

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council Public Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: July 16, 2026

Time: 1:05 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

Location: Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Present: Dana Floyd (Chair), Riley Daugherty, Robert Wardell, DeAnna Winterrose, Leigh Spruce, Bridget Parkhill, Melanie Baker, Katie Mirkovich (DVR), Megan DeSmet (BHHA), Angela Randal (HCA), Letha Fernandez

Staff: Emily Rogers, Christie Chiles, Phillip Rasmussen, Brandi Monts

Call to Order and Introductions

Public Policy Committee Chair Dana Floyd called the meeting to order at approximately 1:05 p.m. Dana introduced herself as a Council member from Yakima and noted that this was her first meeting as committee chair. Emily Rogers welcomed Dana to the role and provided an overview of the meeting.

Approval of April 2026 Meeting Minutes

The committee reviewed the draft minutes from the April 16, 2026, Public Policy Committee meeting.

Leigh Spruce moved to approve the minutes. Angela Randall seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.

Agenda

Emily reviewed the agenda. The committee would receive an overview of the Public Policy Committee, review the results of the legislative priorities survey, discuss the leading issues and values to include in the Council's 2027 legislative priorities, receive information about federal issues and resources, and review next steps.

Public Policy Committee Orientation

Emily Rogers provided an overview of the purpose and responsibilities of the Public Policy Committee. She explained that the committee leads the Council's annual process for developing legislative priorities, including gathering input

from Council members, reviewing survey results, refining proposed language, and recommending priorities for consideration by the full Council.

The committee also helps identify resources and educational materials that Council members and community members may need to understand the legislative process and participate effectively. Examples include legislative priority documents and videos, advocacy resources, information about how a bill becomes law, and other plain-language materials.

Emily noted that committee members may also provide input to contractors, participate in meetings or public events, and suggest ways to reach communities that have not historically been included.

Staff reviewed the distinction between speaking as an individual Council member and speaking on behalf of the Council. Members may identify themselves as Council members when sharing their own views but should not state that the Council supports a position unless that position has been formally adopted. Staff emphasized that the Council's role is to provide information and education rather than lobby.

Legislative Priorities Survey Results

Emily Rogers reviewed the results of the legislative priorities survey completed by Council members. Four topics received the strongest support:

- Medicaid
- Caregiver and provider shortages and training
- Family caregiver supports
- Access to disability services and supports

Emily noted that Medicaid received the most votes and that several of the other leading topics are closely connected to Medicaid funding and policy. The committee agreed to focus its discussion on these four issues as it began developing the Council's 2027 legislative priorities.

Discussion of Legislative Priorities: Medicaid

The committee began discussing the four highest-ranked legislative priority topics, starting with Medicaid. Members emphasized that Medicaid supports far more than medical care for people with developmental disabilities. It also funds services and supports that make community living possible, including personal care, therapies, assistive technology, and services administered through the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

Members discussed the need for priority language that clearly explains Medicaid's role in supporting independence, inclusion, health, safety, and quality of life. The committee also discussed creating plain-language educational materials, such as a one-page visual or infographic with a QR code linking to more detailed information about Medicaid-funded services.

Members noted that the legislative priority statement itself should remain broad and concise, while separate educational materials could provide more detailed examples of services and explain how Medicaid funding moves through different state agencies.

Discussion of Legislative Priorities: Caregiver and Provider Shortages

The committee discussed the serious shortage of paid caregivers and service providers and the effect this has on people with developmental disabilities who rely on in-home and community-based supports. Members emphasized that when caregivers are unavailable, people may be unable to receive essential assistance needed to live safely and participate in their communities.

Members identified several barriers to recruiting and retaining caregivers, including low wages, inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates, certification requirements, training costs, limited access to technology, language barriers, and training that may not be relevant to the individual receiving support.

The committee discussed the importance of distinguishing between training for paid providers and requirements placed on family caregivers. Members supported meaningful, accessible training that improves the quality and safety of care, while recognizing that family members often bring extensive experience and individualized knowledge. Members also emphasized that legislative priority language should remain broad enough to address workforce shortages, living wages, unnecessary barriers, and access to qualified caregivers as issues arise during the legislative session.

Discussion of Legislative Priorities: Family Caregiver Supports

The committee discussed the central role family caregivers play when paid providers are unavailable or difficult to retain. Members noted that many family members provide extensive unpaid support and often become caregivers because no other provider can be found.

Members supported policies that allow family members to continue providing paid care to relatives with developmental disabilities. They also discussed

access to voluntary, paid training and continuing education that is relevant to the person receiving support. Members emphasized that family caregivers bring years of individualized knowledge and should not be required to complete training that does not improve the quality of care.

The committee also discussed recognizing family caregivers as part of the broader workforce and ensuring that policies do not remove services or supports from people who depend on family-provided care.

Discussion of Legislative Priorities: Access to Disability Services and Supports

The committee discussed the need to protect access to disability services and supports and to address gaps in availability across the state. Members emphasized that people may qualify for services but still be unable to receive them because providers are unavailable, programs are not offered in their area, or the service system is difficult to navigate.

Members highlighted particular concerns about rural communities and areas with limited provider capacity. They discussed the importance of building stronger local service networks, improving system-navigation support, using meaningful and age-appropriate assessments, and reducing “service deserts” where people cannot access supports described in state materials.

The committee also expressed support for broad priority language opposing reductions to services or supports and promoting more equitable access for people with developmental disabilities throughout Washington.

Values and Next Steps

Emily reviewed values the Council has previously used to guide its legislative priorities and invited members to suggest additional values or language for consideration. Members were encouraged to send further ideas after the meeting while the priority statements were being developed.

Emily explained that staff and Chair Dana Floyd would use the committee’s discussion to draft proposed language for the four legislative priorities. Committee members would then have an opportunity to review the draft language and suggest revisions before the priorities are presented to the full Council for approval at the October meeting.

The committee’s presentation and related materials will be made available on the Council’s website.

Action Items

Staff and Chair Dana Floyd will draft proposed language for the four legislative priorities based on the committee's discussion. Committee members will receive the proposed language for review and will be invited to suggest changes before the October Council meeting.

Staff will also continue developing and organizing public policy resources, including plain-language materials that help Council members and community members understand legislative issues and participate in the legislative process.

Adjournment

The Public Policy Committee concluded its work at approximately 3:00 p.m. Members then took a 15-minute break before returning to the full Council meeting at 3:15 p.m.