

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

**SELF-ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE  
(SA&L)**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Videoconference Host:**

Governor's Council  
550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1220  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**Videoconference**

**Meeting Date**

Thursday, May 18, 2023  
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**Council Members:**

Jena Crafton, Chair  
Art Delaune  
Margaret Evans  
Elizabeth Joseph  
Nona Safra

**Guests:**

Anna Williams - SDS

**GCDSE Staff:**

Patrick Reinhart  
Jamie Kokoszka  
Robert Tasso  
Rich Saville  
Michael Stevenson

**CALL TO ORDER – 10:06 a.m.**  
**ROLL CALL – Quorum established**

**WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR**

Jena Crafton welcomed attendees to the meeting.

**Introductions, Announcements and/or Good News**

Jena Crafton led the committee in a mindfulness moment.

Jena Crafton shared that the Disability Pride Celebration will be held in Anchorage on July 22, 2023 on the Park Strip. She also shared that the next Peer Power Empower Hour is scheduled for May 18, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Jena Crafton shared that she accepted her 40 Under 40 award, and the event was nice. Several Council members and staff attended the event. Nona Safra attended the event to honor Jena, and she remarked that the Council members look forward to working with Jena as she moves into the Council chair position.

Nona Safra shared that the City of Homer received federal funding to remodel the Homer Harbor. The Army Corp of Engineers is in Homer to receive public input. Nona offered feedback by recommending that they design the harbor to make it more accessible for fishermen and tourists who need accommodations and make it state-of-the-art instead of just adhering to minimum ADA standards.

Nona Safra stated that Homer is Alaska's number one tourist destination on the road system, and she used that information to talk about the almost \$60B of disability tourism in the country, and the fact that there is only one accessible cab in Homer and that most of the hotel rooms are not accessible. She said that the Homer Chamber of Commerce is willing to host a seminar for businesses in the fall to talk about disability travel and what it could mean to Homer.

Patrick Reinhart added that the Council got word that the American Public Transit Association approved the grant written to explore a transit system in Homer. A committee through the Independent Living Center in Homer will work on that beginning with gathering public input. Patrick noted that it will be a several-year process.

Patrick Reinhart shared that he has contacted Chair Heidi Lieb-Williams, and she reported that her recovery is going well.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES and AGENDA**

Jena Crafton **MOVED** to approve the meeting agenda, **SECONDED** by Nona Safra. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

Nona Safra **MOVED** to approve the April 17, 2023 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Elizabeth Joseph. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

## **REPORTS**

### **Chair Report**

Jena Crafton reported that the Peer Power Summit occurred April 28 – 30, 2023. It was a good conference.

Jena Crafton shared that the Disability Policy Seminar delegation visits were completed for April and May. They met with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan's staff and met personally with Representative Mary Peltola.

### **GCDSE Staff Report**

Jamie Kokoszka reported that the Council was accepted to host the I Have Rights presentation at the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) Conference. Jena Crafton, Corey Gilmore, and Anna Attla will present at the conference in July.

Jamie Kokoszka reported that the state is currently experiencing a public guardian crisis. The Office of Public Advocacy (OPA) is overwhelmed with the number of cases and turnover in staff. They have put a halt on accepting new cases, which is creating a lot of concern.

Jamie Kokoszka reported that Patrick Reinhart is working on the Living Well Grant one-year, no-cost extension request, which involves creating a plan to use the remaining funding.

Patrick Reinhart noted that there has been a group working on self-directed care, and one thing that would fit well into the Living Well Grant is contracting with a national organization that pushes the envelope on self-directed work, waivers, and personal care attendant services. The Council plans to meet with a contractor to discuss including them in the last year of the Living Well Grant extension to do a policy and procedure review within SDS.

Jamie Kokoszka announced that the Council received approval to make an employment offer for the Program Coordinator I position. The Council is pleased to welcome Samantha Vetter, formerly with the SDS admin team, to the Council staff. Samantha will begin work on May 26, 2023.

Jamie Kokoszka shared that the Council is revisiting the Working Interdisciplinary Networks of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS), which is part of the Living Well Grant. WINGS explores alternatives to guardianship, which ties into the guardianship crisis. Patrick Reinhart added that the plans for a roundtable on alternatives to guardianship include a meeting on Friday, June 2, 2023, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. He noted that the Council will close out its spring Council meeting, and they have invited groups interested in alternatives to guardianship to the roundtable to discuss what can be done to push forward. The Council hired a contractor to facilitate the roundtable, and an agenda will be forthcoming.

Rich Saville reported that the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) will meet on Tuesday, May 23, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. The Anchorage School District's director of special education will present its corrective action plan based on the restraint and seclusion report that the Office of Civil Rights performed over the last few years. All Council members are welcome to attend.

