

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

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Videoconference Host:

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

Meeting Date

January 9, 2024
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Anna Attla, Committee Chair
Jena Crafton
Ken Hamrick
Margaret Evans
Sabrina Richmond
Dave Berube

Guests:

Jason Caputo, DVR
Gina Bastian, DVR

GCDSE Staff:

Samantha Vetter
Michael Stevenson

Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 1:00 p.m.
ROLL CALL – Quorum established

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Introductions, Announcements, or Good News

Anna Attla welcomed attendees to the meeting. Dave Berube shared that the SVRC finished its strategic planning meeting with a draft plan for the next four years. Dave also continues to work with the Alaska Mental Health Trust on its comprehensive plan.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflicts of interest were declared.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES

Anna Attla **MOVED** to approve the meeting agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by Sabrina Richmond. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

Ken Hamrick **MOVED** to approve the November 2023 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Jena Crafton. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

REPORTS

Chair Report

Anna Attla remarked that she appreciated members attending the meeting and looked forward to getting something done at the meeting.

GCDSE Staff Report

Samantha Vetter shared the following information:

- The Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) grant funding is making it possible for the Council and its partners to present information about the DIF grant at the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC) on February 7, 2024. The presentation's focus will be sharing the programs the grant covers, including Tapestry, Project SEARCH, and others, and hosting a panel discussion.
- The DIF Grant Steering Committee continues to meet. A DIF Grant Advisory Committee has been formed. It comprises organizations, parents, professionals, and students tasked with providing feedback on the activities and programs the DIF grant funds.
- Erin Riehle, the founder of Project SEARCH, will be coming to Alaska at the beginning of March for site visits.

- The Traditional Transitions Project has identified a fourth site. Savoonga Bering Strait School District is slated to add the traditional transition curriculum to student IEPs.
- The Alaska Mental Health Trust Comp Plan is being developed for the next five-year period. Council staff forwards input from the various Council committees, including the Employment Committee.
- The Anchorage School District's Academies Model kickoff started. Samantha Vetter was invited to attend the Transitions Tactic Team meeting.
- DVR's BEST Team will begin meeting again after a short break. Council staff will attend BEST Team meetings to forward input from the Council.
- The Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD) has formed an Employment Champions Workgroup, and Council staff representing the DD population will attend those meetings.

BUSINESS

Centralized Accommodation Fund (CAF) and Other Legislative Items

Samantha Vetter reported that the CAF was removed from this year's legislative budget. The Governor's Council's Executive Director Patrick Reinhart and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director Duane Mayes will be working in partnership to promote the creation and funding of a CAF.

Alaska Work Matters Task Force/AADD/AMHTA Plan Recommendations

Samantha Vetter led a review of employment-related recommendations from partner agencies and organizations to gather input from the committee for possible inclusion in the Employment Committee's future work plan. A summary of the input follows:

- *AMHTA: Ban the Box*
 - Ban the Box is defined as trying to remove the checkbox that says have you ever been convicted of a felony/misdemeanor from applications.
 - Input:
 - Is it eliminating background checks?
- *AADD: Advocate to remove the lifetime cap on pre-employment services*
 - Ensuring waiver services are less limited with the amount of funding for employment supports.
 - Input:
 - No comments.
- *ASD Academies Model/DIF Grant: Partner with school system to start working on employment at age 14*
 - Input:
 - The Council is currently involved in ASD's Transitions Tactics Team meetings.

- The Trust has included employment/financial literacy for youth in its Comp Plan.
- *CAF*: Identifying funding for on-the-job accommodations.
 - To ensure job accommodations funding is available for individuals with disabilities.
 - Input:
 - The Trust Comp {lan workgroup tried to identify other funding streams.
 - Is there messaging the committee could use to identify/promote resources for individuals and employers for accommodations?
 - Accommodations funding isn't meant to replace what an employer is legally obligated to do.
 - Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) is masterful at finding funding sources and combining funding around assistive technology.
 - Would a survey of employers help to identify barriers to employing people who need accommodations?
- *DB 101/DIF website*: Increase education about benefits, including user-friendly information for families.
 - Adding funding stream education may fit within the DB 101 model or be included on the DIF website.
 - Input:
 - No comments.
- *1115 Waiver*: Address the lack of transportation for group home residents
 - The 1115 waiver meeting about transportation discussed using Medicaid to pay for the transportation pilot project.
 - Input:
 - No comments.

Discussion of PSA Message – Employment First

Samantha Vetter reported that the “I Have Rights” PSA was a successful campaign and would be used as a model for PSAs related to Employment First. Samantha led a discussion prompted by the following questions:

- Who would be the potential target audience?
- What is the main takeaway/action for people to take?
- Target audience:
 - Individuals with disabilities
 - Individuals with disabilities who haven't considered employment

- Messages:
 - Employment is about putting myself first.
 - Alaskans are independent, self-sufficient, and tough. We are a state that values autonomy and the ability to live how we want.
 - Alaska is proud to be an Employment First state since legislation passed in 2014.
 - Employment First means that having a good job in the community is a preferred outcome for individuals with disabilities.
 - Using employment support services to achieve goals and aspirations allows people to live their own way.
 - Many available programs in the state that support individuals towards gaining greater ability to live as they choose through having a job.
 - A good job gives you a higher quality of life, independence, financial security, and mental and physical well-being.
 - Individuals with disabilities sharing stories of successful employment outcomes:
 - Employment can improve your life
 - I have a job I'm proud of
 - I have social networks through employment
 - I'm inspiring other people with disabilities
 - Show facts and rates of employment of people with disabilities/people without disabilities employed, and individuals with disabilities who used programs gained benefits.
 - Individuals with disabilities are an untapped workforce resource.

- Primary takeaway:
 - Work is the goal.
 - Employment is for you.
 - There is assistance for you to obtain and retain a job.

- Where to get more information:
 - Empowerment through Employment Guide, DVR, GCDSE

Samantha Vetter will send the draft discussion notes to committee members for further review and possible input. Jason Caputo asked committee members to weigh in on what barriers they see keeping some people from taking the first step on employment.

DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next Employment Committee meeting is scheduled for April 16, 2024 from 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Samantha Vetter reminded the committee that the winter Council meeting is scheduled for February 13 – 15, 2024 in Juneau.

GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT

Jena Crafton **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Sabrina Richmond. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.