

Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council

Full Council Draft Minutes

July 16, 2026

9:00 AM to 12:00 PM and 3:15 PM to 3:45PM

Present

Riley Dougherty, Robert Wardell, Alex Koval, Tayshia Farra, Julie Clark, Melissa Dodge, De Anna Winterrose, Leigh Spruce, Bridget Parkhill, Connor Casseday, Dana Floyd, Melanie Baker, Katie Nash, Katie Mirkovich, Kris Pederson, Angela Randal, Monica Burke, Mark Harniss, Noah Seidel, Letha Fernandez

Staff

Brandi Monts, Brian Dahl, Kevin Vargas, Linda West, Christie Chiles, Emily Rogers, Phillip Rasmussen, Tannis Sears

Guests

Elizabeth Gordon (Governor's Committee on Disability)

Call to Order

Leigh Spruce called the July 16, 2026, quarterly meeting of the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council to order at 9:00 a.m. A quorum was established.

The Council recognized the enduring presence and contributions of Tribal Nations throughout Washington State through its Tribal Land Acknowledgment and reaffirmed its commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and equitable participation for all communities.

Changes to the Agenda

Brandi Monts requested one amendment to the agenda. A federal policy update was added to the Executive Director's Report to provide members with information regarding recent federal developments affecting

developmental disabilities programs and services. Riley Daugherty also noted he would provide a brief update during that discussion. No additional agenda changes were requested.

Approval of April 2026 Full Council Meeting Minutes

Motion

Robert Wardell moved and Alex seconded to approve the April 2026 Full Council meeting minutes with the agenda amendment. The motion carried unanimously.

De Anna raised a point of order regarding the Council's use of Robert's Rules of Order and the sequence of discussion, motions, and voting. Brandi Monts shared that the Co-Chairs and staff had been discussing ways to simplify the Council's meeting procedures and voting process to make them easier for members to follow.

Brian Dahl noted that the Membership and Governance Committee would review the Council's meeting procedures as part of the upcoming Charter revision process. The review would include Robert's Rules of Order, voting procedures, and broader meeting practices to establish a clearer governance framework for conducting Council business.

Disability Pride Month Icebreaker

Katie Nash and Melanie Baker led the Council's Disability Pride Month icebreaker. Melanie introduced the Disability Pride Flag and explained the significance of the colors representing the diversity of disability experiences. Katie shared that Disability Pride Month continues to receive limited public recognition and encouraged members to identify opportunities to increase awareness throughout their communities.

Council members participated in a discussion, offering ideas to promote Disability Pride Month and increase awareness of disability inclusion. Members discussed using social media, Zoom backgrounds, and email signature blocks to increase visibility; encouraging local governments to issue proclamations recognizing Disability Pride Month; partnering with schools, employers, community organizations, and professional sports

teams; promoting accessible community events; and expanding public education regarding disability rights and inclusion.

Members also discussed the relationship between Disability Pride Month and the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, recognizing that while the ADA represents an important civil rights milestone, Disability Pride celebrates disability identity, community, and inclusion. Additional ideas shared through the meeting chat included improving accessibility in public spaces, providing disability awareness training for local government staff, expanding the use of plain language and accessible communications, strengthening partnerships with disability organizations, and supporting community projects that promote inclusion and peer leadership. Staff shared Disability Pride resources and virtual backgrounds for members to use throughout the month.

Co-Chair Report

Co-Chairs Leigh Spruce and Tayshia Farra gave the Co-Chair report. Leigh recognized outgoing Council leadership and thanked Tayshia Farra for her service as Community Co-Chair, Melanie Baker for her leadership of the Membership and Governance Committee, and Julie Carr for her leadership of the Public Policy Committee.

Tayshia reflected on her time as Council Co-Chair, expressing appreciation for the opportunity to serve and noting that although her leadership term was ending, she would continue to advocate as a parent and remain engaged within Washington's developmental disabilities community.

The Council also recognized Riley Daugherty as the incoming Chair of the Membership and Governance Committee and Dana Floyd as the incoming Chair of the Public Policy Committee, thanking both members for accepting their new leadership responsibilities.

Leigh Spruce thanked Council members, staff, Developmental Disabilities Network partners, and Community Advocacy Coalition leadership for participating in the annual Executive Director evaluation process. Christie reported that thirteen individuals completed the evaluation survey.

