

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

**WINTER COUNCIL MEETING  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting Location  
Governor's Council on Disabilities  
and Special Education  
333 Willoughby Ave, Alaska Office Building, #115  
Juneau, Alaska**

**February 13 – 15, 2024**

**Tuesday, February 13, 2024**

**Council Members:**

Jena Crafton, Chair  
Anna Attla  
Christine Bohan  
Carl Brady  
Chelsea Burke  
Art Delaune  
Don Enoch  
Heidi-Lieb Williams  
Corey Gilmore  
Ken Hamrick  
Director Anthony Newman  
Caitlin Poindexter  
Sabrina Richmond  
Nona Safra  
Demii Van Dusen  
Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich  
Director Duane Mayes

**Council Staff:**

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director  
Michael Stevenson  
Rich Saville  
Jamie Kokoszka  
Samantha Vetter  
Lanny Mommsen  
Ian Miner

**Minutes Prepared by:** Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

**CALL TO ORDER – 9:15 a.m.**

**MINDFULNESS MOMENT**

**ROLL CALL/ZOOM REMINDERS – Quorum established**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Caitlin Poindexter MOVED** to approve the meeting agenda, **SECONDED** by **Chelsea Burke**. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Chair Jena Crafton** opened the floor for announcements and introductions.

**Patrick Reinhart** shared the schedule of events for the Juneau meeting for the members attending in person.

**APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES**

**Caitlin Poindexter MOVED** to approve the October 2023 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by **Chelsea Burke** and **Sabrina Richmond**. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**COUNCIL CHAIR REPORT**

**Chair Jena Crafton** reported that in her role as chair, she participates in the following committee work:

- Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services Committee
- Legislative Committee
- Self-Advocacy and Leadership Committee
  - Two new co-chairs, Heidi Lieb-Williams and Christine Bohan
- Employment Committee.

**Chair Crafton** reported that other activities include:

- Participated in the review of board member applications for the Mental Health Trust
- Participated in the Governor's Council's presentations at the Center for Human Development's staff meetings
- Participated in the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) virtual meetings
- Presented Inclusive Practice Awards at the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference in February

**Chair Crafton** shared that she plans to attend the Disability Policy Seminar in Washington D.C. if funding is available, and she will attend the Full Lives Conference where she will co-facilitate the *I Have Dreams* presentation.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

**Patrick Reinhart** reported the following information:

### Projects and issues addressed since October 2023:

- Meeting with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation on housing issues.
- Attended Executive Director Leadership Seminar in Rhode Island.
- Participates in monthly Achieving Better Life Experience (ABLE) calls.
  - The Council has been designated to work with other states involved in the coalition of ABLE accounts.
- Participates in the Alaska Mental Health Trust meetings.
- Participates in the Center for Human Development's IDD/Mental Health Advisory Board meetings.
- Participates in the Trust's Comp Plan Advisory Group.
- Supports the WINGS/SDMA Committee and workgroups.

**Patrick Reinhart** reported that he was recently elected to the NACDD board as treasurer.

**Patrick Reinhart** shared that his son had a massive stroke in December, and he is going home tomorrow from the hospital. His son spent 55 days in a rehab facility in Colorado, and Patrick plans to go to Colorado to assist his son with adjusting to his new reality.

### Administrative updates:

- The Federal Program Performance Report (PPR) was submitted on time.
- The Council's 2023 Annual Report is completed, and copies will be distributed at the meeting.
- Vacant planner III position, advertising for the position in late spring.
- Alaska ABLE report completed.
- Ending the Living Well Grant:
  - The five-year grant was extended to six years. It ends September 30<sup>th</sup>.
- Successfully transferred Disability Benefits 101 website to UAA/CHD.
- Contracts are in place with CHD, Peer Power, and Project SEARCH for the activities they do for the Council related to the Living Well Grant and other supports.

### Council budget and grant updates:

- FY'25 budget gap:
  - The Council is working to close the gap. The Living Well Grant ending impacts the budget, and the Council is exploring many ways to close the gap.
- Ending the Alaska Living Well Grant work.
- The Council signed a Statement of Intent (SOI) with the Alaska Mental Health Trust. The funding supports 1.5 positions at the Council.
- Requesting an increase in state funding for the Council budget in FY'25.
- Looking to apply for other grants that fit the Council's state plan goals and activities.

### Council news and events:

- Attended the Special Education Conference on February 6, 2024 in Anchorage.

- **Chair Jena Crafton** presented the Inclusive Practice Awards. Many Council members participated in the events.
- February 27 – 29, 2024, Key Campaign.
- March 4 – 6, 2024, Project SEARCH National Technical Assistance visit
  - Erin Riehle, the founder of Project SEARCH, will be in Alaska in March to visit the Project SEARCH sites in Alaska.
- April 10 – 12, 2024, National Disability Policy Seminar.
- April 11 – 12, 2024, Full Lives Conference.
- April 2024, Peer Power Self-Advocacy Summit.

Upcoming events/news:

- Legislative follow-up for Council and Joint Trust advocacy.
- Continued budget tracking.
- NACDD Board:
  - Elected as board treasurer
  - Hiring a new CEO soon
  - Planning to attend the NACDD Conference with Council chair and vice chair in July
  - Participates in weekly Executive Director Livingroom Series and bi-weekly national policy issue calls.
- The Council will seek funding to send a team to the Disability Policy Seminar.
- Preparing for a housing concentration plan next year.
- Trust’s Improving Lives Conference Planning (September 17 – 18, 2024)
  - The Council will be involved in the conference planning.

**BUDGET REPORT**

Nicole Wery-Tagaban, the administration operations manager at SDS, joined the meeting to share a budget presentation. She highlighted the following information:

FY 2024 Budget and Actuals by Funding Source:

<u>Council’s funding sources</u>	<u>FY’24 budget</u>	<u>FY’24 expenditures</u>
<u>Federal:</u>		
Living Well Grant	\$ 572,955	\$ 195,160
DD Act State Councils FFY 23	\$ 343,125	\$ 330,040
DD Act State Councils FFY 24	\$ 179,670	\$ 16,406
<u>State Interagency (RSA):</u>		
Support for SEAP	\$ 85,000	\$ 28,072
Support for ICC	\$ 100,000	\$ 55,213
Pathways Transition-Age Youth Workforce Readiness (DEED)	\$ 148,049	\$ 5,830
<u>MHTA:</u>		
General fund/MH	\$ 79,600	\$ 7,014
GCDSE joint staffing	\$ 189,500	\$ 79,154
<b>FY’24 budget total</b>	<b>\$1,697,900</b>	<b>\$ 716,893</b>
<b>FY’24 budget remaining balance</b>	<b>\$981,006</b>	

## STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Legislative Committee

**Chair Caitlin Poindexter** shared the following update for the Legislative Committee:

Committee members:

- **Chair Caitlin Poindexter, Art Delaune, Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, Corey Gilmore, Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich, Jena Crafton, Margaret Evans, Carl Brady, and Chelsea Burke**

Committee staff:

- **Jamie Kokoszka, Patrick Reinhart**

**Caitlin Poindexter** shared the AKLeg.gov resource. She noted that AKLeg.gov allows the public to track bills and has many other resources for participation in the legislative process.

