

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

**SPRING COUNCIL MEETING
MEETING MINUTES**

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

May 30 – 31, 2024

Council Members:

Jena Crafton, Chair
Anna Attla
Christine Bohan
Carl (CB) Brady
Art Delaune
Garrett Dominick
Don Enoch
Margaret Evans
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus
Corey Gilmore
Kenneth Hamrick
Elizabeth Joseph
Heidi Lieb-Williams
Director Anthony Newman
Caitlin Poindexter
Sabrina Richmond
Nona Safra
Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich
Marlene Wenger
Demii van Dusen (day 2)

Council Staff:

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

Minutes Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

THURSDAY, MAY 30, 2024

CALL TO ORDER – 9:30 a.m.

MINDFULNESS MOMENT

ROLL CALL/ZOOM REMINDERS – Quorum established

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Caitlin Poindexter MOVED to approve the meeting agenda, **SECONDED** by **Nona Safra**. **Patrick Reinhart** added a special guest presentation to the agenda on day two. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Jena Crafton opened the floor for announcements and introductions.

APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES

Caitlin Poindexter MOVED to approve the February 2024 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by **Don Enoch**. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflicts of interest were declared.

COUNCIL CHAIR REPORT

Chair Jena Crafton reported the following activities she has been involved in over the past few months:

- Participated in the Legislative Committee, the Employment Committee, and the Self-Advocacy and Leadership Committee meetings
- Traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend the Disability Policy Seminar, attended training sessions, and participated in Hill Day visits with the Alaska congressional delegation
- Provided information to the public about the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education at the Full Lives Conference
- Co-presented with **Anna Attla** and Karen Heath at the Full Lives Conference
- Traveled to Ketchikan for the Trust meeting and participated in the Council presentations with **Patrick Reinhart**.

Upcoming events:

- Plans to attend the NACDD Conference in Washington, D.C.
- Plans to attend the Trust's Improving Lives Conference
- Plans to participate in the *I Have Dreams* presentations as a panelist
- Disability Pride celebration.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Patrick Reinhart reported the following information:

Executive Director (ED) activities:

- Participated in legislative hearings and meetings (approximately 40% of ED time)
- Seated as an officer on the board of NACDD:
 - Participates in bi-weekly meetings with staff and fellow EDs
 - Attends NACDD monthly policy calls

- NACDD welcomed a new executive director, Jill Jacobs
- Participates in Mental Health Trust Authority meetings, including several related to the support of a large provider that was struggling
- Participates on CHD's IDD/Mental Health Advisory Board
- Continues to attend the Trust's Comp Plan Advisory Group meetings
- Participated in the Project SEARCH National TA visit March 4 – 6, 2024
- Procured funding to send **Chair Jena Crafton, Caitlin Poindexter**, and Council staff **Rich Saville** to the National Disability Policy Seminar April 8 – 10, 2024 in Washington, D.C., and helped with training on issues for the whole group
- Assisted Special Olympics CEO with legislative funding requests
- Met with DOT Commissioner Anderson to discuss transportation issues
- Met with Alaska Hospital and Health Association (AHHA) regarding ASL interpreter service for patients who use ASL for communication
- Met with legislative staff about the lack of access for deaf persons and followed up with a letter to legislative leadership
- The Council supported Full Lives Conference, April 10 – 11, 2024
- The Council supported the Peer Power Summit, April 26 – 28, 2024
- The Council was invited to participate in the commissioner's group on Medicaid in schools
- The Council was invited to the Governor's Task Force on Childcare meeting to talk about issues around accessibility.

Administrative Updates

- The federal Program Performance Report review was completed, and the Council received good marks from ACL
- The Council recruited for the HHS Planner III position, and the position was offered to and accepted by **Chelsea Burke**
- The Living Well Grant closed out with a few extra dollars remaining
- In collaboration with the Public Health's COVID funding plan, the Council plans to update the Get Ready! Toolkit
- The Council is finalizing contracts with CHD, Peer Power, and Project SEARCH
- ED meets weekly with **Director Anthony Newman** and frequently with SDS budget administrators
- ED attended the Department of Health (DOH) Supervisory Practices and Management Course.