Brandi Monts explained that the annual evaluation is required under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and is conducted by Developmental Disabilities Councils nationwide. She summarized the evaluation process, noting that responses were overwhelmingly positive while identifying opportunities to improve communication regarding the respective roles of Council members and the Executive Director. Brandi shared that future orientation efforts would be expanded to include contractors and Community Advocacy Coalition leaders to strengthen understanding of Council governance and responsibilities. Evaluation results will be distributed to members following the meeting.

Robert Wardell thanked Brandi for her leadership and expressed his appreciation for her continued service to the Council.

Executive Director Report

Executive Director Brandi Monts reported that the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council had been nominated for two Disability Inclusion Network Awards, recognizing the Council's collaborative work to advance disability inclusion throughout Washington State. She thanked Council members, staff, contractors, and community partners for their contributions and noted that the nominations reflected the collective efforts of the entire Council team. Members were invited to attend the upcoming awards ceremony if public participation was permitted.

Brandi provided an update on the Developmental Disabilities Administration's new 10-Year State Plan, A Path Forward: Transforming IDD Services in Washington. She explained that the Legislature funded the initiative during the previous legislative session and directed DDA to develop a long-term strategic plan reflecting community priorities for developmental disabilities services. Community engagement activities have begun, including discussions with the Community Advocacy Coalition regarding housing, supported employment, residential services, and other priority topics. The final plan must be submitted to the Legislature by July 2027 community input will occur on an accelerated timeline over the coming months.

Brandi introduced Tannis Sears, the Council's new Administrative and Communications Lead. Tannis shared her professional background in the community action network, psychology, and social work.

She expressed her enthusiasm for supporting the Council's mission of advancing opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Council members welcomed Tannis to the team.

Brandi also provided an update on the Council's current Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs). Three funding opportunities had been released to support implementation of the Council's upcoming Five-Year State Plan, including Legislative Education Information and Tools, Community Advocacy Coalition coordination, and Self Advocates in Leadership (SAIL). She explained that the Council adopted the NOFO process to encourage innovative proposals focused on achieving the goals of the State Plan and thanked Brian Dahl and Kevin Vargas for leading the procurement process. A fourth leadership development opportunity is expected to be released later in the year.

Brandi reported on the recent visit by the Commissioner of the Administration for Community Living (ACL), noting that Washington was one of only a handful of states selected for an in-person visit. Representatives from the Council, Disability Rights Washington, and the University of Washington Center for Human Development and Disability participated in discussions highlighting Washington's collaborative approach to systems change, behavioral health, and cross-network partnerships. Brandi thanked Council members and community partners who participated in the visit and helped demonstrate Washington's commitment to collaboration.

Brandi also provided a federal policy update, discussing recent developments related to the Olmstead decision, special education, Medicaid, voting accessibility, proposed federal grant regulations, and anticipated state budget reductions. Brandi encouraged Council members to remain engaged, educate their communities regarding the importance of developmental disabilities services, and continue advocating for policies that promote community living, inclusion, and access to supports. Council members discussed the importance of educating policymakers and the public regarding the value of community-based services and protecting the rights of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Budget Report

Brandi Monts presented the Council's federal budget status for FFY 2024, FFY 2025, and the proposed FFY 2026 allocation. She reviewed current expenditures, explained the Council's practice of expending the oldest federal funds first to maximize available resources, and reported that approximately \$15,000 remained available from the FFY 2024 allocation following recent reconciliation by the Department of Commerce.

Brandi also reviewed discretionary funding expenditures, including support for Autism Education Day. It was expected and explained that the proposed FFY 2026 budget would support both Council operations and implementation of contracts aligned with the upcoming Five-Year State Plan. Council members discussed overall federal funding levels, how national appropriations are distributed among Developmental Disabilities Councils, and the importance of continued advocacy for federal investment in developmental disabilities programs. Brandi agreed to provide additional information regarding the national Developmental Disabilities Council appropriation in follow-up materials.

Motion

Julie Clark moved and Alex seconded to approve the FFY 2026 budget as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Break

Following approval of the budget, the Council recessed for a morning break at approximately 10:18 a.m. and reconvened at 10:30 a.m.

Co-Chair Election

Leigh Spruce opened the election process for the Community Co-Chair position. Leigh thanked each candidate for their willingness to serve and invited any additional nominations from the floor. Hearing none, nominations were closed.