## **BUSINESS**

### **DISCUSSION ON LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND PRIORITIES RELATED TO SA&L**

Patrick Reinhart reported that the legislature failed to reach an agreement, resulting in no state budget. There will be a special session called. Budgetary-wise, the request the Council made to support ending the waitlist, particularly the internal needs of the SDS to implement the interRAI, was included in both the House and Senate versions. Patrick reported that the House had included a \$100,000 line item for the Centralized Accommodation Fund (CAF), but the Senate did not, which makes it a Conference Committee matter when negotiations begin again.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Senate added \$30M (\$15M general funds/\$15M Medicaid funding) to its budget to help with home and community-based providers for another year while rebasing rates. The House did not include it in its budget.

Patrick Reinhart shared that SB 57, the Adult Home Care bill, passed along with other items included in SB 106, such as continuing COVID emergency orders that allowed family members to provide services and get paid for it. That was included in SB 57 and passed along with other cleanup items related to the department's ability to share information. It has been sent to the Governor for signature. The Office of the Governor has already reached out on opportunities to sign that bill with advocates such as the Council and other partners. The Council responded with several options, including signing at the Council meeting June 1 – 2, 2023 or signing at a Disability Pride event this summer.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the Deaf Children's Bill of Rights will be held over until the next session. Art Delaune requested a list of the bills brought forward this year that will be on the following session's calendar so that throughout the summer and fall, Council members and staff can advocate for the bills whenever meeting with lawmakers.

Robert Tasso shared that CMS has released two significant rules intended to improve access to HCBS services. The proposed rules seek to increase transparency and accountability, standardize data, and monitoring and creating opportunities for states to promote active beneficiary engagement in their Medicaid programs with the goal of improving access to care, fee-for-service managed care, and HCBS. Robert noted that there are concerns related to rates and direct support wages. He said that states will be required to demonstrate that payment rates ensure a sufficient direct care workforce. Robert explained that for PCS services, the state must demonstrate that at least 80 percent of the funding is spent on compensation for the DSP workforce, which leaves agencies with 20 percent for administration. There is also a grievance process with requirements that states must have in place. Robert noted that an in-depth discussion of the proposed rules will occur at the CISS Committee meeting on Wednesday, May 24, 2023.

### **Disability Policy Seminar (DPS) and Virtual Hill Visit Updates**

Robert Tasso reported that the virtual hill visits were a success. Representative Mary Peltola met with Council members in person and was fully engaged in the conversations about disability funding, Social Security, and other issues being raised. Senators Sullivan and Murkowski could not meet in person, but sent their staff to hear the concerns. All three lawmakers were invited to the June and October Council meetings.

Robert Tasso reported that in preparation for next year's Disability Policy Seminar and hill visits, he plans to contact other state agencies to see if they would be interested in joining the Council for hill visits.

Robert Tasso expressed his appreciation to everyone who participated in the Disability Policy Seminar and hill visits.

### **DSP Pilot Program**

Rich Saville reported that the Direct Service Provider Program certification/accreditation pilot program is ongoing. It's a two-year project that started a year ago. The goal of the project is to get 100 hours of education accredited through the National Association of Direct Service Providers to become accredited, giving DSPs more professional standing and compensation. The providers participating in the pilot project receive a stipend once they become certified. Rich reported that the program started with 128 DSPs through 14 different agencies. Currently, there are 87 DSPs still in the project, and they are on track to finish the 100 hours of education by July 1<sup>st</sup>. The curriculum is being developed by the University of Alaska, Center for Human Development, and it includes approximately ten core competencies required by NADSP and competencies related to various DSP responsibilities.

Rich Saville noted that he recommended CHD include the *I Have Rights* presentation in the DSP curriculum. He said it would not be part of the first 100 hours, but as an ongoing curriculum gets built, there may be an opportunity to include it.

## **Expectations Matter: My Life, My Choice, My Plan Video**

Jamie Kokoszka noted that there is a link in the agenda for committee members to watch the video.

## **Self-Advocate Discussion Series**

The self-advocate discussion series will be held Thursday, May 18, 2023 at 4 p.m. EST. Jamie Kokoszka included the link on the agenda.

## **PARTNER UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements were made.

## **TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Jena Crafton reported that the summer Council meeting is scheduled for June 1 – 2, 2023. There will not be a SA&L Committee scheduled in June. The committee discussed reconvening in September. Jamie Kokoszka asked committee members for input on guest speakers and issues they would like to see the committee take up beginning in September.

## **GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT**

Nona Safra **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Margaret Evans. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 11:06 a.m.