

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**CISS Committee/Legislative Committee Combined Meeting
MINUTES**

Videoconference Host

Governor's Council
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1220
Anchorage, Alaska

Meeting Date

Wednesday, December 7, 2022
12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Committee Members:

Corey Gilmore, Chair CISS Committee
Art Delaune, Chair Legislative Committee
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus
Corey Gilmore
Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich
Jena Crafton
Director Duane Mayes
Margaret Evans
Dave Fleurant
Ken Hamrick
Elizabeth Joseph
Charlene Tautfest

Guests:

Heidi Lieb-Williams
Karen Heath

Staff:

Patrick Reinhart
Jamie Kokoszka
Lanny Mommsen
Rich Saville
Michael Stevenson

Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 12:00 p.m.
ROLL CALL – Quorum established

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Corey Gilmore welcomed guests and members of the Legislative and CISS Committees.

Introductions, Announcements, or Good News

No introductions were made, nor were announcements nor good news shared.

Declarations of Conflict

No conflicts of interest were declared.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich **MOVED** to approve the agenda, **SECONDED** by Director Duane Mayes. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

REPORTS

Chair's Report

Tabled.

Staff Report

Tabled.

BUSINESS

Discussion on Potential Legislative Priorities

Art Delaune reported that the Legislative Committee has been meeting and discussing potential legislative priorities for the next legislative session. He shared that the official results of the 2022 mid-term elections are in, and the slate of new and returning legislators is final.

Art Delaune reported that the potential advocacy priorities discussed in the Legislative Committee meetings include the following:

- Workforce issues
- Self-directed services
- Day habilitation limits
- Grant funding to fill in gaps in services
- Community and public transportation
- Job accommodation fund
- I/DD waitlist elimination

Art Delaune noted that as part of the I/DD waitlist elimination, SDS must respond to the administration regarding a plan to eliminate the waitlist by December 20, 2022.

Art Delaune reported that the Legislative Committee recommended creating an introduction letter to the legislators listing the accomplishments of the Council.

Art Delaune opened the floor for a discussion on legislative priorities. He reminded the members that it is important to weave the DD Shared Vision into advocacy. Following is a summary of the discussion:

Workforce Issues

- Workforce issues are a general topic. The lack of a trained and reliable workforce impacts every issue on the potential priorities list. If there are not enough direct service providers (DSPs, individuals with disabilities who are eligible for services will not get those benefits that assist them with things like supported employment and activities of daily living.
- There is a lack of compensation for DSP staff. The way DSPs are paid is antiquated and insufficient.
- The primary issue revolves around recruitment and retention. Solving recruitment and retention is the driver for the DSP workforce.
- There are some questions concerning the funding intended to support DSP wages. The service agencies need to be held accountable for the allocated money.

- It is important to work with provider agencies to ensure they require training on the DD Shared Vision.
- It is important to change the approach to work by employing flexibility. Using a hybrid model is often effective, along with increased pay. Flexibility is powerful for people with disabilities. They may be able to work by taking advantage of the telework approach.
- It would be useful to know if DSPs have a standard pay rate and if they are unionized.
- There is a need to find innovative ways to recruit workers to provide services, such as employing family members, using technology, and remote monitoring to support people with disabilities.

Lanny Mommsen shared information about the job market and job seekers given at the AADD meeting by Dan Robinson, research chief from the Department of Labor, as follows:

- What can employers do to recruit and retain more employees?
 - Give job seekers more monies
 - Opportunities for advancement
 - Meaningful work, respect
 - Flexibility
 - Childcare and other creative solutions.
- What can policymakers do?
 - Provide stability and continuity to existing education and training infrastructures
 - Pay attention to the workforce economics and demographics data
 - Consider making it easier for trained and experienced people to work in Alaska, such as the reciprocity of licensing
 - Telework.
- What can the workforce development system do?
 - Help bring underutilized potential workers into the mix like veterans, seniors, people with disabilities, underrepresented genders, formerly incarcerated, et cetera
 - Communicate better and more to youth and career changers as they are considering education training opportunities

Self-Directed Services

- Supported employment is not available for individuals with disabilities who want to be self-employed.
- The definition of supported employment may need to change to accommodate self-employment. Supported employment as a waiver service is not billable in a licensed assisted living home that is billing for supportive residential living.

Day habilitation limits

- In order to move forward with addressing day hab limits, it would be valuable to locate a report on companion services that was done when SDS changed the day hab limits and excluded companion services.

Grant funding to fill in gaps in services

Patrick Reinhart shared that a few years ago, the ISW model was implemented, and it basically provided a level of service for everything. However, there still seem to be odd situations for agencies that work with families that somehow don't qualify or can't get funding because they don't fit in the model. It would be valuable to design a grant program that could fill the gaps that are being identified.

Community and public transportation

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Alaska Mobility Coalition (AMC) has scheduled a meeting to discuss proposing legislation to add public and community transit to the duties and responsibilities of the Department of Transportation (DOT). The commissioner of DOT is expected to participate in the meeting. Patrick noted that if AMC makes headway with that, the Governor's Council could write a letter of support.

Patrick Reinhart shared that the state receives \$4M a year from the federal government. Through the Infrastructure Bill, \$11M became available for rural transportation funding. That is expected to roll out with a 30% increase for the next two years. By the end, close to \$17M will be available for annual funding for rural transit. This would be a good opportunity for an agency ready to start a new transit system or community transportation operation.

Job Accommodation Fund

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Employment Committee had a presentation from Kate Sheehan and Kelley Roberson regarding the Alaska Work Matters Task Force report. The recommendation to create a job accommodation fund was well received. Patrick noted that he hopes the administration puts forward legislation to create the fund, which would go a long way to promote hiring people with disabilities in state agencies.

I/DD waitlist elimination

Patrick Reinhart stated that until the SDS report is presented on December 20th, the Council won't know what is in it and cannot make plans to move forward until a full review of the recommendations is complete. He believes the report will be a great lead-in to the advocacy the Council will do on behalf of people with disabilities.

Introduction letter to legislators, list of accomplishments

After a discussion on the introduction letter and list of accomplishments, the committee members agreed to draft an introduction letter that strictly introduces the Council and does not specifically address the priorities. The benefits of doing it that way include educating the new legislators on who the Council is, refreshing the information for returning legislators, and giving them a resource of subject matter experts should their constituents need guidance on issues related to the scope of the Council. The list of accomplishments accompanying the introduction letter will let the lawmakers know that the Council is the subject matter expert.

Others

- Committee members discussed the importance of identifying champions and connecting with local lawmakers.
- The makeup of the Senate leadership is done, and the House is still organizing.

Art Delaune recapped that the approach to advocacy in Juneau will focus on services that help people to live independently and the DD Shared Vision. The Council will look for ways to promote change to self-directed

waivers, day hab, grant funding, and other advocacy important to live independently in the community.

Update on Federal Issues

Heidi Lieb-Williams shared that she is aware of an issue at the federal level related to a marriage penalty. The disability community needs to fight to eradicate any penalty for people with disabilities to get married.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the ABLE Act age increase is still in Congress and has a good chance of passing this year.

GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT

Dave Fleurant **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Margaret Evans. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.