The following candidates addressed the Council:

Melanie Baker shared her commitment to continuing her advocacy on behalf of people with developmental disabilities and strengthening opportunities for self-advocates. She reflected on the mentorship she received after joining the Council and expressed her desire to continue using her voice to advance positive systems change.

Bridget Parkhill discussed her experience as a parent of a person with developmental disabilities and described how Council service had broadened her understanding of statewide advocacy. She highlighted opportunities to participate in mediation training, legislative advocacy, and recent meetings with the Administration for Community Living. Bridget emphasized that the Council's collective voice creates meaningful change for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Alex Koval reflected on his five years of Council service, previous leadership as Chair of the Membership and Governance Committee, and his experience serving as President of Clark County People First. He expressed his commitment to collaborative leadership and continuing to improve opportunities for people with developmental disabilities throughout Washington.

Robert Wardell highlighted his advocacy experience through the Council and other disability organizations and reaffirmed his commitment to representing the voices of people with developmental disabilities across Washington.

Following candidate statements, staff reviewed the election process. Voting was conducted through a confidential electronic poll, with alternative voting methods available for members requiring accommodations. Staff explained that all Council members, including agency representatives, were eligible to vote, while only community members were eligible to serve in the Community Co-Chair position. Election results would be announced during the afternoon Full Council session.

2027-2031 Five-Year State Plan Public Comment Review

Brian Dahl and Kevin Vargas presented the final draft of the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council's 2027-2031 Five-Year State Plan following completion of the public comment period.

Kevin reviewed the Council's two-year planning process, beginning with the Comprehensive Review and Analysis, statewide needs assessment, public surveys, and community engagement activities. He summarized the Council's work to develop goals, objectives, and activities through breakout sessions, Council meetings, and public review. Following Council approval in April, the draft State Plan was released for a forty-five-day public comment period before returning to the Council for final consideration.

Kevin reported that staff received input through online surveys, written comments, and a virtual listening session hosted in partnership with Open Doors for Multicultural Families. Approximately forty-seven participants attended the listening session, providing valuable feedback from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Brian noted that offering multiple opportunities for participation ensured community members could provide input in ways that were accessible and meaningful to them rather than relying solely on written surveys.

Staff reported that public feedback strongly affirmed the overall direction of the State Plan. Rather than recommending significant structural changes, comments focused primarily on strengthening language and clarifying existing objectives. Six primary themes emerged through the public comment process:

- Self-advocacy and opportunities to be heard
- Access to services and system navigation
- Behavioral health and developmental disabilities
- Cultural and community needs
- Quality services
- Rights and equity

Kevin reviewed revisions incorporated into the final draft. For Goal One, revisions strengthened language supporting leadership opportunities for individuals with lived experience, expanded culturally responsive sexual health education, and increased emphasis on supported decision-making. Revisions to Goal Two strengthened behavioral health coordination, supports for aging caregivers and individuals with developmental

disabilities, justice system diversion and reentry efforts, and quality assurance within home and community-based services. Staff noted that these revisions strengthened the existing plan while maintaining its overall goals, objectives, and performance measures.

Brian reviewed the remaining steps in the federal approval process, explaining that the Council's approved State Plan would be submitted to the Administration for Community Living by August 15, 2026. The plan would then undergo both federal staff review and peer review before implementation beginning October 1, 2026. Brian thanked Council members for their extensive participation throughout the two-year planning process and emphasized that the State Plan reflects the collective priorities, experiences, and recommendations of the Council and the broader developmental disabilities community.

Brandi Monts thanked Council members for their willingness to ask difficult questions throughout the planning process while encouraging continued focus on demonstrating how the Council's work improves the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families. She also recognized Council staff for their flexibility and commitment to incorporating member feedback throughout development of the State Plan.

Motion

De Anna moved and Riley seconded to approve the 2027-2031 Council's Five-Year State Plan as presented, with authority for staff to make any necessary non-substantive revisions prior to submission to the Administration for Community Living. The motion carried with Connor abstaining.

Council members congratulated Brian Dahl and Kevin Vargas for leading the development of the State Plan. The Council thanked staff and community partners for their contributions throughout the planning process. Brian encouraged members to continue providing feedback prior to submission if additional clarifications were identified.