**Art Delaune** shared that in his research for the legislative visits, he noted that Representative Carrick introduced an education bill on February 7, 2024, HB 310, to allow medication to be given to children with disabilities in schools. He made contact with her staff, who gave a brief explanation of the proposed bill. **Art Delaune** suggested that the Council research the bill further and look into whether it is something the Council would support.

Committee activities:

- The committee considered position papers to present during the 2024 legislative visits:
  - HB 111/SB 143, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child's Bill of Rights
    - HB 111 was absorbed into SB 140, a controversial education bill. SB 143 remains a stand-alone bill.
  - SB 104/HB 161, Civil Legal Services Fund
    - A bill to increase the funding from 10% of court filing fees to 25%. The funding assists people at/below the poverty level and individuals with disabilities. They have not had an increase in funding in decades and have had to turn away approximately 50% of the people who come for help.
  - Centralized Accommodation Fund (CAF)
    - The efforts to establish a CAF have changed from legislative action to working with the administration to adopt a new internal method to create funding.
  - HCBS Efficiencies
    - Home/Environmental Modifications (E-Mods)
    - Participant-Directed Services
  - Repeal Assistive Technology Loan Program
  - Public and Community Transit.

**Caitlin Poindexter** reminded Council members that a two-hour training is scheduled on day two of the meeting.

## **Community Inclusion Support Services (CISS) Committee**

**Chair Corey Gilmore** shared the following update for the CISS Committee:

Committee members:

- **Chair Corey Gilmore, Art Delaune, Margaret Evans, Dave Fleurant, Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, Ken Hamrick, Elizabeth Joseph, Nona Safra, Marlene Wenger and Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich**

Committee staff:

- **Lanny Mommsen, Samantha Vetter**

Committee activities:

- Met twice since October 2023
- DD Awareness Month (March)
  - Proclamation submission
  - Outreach on GovDelivery and Facebook
- Full Lives Conference, April 11 – 12, 2024
  - Looking for proposals for the conference.

Committee advocacy:

- Reviewed HCBS position paper
- Supported Decision Making Workgroup
  - The Council is actively involved with the WINGS Committee and its workgroups. Council staff is working with a contractor to update the website's SDMA resources and videos.

Housing activities:

- Explored existing housing data
- Plan to host a listening session on housing
- Participating in the Alaska Mental Health Trust Comp Plan for housing (Section 3.1)
- Plan to attend the Housing First Partners Conference, Atlanta (April 2024)

Samantha Vetter reported that the Trust offers Mini Grants of up to \$2,500 annually to eligible beneficiaries or to an agency on behalf of a beneficiary. More information can be found on the Trust's website. Jamie Kokoszka shared a variety of ways the Mini Grants have benefitted beneficiaries.

Corey Gilmore reminded Council members that it is time for Medicaid renewals. If you have not updated your information, please do so.

## **Self-Advocacy & Leadership (SA&L) Committee**

**Co-Chairs Heidi Lieb-Williams and Christine Bohan** shared the following update for the SA&L Committee:

Committee members:

- **Co-Chair Heidi Lieb-Williams, Co-Chair Christina Bohan, Jena Crafton, Anna Attla, Art Delaune, Margaret Evans, Corey Gilmore, Elizabeth Joseph, Nona Safra, Garrett Dominick, and Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich**

Committee staff:

- **Jamie Kokoszka, Lanny Mommsen**

**Heidi Lieb-Williams** shared sentiments on how empowering it is to be a self-advocate. She noted that she sits on the National Association of Council of Developmental Disabilities Leadership Circle. **Anna Attla, Jena Crafton, Corey Gilmore,** and herself are a few of 86 people nationwide invited to the Leadership Circle. Alaska is the only state with more than one person that has won national White House awards. She exclaimed that Alaska is an example to other states regarding self-advocacy and leadership.

Committee news:

- Peer Power's Empower Hour is held the fourth Thursday of the month, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- NACDD Self-Advocacy and Leadership Discussion Series webinar opportunities are provided for committee members to attend
- April 26 – 28, 2024, Peer Power Summit. Registration is open until March 15, 2024
- April 2024, Full Lives Conference:
  - Sponsoring Council members and staff registration
- Disability Pride Celebration:
  - July 20, 2024, Kenai
  - July 27, 2024, Anchorage Park Strip
  - Submitting a request for an ADA proclamation
- *I Have Dreams* presentation:
  - Peer Power Summit
  - Virtual.

**Christine Bohan** noted that the Council is recruiting for new self-advocates. She shared advocacy and leadership opportunity resources.

## **OTHER COMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)**

**Chair Sabrina Richmond** and Council staff **Rich Saville** shared the following update:

Committee members:

**Chair Sabrina Richmond, Margaret Evans, Caitlin Poindexter, Chelsea Burke,** Pam Kellish, Susan Kessler, Amy Simpson, Lisa Bennett, Laura Barrows, Angie Gingue, Meghan Johnson, Rebecca Vickery, Elizabeth Siddon, Hattie Harvey, Kathy Berry, Shauna Nickel, Adrienne Schwartz, Sandra DeHart-Mayor, Jimael Johnson, Carmen Wenger, Emily Urlacher, Rep. Jenny Armstrong, and Kristen Spencer

Staff:

**Rich Saville, Patrick Reinhart**

Recent activities:

- An ICC ILP Finance Subcommittee was formed and is developing a plan to advocate for funding and expanded services.
  - Meetings are held monthly with Raviant Consultants
    - Currently discussing new lower eligibility requirements with a lower percentage of disability and adding additional automatically qualifying diagnoses
- The ICC reviewed the ILP Annual Performance Report (ILP APR)
  - Improvement in most indicators over the last year
  - Zero slippage in many areas
  - Last year, the ILP was in “needs assistance.” The expectation is to return to “meets requirements” this year.