Council Budget and Grant Updates

- The Council's FY '25 budget gap has been closed by various funding sources
- The Council signed an MOU with DEED on Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) grant work
- The Council intends to write a new DIF grant in collaboration with the SILC, the Anchorage School District, and possibly SERRC. The grant application is due July 8, 2024
- The Council will file a grant statement of intent (SOI) for the Alaska Mental Health Trust grants for FY '25 and FY '26. The same process will occur regarding DEED and the ICC RSA.

Upcoming Events/Issues

- September 17 – 18, 2024, Trust Improving Lives Conference
- July 20, 2024, Kenai Disability Pride, Soldotna City Park
- July 27, 2024, Anchorage Disability Pride, Anchorage Park Strip
- Council staff member **Samantha Vetter**, along with representatives from the three Project SEARCH sites, plan to attend the Project SEARCH National Conference in mid-July in New Mexico
- **Patrick Reinhart, Chair Jena Crafton, and Sabrina Richmond** plan to attend the NACDD National Conference and TA Institute in July
- The Council is looking at the possibility of having a table at the Alaska State Fair to distribute resources on August 19, 2024
- March 18 – 19, 2025, Key Campaign in-person meeting, Juneau.

Future Plans:

- Continue budget tracking
- Continue participation on the NACDD board
- Attend the NACDD Conference
- Continue bi-weekly ED meetings and monthly policy calls
- Will begin onboarding HSS Planner III
- Continue attending the Trust's Improving Lives Conference planning meetings
- Plans to attend Dr. Karen Ward's retirement party on June 27, 2024
- Will be writing a new DIF grant due July 8, 2024.

Future Council Meeting:

- Council meetings scheduled:
 - September 19 – 20, 2024, Anchorage
 - February 10 – 13, 2025, Juneau

Patrick Reinhart noted that he will be out of the office June 12 – 21, 2024.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Legislative Committee

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, and Carl Brady**
- 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.

Chair Activities:

- Participated in legislative visits
- Attended the Disability Policy Seminar

- Takeaways:
 - There are 30 senators on the Appropriations Committee, including Senator Lisa Murkowski
 - Had the opportunity to meet Marty Ford, who has worked for The Arc of the United States for 40 years in public policy.
- Participated in SERCC TBI/IEP discussion
- Attended various conferences, including:
 - Stone Soup Group Parent Conference
 - Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC)
 - Artificial Intelligence Summit (Small Business Development Center)
- Legislative discussions with Council legislative staff.

Caitlin Poindexter reported on the committee’s legislative priorities and position papers for the 2024 legislative session:

- Centralized Accommodation Fund (CAF)
 - Ongoing discussions with the administration on exploring an administrative funding structure.
- Environmental Modifications (EMOD)
 - Although there is no increase in funding, the legislature included language directing the state to increase the cap.
- Participant-Directed Services.

Committee Work:

- Committee members testified at bill hearings
- Committee members participated in the Trust Joint Advocacy meetings
- Created letters of support/concern:
 - Supported a letter from Representative Vance to Commissioner Hedberg regarding EMODs and HomeMAP assessments
 - Letter of support for SB 240/HB 343, improving access to school-based Medicaid services for Medicaid-eligible children. The bill removes statutory requirements that school-based services are only Medicaid reimbursable if a child receiving services is diagnosed with a disability and the services are included in an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).
- ADA e-mail and letter to legislature leadership related to accessibility to public meetings, i.e., closed captioning, interpretation services, and other accessibility options.

