recruitment, orientation, membership rotation, Development Day planning, Charter review, and Council operations. The committee also discussed the growing workload of the committee and the importance of maintaining clear planning and organization tools to support its work over time.

The committee reviewed several Council policies related to travel, reimbursement, agenda development, equipment, and delegation to the Executive Director. Members discussed efforts to align policies with current Department of Commerce requirements and the Developmental Disabilities Act while continuing to improve accessibility and use of plain language.

Public Policy Committee Report

Emily Rogers provided an update from the Public Policy Committee. Emily explained that the committee meeting focused heavily on preparing for the upcoming legislative session and helping transition new members into the committee's advocacy work. Members discussed ways to improve early planning and strengthen advocacy efforts before the legislative session begins.

Emily also shared that the Council would soon distribute surveys intended to help identify policy priorities for the next legislative session. Committee members discussed ways to improve the

advocacy planning process and build stronger member engagement in policy work.

Upcoming Meeting Information

Staff announced that the July 2026 Council meeting would be held virtually for one day, eliminating travel requirements for members. Staff also shared that the October meeting was expected to return to an in-person format on the west side of the state.

Public Comment

During public comment, Samantha asked questions about the State Plan approval process and what would happen if members of the community disagreed with portions of the plan. Brian explained that the public comment process exists to gather input and improve the plan rather than to serve as a public approval vote. He explained that relevant comments would be reviewed and incorporated before the Council considers final approval in July.

Brian also explained that after Council approval, the State Plan would be submitted to the Administration for Community Living (ACL) for federal review and approval.

He noted that ACL may approve the plan immediately, request revisions, or issue tentative approval pending additional changes.

Public comments also focused on improving outreach and diversity within Council activities. Samantha suggested additional outreach methods, including multilingual flyers and broader community outreach efforts. Brian discussed the Council's ongoing work to improve translations and accessibility of outreach materials, including previous surveys made available in multiple languages.

Additional discussion addressed healthcare transportation supports and the definition of rural communities within healthcare programs. Public participants shared experiences from eastern Washington communities, including Walla Walla.

Adjournment

Before adjournment, Chair Leigh reminded members that the Council would discuss filling the Vice Chair/Co-Chair role during the July

meeting and encouraged interested members to speak with Council staff.

Sydney moved and Alex seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:42 a.m.

Action Items and Follow-Up

- Conduct and support statewide public comment outreach activities for the draft 2027–2031 State Plan;
- Review and incorporate relevant public comments before bringing the final State Plan back to the Council in July for approval;
- Continue expanding multilingual and accessible outreach materials;
- Continue development of legislative priorities and advocacy planning for the upcoming session;
- Provide additional information and follow-up regarding DVR Order of Selection and school-to-work transition concerns;
- Continue reviewing and updating Informing Families coordinator scopes of work and rural outreach strategy; and
- Continue planning for Vice Chair/Co-Chair recruitment and discussion before the July Council meeting.