The next ICC meeting is scheduled for March 5, 2024 from 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

### **Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)**

**Chair Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich** shared the following SEAP update:

Panel members:

- **Chair Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich, Sabrina Richmond, Margaret Evans, Demii VanDusen, Don Enoch,** Heather Batchelder, Lisa Bennett, Joshua Branstetter, Jeannine Bryan, Robyn Capp, Ashley Crace, Amy Hagen, Robert Heide, Jacob Kammermeyer, Mandy Link, Ernie Manzie, Alyssa Rose-Miller, Amy Thomas, and Andrianne Schultz

Panel staff:

- **Rich Saville, Patrick Reinhart**

**Chair Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich** announced the 2024 Inclusive Practice Award winners as follows:

- Paraeducator of the Year, Jenny Miller, Hoonah
- Inclusive Practices Individual, Dale Ebcas, Kalskag
- Inclusive Practices Team, Mary Lillie and Lacy Davis, Manokotak School

**Jena Crafton** shared the importance of Positive Behavioral Intervention Services in schools.

**Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich** spoke briefly about the compensatory education program. She shared that at the beginning of the pandemic, the secretary of education wrote a letter saying it's not a matter of if these kids will need comp ed, it's a matter of when and how. Some students in gen ed and special education were impacted more than others. They are trying to take the progress reports from the end of 2019 and compare them with reports in 2022 to find the gaps and where comp ed would be needed to get on track. Stone Soup Group has made available a five-part video series that tells people how to access records and file a request for comp ed specifically for regression due to the pandemic.



The next SEAP meeting is scheduled for February 27, 2024, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. DEED will give a presentation on the PBIS Project in rural school districts.

### **Special Education Service Agency (SESA)**

SESA Board President **Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus** and SESA's Executive Director Olivia Yancey shared a PowerPoint presentation and highlighted the following information:

- SESA board:
  - Board president **Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, Anna Attla, Caitlin Poindexter, Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich, Elizabeth Joseph, Rich Saville, Don Enoch**, Clayton Holland, Micaela Kolerok, and Heather Wheeler
- Mission: SESA provides consultation and training to support the unique educational needs of individuals and the Alaskan communities that serve them.
- SESA is an educational service agency that provides low-incidence disability services. Low-incidence disabilities include autism, deaf/hard of hearing, visual impairment, emotional disabilities, and multiple disabilities. In addition, SESA operates the Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC), the Alaska Deaf-Blind Project, and the Alaska Center for Accessible Materials.
- SESA became a public organization in 1986.
- Funding for SESA is 84% State of Alaska funding, 11% federal pass-through, 3.8% direct federal funding, and less than 1% interest and other funding.
- Senate Bill 119 extended SESA's termination date to June 30, 2029 when it will undergo a redetermination process.

#### Activities since August 2023:

- SESA provided technical assistance to over 12,389 Alaskans.
- SESA programs have offered over 59 site-based, district, and statewide training for Alaskans on evidence-based or best practices related to the educational program of students with low-incidence disabilities. Over 47% of those were conducted via distance delivery.
- SESA Low Incidence Disability Programs have offered and provided support to 502 students and their school teams.
- SESA has produced 302 customized student or patron-focused reports offering recommendations and guidance.
- SESA specialists have made 143 onsite consultations or training for Alaskans.
- The Alaska Center of Accessible Materials has created and connected 20 accessible educational materials projects for school teams and their students with disabilities.
- Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC) has conducted 13 trainings and 10 community outreach activities.
- The Anne Freitag Library has 1,290 patrons and continues to do outreach across the state to share what is available at the statewide lending library.

Olivia Yancey shared feedback and pictures from SESA's programs, including the Alaska Deaf-Blind Project, the Alaska Autism Resource Center, and the Anne Freitag Library.

Upcoming events:

- March 26 – 28, 2024, Alaska Deaf-Blind Project presents a three-day, free webinar on Modes of Communication.
- April 2, 2024, AARC hosts a free webinar featuring speakers from Autism Level Up!
- April 20, 2024, AARC Autism Awareness Walk.

Olivia Yancey shared the SESA referral process. She noted that more information can be found on SESA's website. The next SESA board meeting is scheduled for May 8, 2024.

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus reminded Council that the AARC is at risk of losing \$50,000 of funding. She encouraged Council members to advocate for SESA and its continued funding.

### **Employment Committee**

**Chair Anna Attla** shared the following update for the Employment Committee:

Committee members:

- **Chair Anna Attla, Nona Safra, Director Duane Mayes, Jena Crafton, Ken Hamrick, and Margaret Evans**

Committee staff:

- **Samantha Vetter**

Committee/staff activities:

- The Employment Committee has met twice since October.
- Continued work on the Council's Five-Year Plan, Goal 3, Employment.
- Committee members/staff work with the following partners:
  - BEST Workgroup
  - AADD Employment Champions Workgroup
  - Alaska Mental Health Trust Comp Plan, Sections 3.2 and 3.3 Workgroup
  - Anchorage Academies Model, Transitions Tactic Team
  - Work with DVR – Employment First messaging/October National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) messaging.

**Anna Attla** reported that the BEST Job Fair and Symposium was held in October of 2023 at the Fairview Rec Center in Anchorage, where over 24 employers and professional agencies participated. There were 12 employer-based presentations, including ABLE and Project SEARCH presentations. She shared that Sharon Miranda was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Samantha Vetter** reported that DEED was awarded the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant in the fall of 2023. Grant partners and projects include:

- Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): Youth Leadership Forum, Immersive Youth Aviation Academy, Youth Emergency Management Program
- Center for Human Development (CHD): DB 101 Calculator, Evaluation, TAPESTRY expansion, Indigenous Transition Skills Curriculum
- Southeast Independent Living Center (SAIL): RecWORKS!

- GCDSE: Project SEARCH support, Peer Power student outreach
- DEED: Grant management, steering and advisory committee, facilitation, reporting and evaluation, and website development

**Samantha Vetter** reported that the Council and other partners hosted a presentation on DIF at the ASSEC Conference. The Council plans to form an advisory committee for the grant that meets quarterly and includes parents, students, teachers, and professional representation. Interested parties can contact Samantha at the Council. She noted that the steering committee meets biweekly, and the project coordinator at DEED is Kerri Tanet.

**Samantha Vetter** reported that with regard to Project SEARCH, all sites continue site steering committee meetings. The sites are:

- Anchorage Providence Medical Center – 9 interns
- Fairbanks Memorial Hospital – 6 interns
- Mat-Su Regional Medical Center – 4 interns

**Samantha Vetter** reported that Erin Riehle is scheduled to visit Alaska for Project SEARCH site visits on March 4 – 6, 2024. She shared that the virtual Anchorage Mock Expo is scheduled for February 22, 2024, and more information is available online.

**Samantha** shared that she was invited to participate in intern interviews at the Mat-Su site. She found the experience enlightening. She appreciated the enthusiasm of the potential interns.