Bill Tracking:

- Passed:
 - HB 219, Repeal Assistive Technology Loan Program
 - SB 91, Telehealth: Multidisciplinary Care Team
 - HB 344/SB 241, Medical Assist, Demonstration Projects
- Did not pass:
 - SB 104/HB 161, Civil Legal Services Fund
 - Did not pass; however, there was an increase in the operating budget for Alaska Legal Services
 - HB 360, Home Care Employment Standards Advisory Board
 - SB 250, Uniform Act: Guardianship/conservatorship

- HB 355, Statewide Public and Community Transit Plan
- SB 181, Child Placement: Diligent Search
- HB 111/SB 143, Education for Deaf and Hearing Impaired
- HB 167, Minors in Facilities Outside Alaska
- HB 343/SB 240, School Medical Assistance.

Advocacy for next session (first year of a two-year session)

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child’s Bill of Rights
- Revisions to the DD Shared Vision
- Home Care Employment Standard Advisory Board
- Uniform Act: Guardianship/Conservatorship
- Statewide Public and Community Transit Plan
- Civil Legal Services Fund
- Environmental Modifications
- Participant-directed services
- Centralized Accommodation Fund

Community Inclusion and Support Committee (CISS) Committee

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, and Chelsea Burke**

Committee Activities:

- Met twice since February 2024
- DD Awareness Month (March) proclamation submission, outreach through GovDelivery and Facebook
- Participated in the Full Lives Conference April 11 – 12, 2024
 - Joined the planning committee and had a resource table at the conference
 - **Council Chair Jena Crafton** and Council member **Anna Attla** participated in a presentation at the conference
- Council staff member **Lanny Mommsen** presented on Emergency Preparedness at ADRC for 75 people.

Committee Advocacy:

- Reviewed home and community-based services (HCBS) position paper
- Formed a Supported Decision-Making Workgroup
- GCDSE is actively involved with the WINGS Committee:
 - Alternatives to Guardianship Workgroup
 - Guardians for the aging population
 - Working with a contractor to update the Council’s website and SDMA resources.

Housing Activities:

- Explored existing housing data (NCI data)
- Plan to host a listening session for housing

- Participating in the Mental Health Trust Authority Comp Plan work for housing (Section 3.1)
 - The Section 3.1 team has its final meeting to review the feedback from public comment and resubmit its recommendations based on the comments.
- Council staff **Samantha Vetter** attended the Housing First Partners Conference in Atlanta in April 2024:
 - The conference focused on homeless support and services and reducing unsupported living situations or low-barrier shelters.
 - The various Alaska representatives who attended the conference met to discuss what was learned and encourage other interested parties to join in the efforts addressing housing issues in Alaska.

Other Activities

- Mini-Grants:
 - The Trust awards mini-grants with an annual limit of one application of up to \$2,500 per beneficiary, depending upon need. Mini-grants are only awarded to an agency on behalf of a beneficiary.
- Who is eligible?
 - People with developmental disabilities
 - Youth enrolled in early intervention or infant learning programs and Trust beneficiaries
- Links to apply and more information:
 - <https://alaskamentalhealthtrust.org/alaska/mental-health-trust-authority/grants/mini/grants/developmental-disabilities/>

Other Activities

- Committee members participated in legislative visits
- Disseminated information/reminders related to Medicaid renewals
- Reviewed new regulations for APDD waiver, adding nursing care
- The DD Vision Collaborative is coming back together to address the DD Shared Vision.

Corey Gilmore noted that the CISS Committee has a broad mission and would welcome Council members to join the committee in its efforts to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

Self-Advocacy & Leadership (SA&L) Committee

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, Marlene Wenger, and Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich**
- Committee staff:
 - **Jamie Kokoszka, Lanny Mommsen**

Committee News:

- The Council supported the Peer Power Summit with funding, survey creation, and staff assistance at the summit.
- In April 2024, Council members, LEND fellows, and Mat-Su LINKS staff attended the Disability Policy Seminar. They met with Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, Congresswoman Peltola, and key members of their staffs to discuss issues of importance to the Council related to:
 - Autism Cares reauthorization
 - Social Security
 - IDEA funding for special education
 - Community living
- In April 2024, the Council sponsored members and staff registration to the Full Lives Conference. The Council had staff on the Planning Committee and a resource booth at the conference. Staff member **Lanny Mommsen** shared an emergency preparedness presentation. **Chair Jena Crafton** and Council member **Anna Attla** shared a presentation on Council activities.