Expansion 2025 Conflict Mediation Review

Executive Director Brandi Monts provided an overview of the Council's Expansion 2025 Conflict Mediation initiative. The project grew out of the Council's previous diversity, equity, and inclusion work, during which

participants identified conflict resolution as an important skill for strengthening collaboration across Washington's developmental disabilities community. In response, the Council partnered with the Thurston County Dispute Resolution Center to provide conflict mediation training for Council members, staff, and Community Advocacy Coalition participants.

Participants reflected on both the introductory four-hour training and the forty-hour mediation certification course. Emily Rogers, Linda, Bridget Parkhill, and Brandi Monts shared that the training emphasized active listening, creating space for respectful dialogue, asking clarifying questions, and helping participants better understand one another even when disagreements remained. Members noted that the training reinforced the importance of slowing conversations, reducing conflict, and building trust while working toward systems change.

Several participants expressed interest in pursuing additional mediation training and encouraged the Council to continue investing in conflict resolution skills to strengthen relationships throughout Washington's developmental disabilities community. Robert Wardell also shared his interest in participating in future training opportunities.

Brandi thanked everyone who participated in the trainings and encouraged members to continue applying learned skills throughout their work within the developmental disabilities community.

The Council recessed for lunch. Members were reminded to return at 1:00 p.m. for committee meetings and to reconvene in the afternoon full Council session for agency reports, announcement of the Co-Chair election results, and remaining business.

Leigh Spruce reconvened the Full Council and announced that Bridget Parkhill was elected Community Co-Chair. Council members congratulated Bridget on her election and thanked all candidates for their willingness to serve in a leadership role.

Committee Reports

Membership and Governance Committee

Riley Daugherty reported that the committee approved the April 2026 meeting minutes and reviewed the committee's responsibilities.

Members received an overview of the Council Charter, Executive Order, and Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Commerce. Providing an overview of how each document guides the Council's authority and operations. The committee also reviewed Council member recruitment and onboarding processes and identified the Charter, Executive Order, and Memorandum of Understanding as priorities for continued review during the October meeting.

Public Policy Committee

Dana Floyd reported that the committee approved the April 2026 meeting minutes and reviewed the committee's role in developing legislative priorities and supporting Council members in legislative education and engagement.

The committee reviewed responses to the legislative priorities survey and identified four primary priorities:

- Medicaid
- Access to services and supports
- Caregiver and direct support workforce shortages and training
- Family caregiver supports

Members discussed the relationship between these priorities, recognizing Medicaid as the foundation supporting many developmental disabilities services and community living opportunities.

The committee also reviewed the Council's legislative priorities video and discussed opportunities for members to participate in education and testimony during future legislative sessions.

Agency Reports

Monica Burke shared information regarding recruitment for the Adolescent, Guardian, and Caregiver Advisory Board and highlighted newly developed pediatric feeding disorder resources to support children and youth with developmental disabilities and their families.

Noah Seidel reported completion of its annual priority-setting process and announced a new Long-Term Residents' Rights Team that will provide legal assistance to individuals facing involuntary discharge from adult family homes and assisted living facilities.

Letha Fernandez provided an update on statewide behavioral health initiatives supporting children and youth and described ongoing collaboration with community partners to strengthen services and improve outcomes.

Mark Harniss reported progress despite delays in federal funding opportunities. Updates included submission of LEND grant applications, bridge funding supporting continued operations, enrollment of approximately forty new trainees, applications for ADA technical assistance grants, and new philanthropic funding to assist families participating in clinical services through support addressing social determinants of health.

Katie Mirkovich reported that Washington continues to operate under an Order of Selection because available resources remain insufficient to serve all eligible applicants. Members were encouraged to continue referring individuals for vocational rehabilitation services. DVR also highlighted employment opportunities available through the Supported Employment in State Government (SESG) program.

Brandi Monts recognized Katie Mirkovich and Elizabeth Gordon for their leadership in strengthening the Supported Employment in State Government program and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to expanding integrated employment opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities within state government.

Public Comment

There were no comments

Outgoing Community Co-Chair Tayshia Farra thanked Council members and staff for their support throughout her service on the Council. She reflected on the difficulty of concluding her term and expressed her appreciation for the relationships she had developed while serving the developmental disabilities community. Tayshia shared that she hoped to

remain connected with the Council and looked forward to opportunities to serve again in the future.

Council members and staff thanked Tayshia for her leadership and dedication to the Council. Leigh Spruce congratulated Bridget Parkhill on her election as Community Co-Chair and thanked Tayshia for her many contributions during her tenure.

Leigh Spruce adjourned the meeting.