**Samantha Vetter** shared the following information related to the Indigenous Transition Skills Curriculum:

- There are four pilot schools: Hoonah, Grayling, Buckland, and Savoonga.
- The curriculum author plans to visit Grayling in February, and she is working with the schools to implement the curriculum into IEPs and student transition plans.
- At least 11 students are participating in the curriculum, and the curriculum is being built into other student IEPs as interested for the '24/'25 school year.

**Anna Attla** shared the following information on Microenterprise Grants:

- The Microenterprise Grants support self-employment for Alaskans with developmental disabilities.
- Review, input, and provide recommendations on Microenterprise Grant applications.
- The current application period awarded \$33,360.58; four were for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- The goal is to increase the number of DD grant awardees.
- The next application deadline is March 6, 2024.

**Anna Attla** shared the highlights of the ABLÉ Program as follows:

- ABLÉ allows \$18,000 in annual deposits
  - ABLÉ to Work Act (2017) allows an additional \$18,210 in deposits.
- Current account balances are limited to \$400,000.
- Accounts offer six investment choices and charges \$14.50 per quarter.
- Alaska ABLÉ as of December 31, 2023:
  - The number of accounts increased by 15% to 1,081 total accounts

- The average account value was \$10,957 (an increase of 20%), with total assets in Alaska at \$11,845,470.24.
- ABLA Age Adjustment Act passed on December 24, 2022, which goes into effect on January 1, 2026, increases the age of onset of disability from 25 to 46, potentially expanding it to an additional six million people.

**Samantha Vetter** shared an update on the DB 101 as follows:

- The website has been updated and has a new look and functionality
- CHD is working with the World Institute on Disabilities to add to the DB 101 School and Work Calculator
- Technical assistance meeting was held with WID training to users to be offered
- Youth and families will have access to benefits counselors through the WIPA Project.

### **LUNCH & LEARN: Insight into Deaf Culture**

Council members, staff, and guests from the SILC attended a Lunch & Learn at the Capitol on Deaf Culture.

### **PROGRAM, PROJECT, and PARTNER REPORTS**

#### **Infant Learning Program (ILP)**

Pam Kellish joined the meeting, gave a brief overview of the ILP Program, and shared ILP update as follows:

Total enrollment:

- FFY 20      1,803
- FFY 21      1,650
- FFY 22      1,636

*Service Compliance, Indicators 1, 2, and 7:*

- Children enrolled within 45 days of referral
  - Target      100%
  - Results     98.3%
- Services delivered in natural environments
  - Target      97%
  - Results     99.4%
- Services start by the date listed on the IFSP
  - Target      100%
  - Results     98.8%

*Transition Compliance Indicators 8A, B, and C:*

- Transition IFSP by 33 months
  - Target      100%
  - Results     100%
- LEA and SEA notification by 33 months
  - Target      100%
  - Result      91%
- Transition conference by 33 months
  - Target      100%

- Result 99.6%

*Child Outcomes at Entry and Exit, Indicators 3A, B, and C:*

Improved development

- Social target 54.45% Results 65.37%
- Knowledge target 57.56% Results 67.78%
- Actions target 61.85% Results 68.87%

Exit at Age Level

- Social target 42.40% Results 45.45%
- Knowledge target 31.4% Results 34.04%
- Actions target 45.38% Results 42.75%

*Child Count (December 1, 2022) Indicators 5 and 6:*

- Birth to 1-year olds: 193 Target 1.89% Results 2.03%
- Birth to 3-year-olds: 877 Target 2.7% Results 3.12%

*Family Outcome Survey, Indicators 4A, B, and C:*

- Families report they know their rights
  - Target 100%
  - Results 96.75%
- Families report they can communicate their child's needs
  - Target 97%
  - Results 95.83%
- Families report they can help their child develop and learn
  - Target 97%
  - Results 95.83%

Pam Kellish referred the Council members to SDS's website for the full report and other resources. Nicole Wery-Tagaban noted that SDS is in the process of revamping its website. If people cannot access particular information, they can contact Pam Kellish or herself.

Tony Newman asked about the work the ICC is doing related to proposed changes to the eligibility criteria and expansion of conditions. Pam Kellish responded that they have been meeting with the consultants weekly to look at the proposed approaches to change. She noted that if eligibility is expanded, they would want to do it slowly so as not to overwhelm programs. Still, the expansion would be beneficial and a natural way to open up eligibility to serve more children earlier.

**Key Coalition**

Michelle Girault joined the meeting, shared a brief history of the Key Coalition, and highlighted the following Key Coalition update:

The ultimate goal: To realize the DD Shared Vision where Alaskans with disabilities live the life they choose with the supports they direct.

**Key Priorities 2024:**

- Priority 1: Continue the work of eradicating the waitlist

- Ask: Continue to monitor the progress of fully implementing the plan to eradicate the IDD waitlist
- Priority 2: Support initiatives that address social determinants of health
  - Ask: Strengthen the state's transportation infrastructure by:
    - Supporting funding for Human Services Transportation
    - Adding \$1M for Transit Match funding
    - Support the increase of housing vouchers specifically for people with disabilities
    - Continue to address challenges within state infrastructure to improve timeliness and access to state services – Division of Public Assistance, Disability Determination Services, and Office of Public Advocacy.
- Priority 3: Invest in community behavioral health services
  - Ask: Increase the state's investment in community behavioral health services by:
    - Supporting a \$13M request to close the gap from a delayed rate increase
    - Enacting a 1% increase in Medicaid spending to bolster current community behavioral health rates until a new long-term rate methodology is created.

Michelle Girault shared the schedule for the Key Campaign this year:

- Unity Lunch, which takes place virtually, is scheduled for Friday, February 16, 2024 at noon.
- A legislative visit process virtual training is scheduled for February 16, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. Virtual visits will take place the week of February 19 – 23, 2024.
- February 27 - 28, 2024, Key, Peer Power, AADD, and the Alaska Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (AADSP) board members will be in Juneau. Juneau is hosting a rally on the Capitol steps on Wednesday. Afterward, they will participate in a work session with SDS partners to continue to dialogue about the next steps in eradicating the waitlist.

Michele Girault encouraged advocates to meet with their representatives and carry the messages of the Key priorities. **Patrick Reinhart** noted that the Governor's Council supports Key Coalition through the Living Well Grant regarding travel. Council members participate in in-person advocacy in partnership with Key.

### Alaska Mobility Coalition

Tabled.

### Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD)

Kim Champney joined the meeting, gave a brief introduction of AADD, and shared the following information focused on the Alaskans Living Well Grant:

Alaskans Living Well:

- The project was partly supported by a grant from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services.