Self-Advocacy and Leadership Activities:

- The last Empower Hour was held this spring.
- The NACDD Self-Advocacy and Leadership Discussion Series in an ongoing webinar opportunity for committee members to attend.

Upcoming Activities/Events:

- Disability Pride Celebration:
 - July 20th, 2024, Kenai
 - July 27th, 2024, Anchorage Park Strip
 - The Council support for the July 2024 Disability Pride Celebration includes booths, funding, T-shirts, and ASL Interpreters
- Plan to submit ADA proclamation
- Will be presenting the *I Have Rights/Dreams* at the Disability and Aging Summit
- Submitted a request to do the *I Have Dreams* presentation at the Trust's Improving Lives Conference.

Lanny Mommsen announced that she plans to send a survey to Council members related to the demographics of Council members to complete the State Plan update.

Employment Committee

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

- Committee members:
 - **Chair Anna Attla, Nona Safra, Jena Crafton, Ken Hamrick, and Margaret Evans**
- Committee staff:
 - **Samantha Vetter**

Committee/Staff Activities:

- The committee met once since February 15, 2024. Topics discussed included:
 - Five-Year Plan, Employment Workplan review
 - **Anna Attla** and **Council Chair Jena Crafton** discussed their Council work at CHD

- AMHTA Comp Plan Sections 3.2 and 3.3 Workgroup
 - The public comment period on the AMHTA Five-Year Strategic Plan closed on April 30, 2024
- Creation of messaging with DVR
- Employment Conference planning with DVR (TBA Fall 2024)
 - Employment tracks include accommodations, assistive technology, mental health in the workplace, and IDEA law
- Mat-Su Employer Expo March 27, 2024
 - Council staff attending the expo had a resource table visited by approximately 80 individuals looking for resources.

Joint Partner Activities:

- AADD Employment Champions Workgroup
 - Eight team members will attend the Association of People First Conference in June 2024 in North Carolina.
- Anchorage Academies Model – Transitions Tactic Team
 - The final tactic team meeting occurred on April 22, 2024
 - Launch Freshman Academy in 2024/2025 year.
- ABLE to SAVE Month, April 2024
 - ABLE allows \$18,000 in annual deposits (2024 tax year)
 - ABLE to Work Act (2017) allows an additional \$18,210 in deposits
 - Two webinars hosted by ABLE National Resource Center in April
 - #ABLEtoSAVE Opens the Door to Housing Opportunities
 - #ABLEtoSAVE for Lifelong Financial Wellness
 - Online webinars are available 24/7
 - Council participated by two Facebook messaging posts and three GovDelivery messages during April.
- Project SEARCH
 - Anchorage Providence Medical Center – 9 interns
 - Fairbanks Memorial Hospital – 4 interns
 - Mat-Su Regional Medical Center – 4 interns
 - Anchorage graduation was held on May 2, 2024, and Mat-Su/Fairbanks on May 10, 2024
 - Anchorage Project SEARCH was recognized by the School Business Partnerships Board, and the team was selected for the Spirit of Tomorrow Superintendent Award.
- Microenterprise Grants:
 - Support self-employment for Alaskans with Developmental Disabilities by serving on Microenterprise Grant Committee
 - Review, input, and provide recommendations on Microenterprise Grant applications.
 - Grant applications are processed twice a year
 - The last reviews were held April 15 and 19, 2024
 - Current application period awarded \$72,000
 - Eight of the eight applications were awarded. Three were DD
 - The goal is to increase the number of DD grant awardees.

OTHER COMMITTEE UPDATES

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)

Tabled.

