

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

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**Videoconference Host:**

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

**Meeting Date**

April 16, 2024  
1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**Attendees:**

Anna Attla, Chair  
Jena Crafton  
Ken Hamrick  
Margaret Evans  
Sabrina Richmond  
Eric Gurley  
David Berube  
Kayla McDonogh

**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. No announcements were made, nor was good news shared.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES**

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

Jena Crafton **MOVED** to approve the January 2024 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by Sabrina Richmond. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

## **REPORTS**

### **Chair Report**

Anna Attla reported that she attended the Full Lives Conference and presented with Jena Crafton on their experiences working at the Center for Human Development (CHD). She shared that it was a good conference that was well attended.

### **GCDSE Staff Report**

Samantha Vetter shared the following information:

- Mental Health Trust Authority Comp Plan – Sections 3.2 and 3.3 Employment:
  - The Comp Plan is out for public comment. It closes on April 18, 2024. Council members are encouraged to review the plan and provide feedback. The expectation is the Comp Plan will be finalized by early June.
- The Peer Power Summit is scheduled for April 26 – 28, 2024.
- Anchorage School District (ASD) Academies Model:
  - The Academies teams conducted their final planning meetings. The full group will convene on April 22, 2024 to finalize the report. The ASD will be responsible for implementing the Academies Model for the '24/'25 school year.
- April is ABLE to Save Month. Many webinars and other resources related to ABLE account benefits and allowances are available. CHD plans to have a solid

presence promoting messaging on employment incentive programs within Social Security. There are proposed changes to the federal regulations governing ABLE accounts that are worthy of review and individual support.

- The Council hired a candidate for the Planner 3 position. They will start May 13, 2024.

Ken Hamrick shared that CHD is recruiting for the 2024 – 2025 LEND cohort. Recruitment details can be found on CHD's website. LEND offers a one-year fellowship for individuals with advanced degrees, professionals working in an I/DD profession, and self-advocates.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Review Employment Pages Updates for Council Website Page**

Michael Stevenson reported that the Council has been working on website updates. He shared GCDSE website, specifically the Employment Committee link. Michael outlined some of the proposed changes to the format and the organization of the various resources. He noted that they are also working on remodeling the Council's homepage. Michael encouraged Council members to review the website and offer feedback. Eric Gurley suggested including a link to the Northwest ADA.

### **Five-Year Plan**

Samantha Vetter directed the members' attention to the Employment Committee's Year 3 Work Plan for FFY '25 and shared the following update:

#### **Goal 3:**

People with developmental disabilities will have access to supports, services, programs, and training necessary for successful transitions to adulthood, meaningful work experiences, integrated and competitive employment, as well as career development, across the lifespan.

- **Objective 1:** People will have information, training, tools, and programs on telework, the State As a Model Employer, employment rights, and universally designed work environments to increase the percentage of people with developmental disabilities with meaningful, integrated, competitive employment in typical work settings.
- **Activities:**
  - **Activity 3.1.1:** Work with partners to participate in at least one employment activity annually, such as job fairs, transition fairs, conferences, and/or statewide stakeholder meetings or trainings. GCDSE and partner agencies will host at least one activity. Review sign-in sheets/participant lists for attendance count; surveys will measure self-reported increase in knowledge and location in Alaska to gauge reach.
    - **Outcome:** More Alaskans will have the opportunity to attend an activity, event, or training to learn more about the Alaska Work Matters Task Force.

- Progress Update:
      - Participated in the Mat-Su Job Fair on March 27, 2024. Estimated 80 attendees. Pathways information and employment handbooks were distributed.
      - Working with the Trust on an employment track at the Improving Lives Conference scheduled for September 17 – 18, 2024.
      - Working with DVR staff on the Employment Symposium slated for fall of 2024.
    - Comments:
      - Highlight Project SEARCH and transition-aged employment programs, promote employment incentives from the Social Security Administration at DVR's Employment Symposium.
      - Contact ASSEC to propose a transition services track at its conference. Highlight work incentive programs, including Ticket to Work and how to manage benefits.
  - Activity 3.1.2: Collaborate and continue to support employment activities with key partner agencies (AMHTA, DVR, UAA CHD, DEED, and others) to support the Council's five-year plan through the management and implementation of plan activities to ensure beneficiaries have greater access to employment, related support services, and accurate resources and information on how paid employment impacts Social Security and other benefits.
    - Outcome: Alaskans with developmental disabilities and their families and/or support professionals will have the information and/or tools necessary to increase the number of Alaskans with developmental disabilities who will be able to secure and maintain integrated employment of their choice.
    - Progress Update:
      - Regular engagement with key employment partners to assist with planning, development, and implementation of activities related to increasing employment outcomes for beneficiaries.
      - Assess the current and future level of support needed to ensure the sustainability of Alaska's Project SEARCH program.
        - Develop a long-term plan for Project SEARCH's sustainability and growth. Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) grant outreach and support has worked. Founder Erin Riehle's visit to Alaska in early March was key for some engagement. There is interest in expanding Project SEARCH into other school districts (Kenai and other rural districts).
        - Project SEARCH sites have finished interviews for next year's cohort and have six potential students identified for the programs.