Grant goals and key strategies:

- Overarching goal:
  - Increase community integration, health, safety, independence, and well-being of Alaskans with developmental disabilities through the realization of the Shared Vision.
- Three objectives:
  1. Enhance health and safety by increasing independence and inclusion
  2. Strengthen the knowledge and skills of direct support professionals
  3. Strengthen and elevate the leadership roles of peer support networks.

Partners in the Living Well Grant:

- |                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Governor's Council    | • SAIL                          |
| • SDS                   | • AADD                          |
| • Peer Power            | • Key Coalition                 |
| • CHD                   | • Mental Health Trust Authority |
| • Disability Law Center | • SILC                          |

AADD's contributions:

- Community Relationship Building Program:
  - AADD created an RFP that was awarded to Hope
  - Hope created and implemented a program to teach DSPs how to support people to build relationships
  - The program will be embedded in the DSP certification program through the Alaska Training Cooperative.
- Strengthen the knowledge and skills of DSPs
  - Statewide DSP Summit (45 DSPs attended)
  - Three follow-up statewide Zooms
  - Development of a Best Practice Guide
  - Launch of the AADSP Discord Server
  - Presentation at Full Lives

**Center for Human Development (CHD)**

**Ken Hamrick** shared the following update on CHD projects:

- Combatting Autism Initiative (CBIA):
  - CBAI supervises ten trainees and has started accepting applications for fall admission to the Field Supervision Program. CBIA has also offered four of the ten planned caregiver webinars with plans to release the rest asynchronously so that families can access the content on their schedule.
- Project ECHO:
  - The first session of the 2024 Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities ECHO series took place virtually on February 8, 2024 and is scheduled to continue every other Thursday through May 30, 2024.
- Family Services Training Center (FSTC)
  - This year, FSTC provided 45 high-quality continuing education training sessions to professionals statewide and traveled to train behavioral health agencies in Bethel, Nome, Kenai, Ketchikan, and Fairbanks.
  - FSTC trains and supports agencies in implementing trust-based relational intervention to support professionals in skillfully intervening with families impacted by trauma.

- Alaska Training Center (AKTC):
  - AKTC provides training and credentialing for DSPs working with people with IDD. There are currently 55 DSPs active in year two of the project. Thirteen agencies continue to be engaged in the project. There are presently 44 DSPs who have completed the NADSP DSP Level 1 Certification. Of the 44 DSP Level 1, 17 have earned Level 2, and eight have earned DSP Level 3 credentialing.
  - AKTC is a partner in the Living Well Grant. This year, they will focus on delivering a new DSP training course entitled Community Relationship Building and Key Concepts. AKTC continues to focus on work with DBH and the Trust around Crisis Now training for the behavioral health peer support, first responders, and healthcare workforce.
- Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA)
  - UAA CHD has assumed responsibility for managing the Disability Benefits 101 website. A free webinar demonstrating the DB 101 will be available on February 29, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.
- Disability Abuse Response Team (DART)
  - The new season of DART webinars has begun. They will convene one topic each month, including support for crime victims with disabilities, brain injury, and intimate partner violence and responding to mental health crises in shelter and agency environments.
  - The DART coordinators presented at three statewide Sexual Assault Response Team trainings focusing on supportive responses to victims with disabilities. The audience included law enforcement, forensic nurses, court personnel, and victim advocates.
- Mental Health DD Project (MHDD)
  - A new year of mental health and developmental disabilities training is beginning. The MDHH ECHO began its nine-session series on February 8, 2024.
- Brain Injury Council of Alaska (BICA) and Brain Injury Program
  - Council members collaborated with the state to adapt the comprehensive brain injury report into a one-page, easy-to-read infographic.
- Friendships and Dating Program
  - The program was proud to be featured in Mother Jones magazine. The focus of the article was the importance of equal access to sexual health education for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Public Health Workforce Expansion Program
  - The staff has expanded knowledge about better health services for people with disabilities by providing numerous presentations, including sessions about accessible healthcare to second-year students at the university, a discussion about the file *8 Keys to FASD*, and a presentation of data



about accessible health education program at the Alaska Public Health Association Conference.

- Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND)
  - The LEND Program is currently recruiting for its 2024-2025 cohort.

**Ken Hamrick** shared an end-of-an-era moment. He noted that Karen Ward, who has an extensive history of supporting Alaskans with IDD and their families and served as the CHD director since 1994, is retiring at the end of June 2024.

### **Disability Law Center (DLC)**

Jacob Kammermeyer, senior staff attorney, reported that DLC is a private law firm that is Alaska's designated protection and advocacy agency. They provide free legal services for people of all ages with any disability with legal matters that are related to their disabilities. He reported that the DLC helps with Social Security Disability hearings, helps people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness apply for benefits they may be entitled to, helps with Medicaid appeals and waiver services and eligibility, helps people with employment discrimination and discrimination in places of public accommodation or in receipt of government services, and assist with special education matters.

With regard to special education, Jacob Kammermeyer reported that DLC is seeing tremendous staff shortages across all school districts, which is having a significant impact on both the services offered to clients and other students with disabilities and the placement options available to them. It also impacts how long teachers and staff have to meet with parents. The IEP team is the most powerful entity under the statutes, and the process in which the IEP team makes decisions is in IEP meetings. Due to staffing shortages, they see IEP team meetings scheduled for 45 minutes to an hour. It is hard to do substantive work in that short amount of time.

Jacob Kammermeyer added that DLC is also seeing a loss in direct services. In the past, services were provided by itinerant providers or direct service providers who would provide services through telepractice. That has now become the norm. Even in large urban districts, there is no access to in-person speech pathology services, occupational therapies, or behavioral support. The issue is exacerbated by the fact that there are simply no private providers in many communities statewide.

Jacob Kammermeyer noted that DLC is also seeing teams that don't have the expertise to modify or amend IEPs based on the evaluations that are taking place and people who can interpret and explain the instructional implications of various assessments and evaluations and translate that into services and supports. When there are evaluators in schools seeing students, those evaluators can't provide any direct services or supervise the provision of services. DLC is seeing an uptick in special education teachers who are spread so thin that they no longer do the lion's share of the teaching. That responsibility is now falling to paraprofessionals. The ability of the paraprofessionals to do their essential work depends on the training and supervision they receive.

Jacob Kammermeyer noted that these are important issues that DLC wanted to bring to the Council's attention. The DLC continues to have good working relationships with the

school districts. Many districts seek to resolve the problems identified through IEP meetings, mediation, or state complaints. Still, many other students and families that aren't in contact with DLC are impacted.

Jacob Kammermeyer shared that due to the staffing shortages and the lack of onsite expertise, DLC is seeing several districts removing students from school or not implementing IEPs as written.