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant Update

The SEAP and DIF Grant updates were moved to day two.

PROGRAM, PROJECT, AND PARTNER REPORTS

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**, Madeline Aguiard, 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's FY '24 funding is 84% state funding, 11% federal pass-through state, 3.8% direct federal funding, and less than 1% interest and other funding.

Activities Since August 2023:

- SESA provided technical assistance to over 18,894 Alaskans.
- SESA programs have offered over 106 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 (LID) Programs have offered and provided support to 531 students and their school teams.
- SESA has produced 580 customized student or patron-focused reports offering recommendations and guidance.
- SESA specialists have provided 956 student consultations and 150 resource consultations to Alaskans.
- The Alaska Center of Accessible Materials has created and connected 26 accessible educational materials projects for school teams and their students with disabilities.
- Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC) has conducted 18 community outreach activities.
- The Anne Freitag Library has 1,323 patrons and continues to do outreach across the state to share what is available at the statewide lending library.

LID participants served across school districts for 2023-2024:

- Total number of participants served: 4,605
- Total number of districts served: 48
- Total number of students served: 531

Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC):

- AARC distance delivery, training, and resource consultations:
 - Total number of participants served: 295
 - Requests include adult diagnosis, behavior resources, employment information, family moving to Alaska asking for more information, females on the spectrum, financial resources, finding a service provider, food aversion or picky eating, general autism resources, group home supports, assistive living, independent living, mental health resources, newly diagnosed, and potty training.
- AARC in-person training:
 - Total number of participants served: 559
 - Satisfaction surveys indicate 4.7 out of 5 stars for excellent training.
- AARC resource consultations:
 - Total number of participants served: 98
 - Connecting individuals to in-state or national resources.
- AARC information dissemination, material development, and material distribution:
 - Total number of participants served: 6,646

Alaska Deafblind Project:

- Total number of participants served: 161
- Total number of students served: 18.

Alaska Center for Accessible Materials (AKCAM)

- Total number of participants served: 205
 - Site consultation, materials, and trainings.

Olivia Yancey shared feedback and satisfaction survey data for SESA activities. She shared the following data:

- Out of 980 distance, on-site, and training satisfaction surveys completed across all programs, 93.36% responded that they gained knowledge from the consultation or training provided by SESA.
- Preferred mode of service delivery:
 - 167 out of 182 LID survey respondents said they would prefer on-site services.
 - Additional responses included:
 - 55 requested video conferencing
 - 14 requested website resources
 - 11 requested teleconferences
 - 7 requested remote observations
 - 7 did not provide a response.

Olivia Yancey reported that there were approximately 1,150 items checked out of the Anne Freitag Library this year, they checked-in 900, renewed 89, and thanks to the Rasmusen Foundation Tier 1 grant, they've added 849 items.

Olivia Yancey shared stories of SESA in action and provided information on how to make a referral. She noted that important dates for SESA include:

- June 7, 2024: SESA offices close for summer break
- July 15, 2024: SESA offices reopen for the 2024 – 2025 school year
- August 5, 2024: SESA specialists return
- August 12, 2024: SESA specialists start travel

FY '25 SESA Board of Director's meeting dates:

- October 2, 2024: Fall meeting
- December 12, 2024: Winter meeting
- March 5, 2025: Spring meeting
- May 7, 2025: Summer meeting

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

SILC's Executive Director **Michael Christian** joined the meeting and shared the following information:

- The Youth Leadership Forum is focused on building leadership skills of youth and young adults with disabilities statewide across all types of disabilities while improving independent living and employment outcomes.
- SILC has divided the program into two categories, community level and one that is regional or statewide. Rather than being urban-centric, they will take the program anywhere in the state with a demand for it.
- At the program's community level, SILC focuses on unpacking young people's life goals as they transition into adulthood. The program will assist young adults in developing plans to include continuing education, training, employment, self-determination, personal development, health and wellness, and community engagement.
- The other portion of the program will consist of a three-and-a-half-day event for a larger group of people that will be conference-style, including sessions focused on ABLE plans, Microenterprise Grants, services from DVR, TVR, and Centers for Independent Living, supported decision-making agreements, and showing people how to get started.