- Project SEARCH 2024 graduations are scheduled for May 8 and 10, 2024.
- Work with DIF grant partners in activities promoting youth transition programs to employment in Alaska.
  - Working on creating an advisory committee for the DIF grant. Parents, staff, and students are welcome to join.
- Comments:
  - Propose collaborating with Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD) on its efforts to reform the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) in Alaska. AADD is sending providers to the APSE Conference in June.
  - Check if the Alaska Association of Direct Service Professionals could be included in partnerships.
  - Propose a service provider credentialing information track at employment events.
- Activity 3.1.3: Microenterprise Grant Review. Support employment for Alaska's developmental disabilities population by serving on the Microenterprise Grant Committee. Participating in the Microenterprise Grant reviews and discussions with the Alaska WIPA Project Director through the UAA Center for Human Development. Review Microenterprise grant applications, and provide input and recommendations on applications no less than 2x per year. Number of meetings and applications reviewed by GCDSE staff and approved by the committee.
  - Outcome: More Alaskans with developmental disabilities will have opportunities for self-employment by receiving funds from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority in the form of Microenterprise grants.
  - Progress Update:
    - Continue to partner with CHD on grant reviews. The next review committee meeting is scheduled for mid-April. There were eight total applications, three of which were applicants with developmental disabilities.
  - Comments:
    - Continue collaboration with CHD on Microenterprise Grant activities.
    - Recommend expanding rural outreach, potentially partnering with CHD's Rain Van Den Berg with the transitional curriculum for rural outreach and regional TVRs.
    - Include more stories of individuals who were successful with the grant opportunity.

- **Objective 2:** Transition-aged youth (14-22) with developmental disabilities will have increased information, education services, training, and tools that are regionally, culturally, and linguistically relevant to them to increase the number of young adults in rural communities with skills for meaningful, place-based adulthood.
  - Targeted Disparity (TD): In collaboration with people with developmental disabilities, their families, and stakeholders, the unequal availability of educational resources for regionally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate transitions to adulthood in the Southwest region of rural Alaska will be decreased through capacity building by curriculum development, outreach, and training.
    - TD Outputs: New units of curriculum developed, outreach to families and professionals, and trainings for teachers and families.
    - Outcomes: Greater availability of educational resources for regionally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate transitions to adulthood in the Southwest region of rural Alaska.
    - Eval/Measurement: In Southwest Alaska, increased capacity by the number of people trained, copies disseminated, views and downloads of online materials, professionals with the knowledge needed to use the curriculum, and number using the curriculum.
- **Activities:**
  - Activity 3.2.1: Support further development of modified curriculum that is regionally, culturally, and linguistically relevant for rural transitions. Examples: Develop surveys with partners to distribute to collaborators to measure the current level of rural relevancy and improvements as the curriculum is developed.
    - Outcomes: More Alaskans will have access to a more culturally relevant Rural Transitions curriculum.
  - Activity 3.2.2: Collaborate with partners on a plan for collecting baseline data on rural transitions, develop a pilot using the curriculum, and measure progress. For example, administer surveys to partners to measure baseline and improvements; in meetings - record the location of participants to ensure statewide reach and review sign-in sheets/participant lists for attendance count.
    - Outcome: More partners will have a data collection plan for the rural transition pilot.
  - Activity 3.2.3: Provide at least one training to parents and guardians on the availability of curriculum collaboration with partners. The Council will co-host one training for parents/guardians on the availability of curriculum.
    - Outcomes: More Alaskan parents will have a greater understanding of the curriculum use.
    - Progress Update:
      - Project SEARCH's Erin Riehle is working with CHD's Karen Heath to ensure all reporting and goals for the Indigenous Transitions curriculum are current with the DIF grant requirements.

- There is a demand for the curriculum, and the Council has shared information at ASSEC. Rain Van Den Berg has done outreach to teachers and at school events.
- Savoonga was identified as the fourth pilot site.
- The Council plans to meet with Karen Heath and Rain Van Den Berg to discuss if the Youth Aviation Academy could be included in the curriculum.
- The Council plans to co-host a training for parents and guardians on the Indigenous Transition curriculum.
- Comments:
  - Suggest looking to TVR to encourage outreach on the curriculum.

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

The next Employment Committee meeting has not yet been scheduled.

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

Ken Hamrick **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Sabrina Richmond. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.