**Patrick Reinhart** recommended that the SEAP invite Mr. Kammermeyer to a meeting to further discuss the issues brought forward at the Council meeting.

### **Employment First Presentation: DVR Director Duane Mayes**

**Director Duane Mayes** directed the Council's attention to the Alaska Employment First Annual Progress Report, FY 2023. He stated that the report has been distributed to all legislators and high-level executive individuals within the Department of Health, Department of Administration, Department of Family and Community Services, and other departments and division leaders. DVR prepares the report each year. The report aims to promote and assist with implementing effective policies and activities to improve the employment rates and conditions of individuals with disabilities in Alaska. The report provides a summary of the standards achieved over the last year.

**Director Mayes** directed the members' attention to page 9, DVR State Fiscal Year 2023 Program Highlights, and shared the following information:

#### Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Highlights:

- 1,951 individuals with disabilities received services
- 98% of individuals receiving services experienced significant disabilities with multiple barriers to employment
- 964 individuals applied for VR services
- 1,782 individuals received information and referral services
- \$3,446,700 was spent on services to individuals in the VR program
- 292 individuals exited the VR program employed
- \$18.66 was the average hourly wage
  - 250 individuals were employed in the private sector
  - 30 individuals were employed in federal, state, or local government
  - 12 individuals were self-employed
- 66 students with disabilities received services from the VR program
- \$183,521 was spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services from the VR program.

#### Potentially Eligible (PE) Students with a Disability Highlights:

- 1,368 students with disabilities received services from the PE transition program
- 91 Alaskan cities hosted PE programs, and 75% of them were held in rural Alaska
- \$1,489,001 was spent on Pre-Employment Transition Services from the PE program

**Director Mayes** reported that each year, DVR helps hundreds of Alaskans with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and keep meaningful jobs. Individuals wanting to work or

continue to work who experience a physical, intellectual, or mental disability that prevents them from achieving career success may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. He shared the following statistics:

- Disabilities of DVR Participants SFY 2023
  - 39% Cognitive
  - 29% Psychosocial
  - 20% Physical/Orthopedic
  - 6% Blind and Visual Impairments
  - 5% Deafness and Hearing loss
  - 2% Communication Impairments
- DVR Participants by Race SFY 2023
  - 63% Caucasian
  - 22% Alaskans Native
  - 9% Black/African American
  - 2% Other
- Occupations:
  - 33% Office/administrative support
  - 6% Production/construction/operating
  - 6% Food preparation/serving
  - 7% Computer/mathematical
  - 8% Farming/forestry/fishing
  - 8% Community/social services
  - 7% Sales
  - 25% Other
- Wages increased from \$16.87 in 2022 to \$18.66 in 2023

**Director Mayes** reported that the Centralized Accommodation Fund (CAF) is part of the Alaska Work Matters Task Force recommendations. At the last legislative session, an effort was made to increase the budget for a CAF, which was vetoed. Director Mayes has been speaking with the administration leaders about ways to make the CAF a reality. A solution has been proposed to establish a fund based on the average annual cost for accommodations and have each department pay an indirect rate to the CAF.

**Director Mayes** reported that within DVR, they have the Disability Determination Services Unit. Funding for that program is 100% federal dollars. The Tax Equity Fiscal Responsibility Act (TEFRA) is for children aged 0 – 19 and families with a child born with significant disabilities. It is not income-based. DVR, in agreement with the Division of Public Assistance, has an MOU in place that 5% of their work is TEFRA, and 95% is Social Security Administration for those who are significantly disabled and need to collect Social Security to survive. He reported that the TEFRA cases have increased 73% in the last year. DVR has 280 TEFRA cases; 20 are being actively worked on by four adjudicators, and 11 cases were closed out last week. Seven adjudicators are in the training queue and will be ready within a year. Director Mayes noted that other efforts are being made to address the increase.

**Director Mayes** thanked the Council for supporting the Assistive Technology Loan Fund transfer.

## **Peer Power Alaska**

Tabled.

## **PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

A public testimony opportunity was offered, and a full transcript was prepared.

## **CONTINUED PARTNER REPORTS**

### **Stone Soup Group**

Lisa Bennett reported that Stone Soup Group was founded in 1992 and is the Parent Training and Information Center, the Family-to-Family Health Information Center, and the Parent-to-Parent USA affiliate. It houses the developmental disability Resource Connection in Anchorage and Mat-Su.

Stone Soup Group services:

- Navigation services:
  - Parent and DD Resource Center
    - Parent navigators assist in finding resources, refer to other agencies and providers, provide school support, and support diagnostic clinics
    - DD navigators assist with the waiver eligibility application process.
- Peer support:
  - Mentor Advocate Partner (MAP)
  - Building Strong Parents (BSP)
  - FASD Caregiver Group
  - Sibshops.
- Training and events:
  - Training series
    - Supported Decision-Making Agreements
    - Transition Series
    - Parent Learning Hour
    - FASD Into Action
    - Talk About It Tuesdays
    - MAP Mentor Parent Training
    - Stone Soup Group Parent Conference.
- Youth activities:
  - Souper Gaming Night
  - Friendships & Dating
  - Sibshops.

Lisa Bennett shared that Stone Soup Group's Parent Conference is scheduled for March 21 – 22, 2024 in person in Anchorage.

## **RECESS**

The meeting recessed at 4:45 p.m.

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

**COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**Zoom Videoconference  
Governor's Council on Disabilities  
and Special Education  
550 W. 7th Avenue, Suite 1220  
Anchorage, Alaska**

**February 13 – 15, 2024**

**Wednesday, February 14, 2024**

**Council Members:**

Jena Crafton, Chair  
Anna Attla  
Christine Bohan  
Carl Brady  
Chelsea Burke  
Art Delaune  
Don Enoch  
Heidi-Lieb Williams  
Margaret Evans  
Corey Gilmore  
Ken Hamrick  
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus  
Director Anthony Newman  
Caitlin Poindexter  
Sabrina Richmond  
Nona Safra  
Demii Van Dusen  
Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich

**Council Staff:**

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director  
Michael Stevenson  
Rich Saville  
Jamie Kokoszka  
Samantha Vetter  
Lanny Mommsen  
Ian Miner

**Minutes Prepared by:** Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

**CALL TO ORDER – 8:30 a.m.**

**MINDFULNESS MOMENT**

**ROLL CALL/ZOOM REMINDERS – Quorum established**

## **DEPARTMENT REPORTS and DIALOGUE**

### **Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)**

Deputy Commissioner Isaak joined the meeting and shared the following information on DEED's State Tribal Education Compact:

Mission, Vision, and Purpose:

- An excellent education for every student every day.
- All students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.
- DEED exists to provide information, resources, and leadership to support an excellent education for every student every day.