Michael Christian reported that SILC has other career exploration programs for young people, including an Immersive Youth Aviation Academy that explores a wide range of careers within the aviation field, a Youth Emergency Management Program, which will include emergency preparedness training, first aid, and CPR, and looking into a wide range of careers in the emergency management field.

Michael Christian reported that SILC members will attend the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Conference along with a group of others from an employment champions workgroup. SILC is looking to reestablish an Alaska chapter of APSE that the SILC could potentially sponsor and give longevity to.

Michael Christian stated that SILC is looking for board members. They have increased their membership allowance and are working on recruitment. They established 17 different recruitment regions statewide. They are looking for people from the Aleutian Pribilof Island area, the communities around Kotzebue, the Arctic Slope, Southeast Alaska, rural Southeast communities, the Mat-Su Valley, the Copper River Basin, and Kodiak.

Michael Christian reported that the SILC is looking to establish a youth advisory council for the SILC to build up the next generation of leaders and already have a pool of applicants to serve in the disability community.

Key Coalition

Michele Girault, the board president for the Key Coalition of Alaska, stated that Key Coalition is a coalition of parents, family members, self-advocates, and friends; the Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities; the Alaska Alliance of Direct Support Professionals; the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education; and Peer Power.

Key Campaign 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 I/DD 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
 - No specific legislation occurred from the priority; however, there is continued dialogue statewide related to addressing homeless issues and access to housing.
- **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.

Michele Girault reported that they launched the Key Campaign with a virtual Unity Lunch, had a virtual campaign, and conducted visits with legislators. The following week, members of the Peer Power board, the Alaska Association of Direct Service Professionals (AADPS) board, the AADD board, and the Key Coalition board members were in Juneau. They joined a march on the Capitol steps organized by the Juneau

chapter of Peer Power. Michele remarked that Key hopes to be live in Juneau next year, bringing back the traditional Key Campaign.

Michele Girault reported that before the 2024 launch, the coalition provided training for people focused on advocacy: how do you tell your story; how do you talk to legislators and make them understand the people you represent, what their life is like, what the barriers are to a thriving life are; and how legislators can help remove those barriers through legislation. Michele remarked that this is an election year, and the coalition encourages everyone to meet with legislators running for office, tell their stories, and begin relationships with potential lawmakers.

Center for Human Development

Ken Hamrick shared the following update on CHD projects:

Employment support programs:

The WIPA Grant

- CHD holds a grant with Social Security to provide benefits planning and assistance to beneficiaries who are contemplating employment or are currently employed and want to figure out how to take advantage of the work incentive programs and minimize the impact on their benefits. This year, that program has supported over 48 people statewide.

Microenterprise Grant

- The grants are up to \$10,000, and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority beneficiaries are the targeted population. So far, in FY '24, the total amount applied for was \$115,000. Sixteen applicants successfully received awards; out of those 16 applicants, six were people with I/DD.

Beneficiary Employment Technical Assistance Grant

- The Indigenous Transitions Skills Pilot Program for rural Alaska has been implemented in three remote communities in Alaska and is making good progress. The program is on track to create a guide for teachers with what has been learned from the project.

Disability Benefits (DB) 101

- DB 101 transitioned from Council management to CHD management. Several webinars are available describing the updated DB 101 website and the tools available. The latest thing is adding a youth package to provide information and tools for youth transitioning to employment. The website is being developed to become a statewide disability employment resource.

Applied Behavior Analytical Services and Supports:

Combatting Autism Initiative (CAI)

- CHD has actively promoted training and credentialing of board-certified behavior analysts (BCBA) to provide intensive behavioral support. Ten trainees are currently being supervised. They have developed a series of caregiver webinars that are available online for families.