Five Shared Strategic Priorities (Alaska's Education Challenge):

1. Support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade.
2. Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs.
3. Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources.
4. Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals.
5. Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.

The work began with SB 34: Compacting in Education:

- State-Tribe negotiations
- State Board of Education
- District consultations
- Teacher union consultations
- Legislative report.

What is Compacting?

- Government-to-government agreement
- Tribes as political subdivisions
- Self-Determination
  - Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act.

Compacting in Education:

How is compacting different in education than the Indian Health Service Federal-Tribal or Child Welfare Service State-Tribal Compact?

- Whole-system approach, not selected services
- Funding mechanism as a formula, not a block of funding.

What does compacting look like in education?

State Role:

Funding - accountable to  
Legislature  
Due process  
State Board of Education

Tribe Role:

Operation of STEC schools  
Employing staff  
Curriculum  
Local governance  
Training staff

Tribal Partners:

1. Central Council Tlingit
2. Inupiat Community of the Arctic Circle
3. Ketchikan Indian Community
4. King Island Native Community
5. Knik Tribal Council

Deputy Commissioner Isaak described transforming education as inspiring Tribal and community ownership of educational excellence. He shared the following quote on what transformation looks like:

"...if love or respect or mutual understanding or other values are valuable parts of our learning, which should somehow be a part of the educational process, it is the educational institutions which decide what will be in the educational process. If we want that as part of education, we must bring about that through institutional change."

Summary of the report:

- Premise: Public schools that are open to all students and funded through public dollars.
- Mechanism: Government-to-government agreement (State-Tribe) to establish Tribal School Districts for the purposes of Tribal self-governance and a funding mechanism that integrates with DEED.
- Operation: Teachers that are certified through a Tribal training process that DEED verifies to issue state licenses for State-Tribal Compact School Teachers.
- Accountability: Background checks, audits, and assessments are required. Under the State Board of Education for the purposes of statewide regulation.
- Evaluation: Actively negotiating.

Deputy Commissioner Isaak shared an overview of the table of contents of the 76-page report and noted that the report could be found online at DEED's website. He said that DEED partnered with the Alaska Federation of Natives, and their website has an education link with a description of the legal work done to lay the groundwork for compacting. He also shared a link to Cook Inlet Tribal Council Visioning Tribal Education, which has personal stories and a video titled: *Our Future Ancestors: A Story of Education in Alaska*.

**Department of Health (DOH)**

Commissioner Hedberg and Director Newman joined the meeting and shared the following information:

With regard to the department's arc of effort related to childcare:

- The Governor's Child Care Task Force has been meeting monthly. In December, the first report that provided 33 recommendations on increasing the workforce, decreasing barriers/increasing access to background checks, and licensing was issued. Several regulation packages are being prepared to distribute for public comment. The report can be found online at the SDS website.
- A background check electronic fingerprinting pilot project will be launched soon in four rural communities.
- A noted barrier related to access is the eligibility requirements for the all-inclusive child care program, Alaska IN!. Alaska IN! is administered by the Child Care Program Office to give extra support to families with children who have special needs in accessing inclusive care and offer supplemental funding to providers for training, needed accommodations, and support to help them meet the child's individual needs. The purpose of Alaska IN! is to enhance the skills of the childcare provider, promote inclusive childcare practices in childcare settings, and ensure families participating in the Child Care Assistance Program, including children with special needs, have access to childcare. This also helps ensure children with special needs have a stable and consistent childcare provider who can meet their individual needs. The program is underutilized, and consideration is being made to expand the program.
- The second report focuses on increasing access, quality, subsidies, and the cost of care.

With regard to the department's arc of effort related to increasing access to youth behavioral health services:

- The Department hears the issues around access to behavioral health services and the need to listen to the public about where the problems lie.
- The Department of Family and Community Services, the Department of Health, and other departments went to five regions, hosted two-day listening sessions, and listed the statewide issues. Taking that input, they divided it into seven topic areas, and they will use that information to inform the next steps to address the gaps to increase access to youth behavioral health services.
- The department acknowledges that a voice from rural Alaska was lacking. The department is committed to continuing the process.
- The culmination of the 117-page report is available for public comment, and the department would appreciate comments specific to regions and to the statewide needs.

With regard to the Department's arc of effort related to the transformation of care:

- The department hosted over ten transformation of care presentations.
- Transformation of care is the state is looking at new CMS waivers around health-related needs, specifically increasing access to food, medicine, housing, and care coordination.
- Currently, the department is exploring and presenting the information and getting an idea of the interest. There is strong interest.
- The department is looking at reflecting on where Alaska is at in terms of nutrition, housing, and care coordination specific to housing and food. It is a scan of where Alaska is currently, where the gaps are, what other states are doing, what



would match with Alaska, and how Alaska can shift that dollar to prevention to prevent those high-cost diet-sensitive needs.

Commissioner Hedberg reported that there are many other issues under the umbrella term of transformation of care, including health-related social needs, access to school-based services, and how to support the incarcerated population screenings for substance use disorder. She noted that the department wants to partner with the Governor's Council on system changes for the Medicaid population.

Commissioner Hedberg shared that the SNAP backlog team has done a great job getting on track.

Director Anthony Newman introduced Deputy Director SDS Lynn Keilman-Cruz and shared the following information:

- SDS promotes health, well-being, and safety for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and vulnerable adults by facilitating access to quality services and supports that foster independence, personal choice, and dignity.
- The mission is informed by the Shared Vision.

Director Newman shared the SDS Continuum of Care spreadsheet, which showed the work the SDS does and the population it serves. He noted that it doesn't show the critical work done by the Quality Assurance Unit, Critical Incidence Reporting, Adult Protective Services, and the Medicare Information Office.

Director Newman shared the initiatives the department is working on as follows:

- interRAI, Resource Allocation Assessment Tool
  - Funded by the legislature last year to implement the interRAI over the next three years. Next steps:
    - Working with CMS to secure federal funding
    - Procuring vendors to assist with the implementation
- Adult Host Care Homes
  - New service and setting authorized by SB 57 for adults on a home and community-based Medicaid waiver. Next steps:
    - Developing regulations
    - 1915(c) waiver amendments
- Legally Responsible Individuals (LRI) As Care Providers
  - SB 57 enabled LRIs to provide personal care services through the Community First Choice Program
  - LRIs will also be able to provide habilitative waiver services.
  - Next steps:
    - Regulation under development
- Residential Services for Complex Needs Individuals

- Departments of Health and Family & Community Services are working together to determine ways to better serve youth and adults with complex needs in home and community-based service settings.
- Goal: Serving people closer to home in settings that are less expensive than institutional care.
- Next steps:
  - Regulations, waiver amendments, and procedures under development

New federal rules on the horizon:

- Older Americans Act Rules
- Medicaid Access Rules
- Adult Protective Services Rules
- Long-Term Care Facilities Standards

### **Department of Family and Youth Services (DFYS)**

Commissioner Koval joined the meeting and shared the following information:

Complex Care System:

- Complex care has been one of the most significant priorities.
- Deputy Director Dr. Brianne Oswald is taking charge of the Complex Case System, and they are recruiting for one support staff position.
- They plan to release a one-pager and a white paper soon to update everybody on the structure and the identified gaps and successes.

Talent Acquisition Team (TAT)

- The Talent Acquisition Team has been going strong.
- TAT is an innovative pilot program that the department uses to address the workforce. They have focused on the workforce and have referrals down from 34 to 10 days.
- The TAT is hosting job fairs, and the next one will be in Sitka.

Commissioner Koval reported the department has been focusing on data connectivity and HIPPA compliance. They have launched a system that helps with staff-to-staff and division-to-division communications. They have seen success in looking at how they are utilizing AI in regard to organizing budgets, travel, and hotspots in the state for the different divisions.

Commissioner Koval reported that the department has launched community-based and jail-based programs for the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API). This is expected to help with forensic restoration for patients based either at the Anchorage jail or for people in the community for restorative services. They are now looking to expand to Highland Correctional to work with the female population.

Commissioner Koval added that they have two asks in the budget: a foster care increase of roughly 30%, and funding to explore pilot step-down programs for transitioning patients out of institutions and back into the community.

## **Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA)**

CEO Steve Williams and Board of Trustees Chair Anita Halterman joined the meeting and shared the following information:

### Mission:

- It is the duty of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to provide leadership in the advocacy, planning, implementing, and funding of services and programs for Trust beneficiaries.

### Trust beneficiaries are Alaskans who experience:

- Mental illness
- Developmental disabilities
- Chronic alcohol or drug addiction
- Alzheimer's disease and related dementia
- Traumatic brain injury.

### Estimated FY'25 spending:

- Authority Grants:
  - \$19,442,000
    - Designated grants to community providers, nonprofits, local governments, and Tribal organizations
- Agency budget:
  - \$ 4,819,900 Trust Authority
  - \$ 5,156,600 Trust Land Office
- MHTARR Grants:
  - \$10,269,200
    - Designated grants to state agencies, departments, and divisions.

### Established focus areas: (provides leadership, advocacy, and planning)

- Disability Justice
- Mental Health and Addiction Interventions
  - Behavioral Health Crisis Response
- Beneficiary Employment and Engagement
- Housing and Home and Community-Based Services

### Additional priorities include:

- Workforce Development
- Early Childhood Intervention and Prevention

### Other work of the Trust includes:

- Advocacy/Public policy
- Planning
- Education/Destigmatization

Steve Williams provided information about the Trust Land Office (TLO), a critical piece of the Trust as an organization. The TLO exists within the Department of Natural Resources and manages the Trust's one million acres of land and other non-cash

assets to generate revenue to help support the Trust's work and grant-making for beneficiaries.

Updates:

- FY'25 budget and advocacy:
  - Watching the legislative budget process to identify a need for advocacy
- Trust's office staffing:
  - All positions are fully staffed.

Looking forward:

- The Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan (DOH and DFCS)
  - The Trust and other advisory boards are a part of the process.
- FY'26 – '27 budget – survey
  - Work has begun on the budget planning for 2026/2027
  - A stakeholder survey will be distributed soon. The survey is one piece used to guide budget recommendations
- Improving Lives Conference, September 17 – 18, 2024.

Kelda Barstad shared the following program update:

- Housing and HCBS:
  - Looking at different ways to build capacity in rural Alaska for coordinating homelessness services and housing overall.
  - The Trust works with partners on many different projects, including Alternatives to Guardianship, working on different ways to help support agencies in early intervention, looking at projects with Senior and Disabilities Services to help that system overall, working in partnership with SDS and CHD to implement the National Core Indicator (NCI), the person-based survey and other projects.

Kelda Barstad encouraged Council members to look for an article in Alaska Business Magazine highlighting a program called Tech that Cares. In partnership with other organizations, the Trust funded the OpiAID, MapHabit, and Moms Matter Now programs.

Kelda Barstad expressed the Trust's appreciation for the partnership with the Governor's Council. There are many initiatives the Trust and Governor's Council work together on to help support beneficiaries and further the work of the focus areas.

### **LEGISLATIVE VISITS DISCUSSION AND TRAINING**

Chair Jena Crafton welcomed the SILC members and opened the floor for introductions. Caitlin Poindexter led the Council and SILC through a review of the formal process of meeting with legislators, including preparing for the meetings, introductions, conduct during the meetings, and what to do after the meetings.

Chair Crafton shared helpful tips when meeting with legislators, including:

- Be genuine
- Introduce yourself
- Share an interesting story about your life

- Ask them a question about their life
- Don't talk about politics
- Talk about shared interests
- Ask them for their address
- Send them a card on a holiday.

The Council position papers:

- HB 111/SB 143, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child's Bill of Rights
- HCBS Efficiencies
  - Home/Environmental Modifications (E-Mod)
  - Participant-Directed Services
- Repeal Assistive Technology Loan Program
- Public and Community Transit
- Support Civil Legal Services Fund

SILC's Executive Director Michael Christian reported that the SILC is focused primarily on Participant-Directed Services and E-Mods. He said that the SILC members reviewed the position papers and felt there was a lot of information in there, and they identified points they felt were most important to impart during the meeting.

Maggie Winston led a brief review of the Participant-Directed Services position paper highlighting points the SILC identified as priorities and shared talking points.

Joan O'Keefe led a brief review of the Home/Environmental Modifications position paper, highlighting points the SILC identified as priorities and shared talking points.

Joyanna Geisler remarked that SILC members are ready to lead during legislative visits on the two positions they identified as priorities. Council members agreed.

Patrick Reinhart led a review of the other position papers and outlined talking points for each position.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

### **LEGISLATIVE VISITS FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Legislative visits were scheduled for 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Thursday, February 15, 2024**

### **LEGISLATIVE VISITS AND DEPARTURE**

#### **Continued Legislative Visits for SILC and GCDSE Members**

Legislative visits were scheduled for 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

#### **Presentation to House HSS Committee**

The presentation to the House HSS Committee was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Governor’s House Social with Lieutenant Governor Dahlstrom**

A social event with Lieutenant Governor Dahlstrom was scheduled for 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

DRAFT