- CHD is involved in the Complex Behavioral Collaborative through the Division of Behavioral Health to support people who are at risk of losing placements or being moved out of state or institutionalized as a result of complex behaviors. One component of that program was internally described as an effective behavioral intervention. They were working directly with referrals for at-risk individuals. They also made several training agreements with different school districts, supporting SouthCentral Foundation staff, the ANMC emergency department, and the pediatric unit.

Project ECHO

- Project ECHO has continued to be an incredible resource within the state. They had another full year of programs supporting Alaskans' health and wellness, including people with disabilities and their families. The program has supported over 2,000 unique users and 114 live ECHO sessions featuring over 130 learning hours of content. The new series included the Refugee Mental Health ECHO, implemented through a CHD and Catholic Social Services partnership. They also saw the return of the Head Injury ECHO for providers, the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities ECHO, and the Co-occurring Disabilities ECHO, all supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and featuring a revised and updated curriculum.
- The ECHO program, which originated at the University of New Mexico, has developed a new platform for accessing ECHOs. The iECHO platform rolled out this year in Alaska as a one-stop center where individuals can register for participation, quickly find the ECHOs they are interested in, and search for other ECHOs here in Alaska and throughout the ECHO system.

Family Services Training Center (FSTC)

- The Family Services Training Center partners with the Alaska Department of Health, the Division of Behavioral Health, and the Trust. The Family Training Services Center aims to increase the accessibility of enhanced competency using evidence-based and promising family treatment models for Alaska state behavioral health providers. In addition, FSTC provides foundational skills training. So far this year, FSTC has provided 60 continuing education training sessions for professionals statewide. This year, they offered face-to-face training to behavioral health agencies in Bethel, Nome, Kenai, Kodiak, and Fairbanks.
- There were 45 professionals and families trained in effective strategies. It is challenging because it is a lengthy training. They have developed a more streamlined platform and use online tools to make the time commitment more digestible for practitioners.

Community Services Components:

Friendship and Dating

- Friendship and Dating is a train-the-trainer model to develop facilitators for holistic, healthy relationships for people with I/DD. This year they held two facilitator trainings, one in February and one in May. The May training was diverse and fun with attendees from Alaska, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Oregon, Calgary, and Tanzania.
- A new partnership led to training on supporting healthy relationships for youth with disabilities within the Alaska foster care system.

Brain Injury Program:

- Following testimony and support from the Brain Injury Council of Alaska (BICA) members, the Governor signed a bill permanently designating March as Brain Injury Awareness Month in Alaska. CHD hosted the Head Injury ECHO series, a four-part series with topics including foundations of brain injury, understanding levels of traumatic brain injury care, return to work, and learning after brain injury.

Public Health Workforce Expansion Program

- CHD supported the Public Health Workforce Expansion Accessible Health Education Project. They conducted surveys focused on the accessibility of health education at the University of Alaska. CHD presented preliminary findings at the Alaska Public Health Association Conference in February. CHD is conducting follow-up focus groups to help create recommendations for further accessibility to health education.

Disability Abuse Response Team (DART)

- DART conducts monthly webinars. Since February, the webinars have focused on healthy relationship development for people with I/DD, making domestic violence and sexual assault agency websites more accessible, and strategies for supporting survivors with brain injury.

Alaska Training Center (AKTC)

- AKTC provides training and credentialing for Direct Service Professionals (DSPs) working with people with I/DD. The pilot project is ending in June 2024. It's being continued as an ongoing project beginning July 2024. The FY '25 program will continue to partner with SDS, the Trust, and CHD. The Trust and SDS have dedicated \$400,000 for DSP agency incentives for participating in the new program, with an FY '25 goal of 110 DSPs completing 50 hours of accredited training through the Center and achieving DSP Level 1 certification through the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP).
- In the pilot project, 50 DSPs from 13 agencies are still active. All 50 have earned a certification at Level 1, 49 have earned Level 2 credentials, and 22 have finished Level 3.
- Other projects in AKTC are the continued work with the Division of Behavioral Health and the Trust around CrisisNow training for behavioral health peer support providers, first responders, and the healthcare workforce. AKTC also participates with the Statewide Dementia Action Collaborative focusing on offering Mental Health First Aid training for older adults and training for the senior service agency staff and workforce.

TAPESTRY

- TAPESTRY is a program that has been at the Center for 15 years. It was initially funded through a five-year federal Department of Education grant. It's a post-secondary campus-based transition program for youth with disabilities in that transition-age group.
- CHD TAPESTRY Program, as a partner agency with DEED in the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) grant, is in the final stages of recruiting and hiring an instructor for the TAPESTRY program in Anchorage. TAPESTRY has

become reliant on DVR's Pre-Employment and Transition Service (Pre-ETS) funding to support TAPESTRY. This new hire will help relieve the workload on a diminished workforce in the TAPESTRY program.

Disability Law Center (DLC) Stone Soup Group (SSG)

Tabled.

Peer Power

Garrett Dominick, director of Communications for Peer Power, shared the following update:

- Peer Power is a non-profit formed to protect and educate people looking to advocate for their civil rights.
- Peer Power joined Key Coalition in Juneau alongside other partners. Peer Power members visited several different legislators to talk about their priorities. The majority of members advocated for the need for a new assessment tool.
- Peer Power Empower Hour hosted the last meeting in May.
- The Peer Power hosted a fantastic summit. The feedback from attendees was excellent, and the event had a great turnout. The guest speaker, Tim McCue, a disability advocate educator for the Washington State DD Ombudsman, remarked that it was a delight to be at the summit.
- Peer Power is a partner in the DEED DIF Grant. They plan to apply for funds to go into high schools and teach students with disabilities to be self-advocates.
- Peer Power is taking on Disability Pride in Alaska. They will be working with the DOH and the Governor's Council.
- Peer Power plans to have a presence at the Disability Expo at the 2024 State Fair.

Art Delaune reported that the Peer Power board voted to donate and be a part of the coalition of advocacy organizations spearheaded by SAIL and the Independent Living Network. Peer Power plans to do a disability access to voting polls survey this fall to see if they can make voting more accessible for people with disabilities.

Garrett Dominick shared that Peer Power's Executive Director Ric Nelson recently moved to Idaho, where he will manage Peer Power remotely and will be working on making Peer Power a national organization. **Garrett** further shared that Ric could not get the services in Alaska to allow him to stay in the state, and for 80 percent of the year, Ric has been isolated in his home because he is a wheelchair user. **Garrett** stated that the state does not do enough to support people with disabilities who use wheelchairs in their efforts to live and move about in their communities.

Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD)

Kim Champney joined the meeting and shared the following AADD update:

Vision, Mission, and Values:

- Vision: Alaskans with disabilities statewide are living the life they choose with support from a robust, flexible, person-directed service system.

- Mission: To facilitate a united provider voice for best practices, advocacy, partnership, and networking
- Values: Respect. Professionalism. Innovation. Partnerships. Person-directed community services.

AADD Reprioritized Goals:

- Goal 1, Prioritize the needs of the DSP workforce
- Goal 2, Advocate for rate reform
- Goal 3, Address system barriers
- Goal 4, Invest in relationship with SDS
- Goal 5, Strengthen partnerships and address silos
- Goal 6, Increase the capacity and power of AADD.

Direct Support Workforce

- Alaska Association of DSPs took input from DSPs who attended the summit in Anchorage, the DSP Zoom sessions, and information gathered at a national conference and created a list of what DSPs said they wanted and needed to do good work. They published that and shared it with provider organizations.
- The DSP certification pilot that SDS and AKTC with Trust support have been running is a turning point because it's given a career path. The DSPs who have been part of that found it positive.
- The Good Jobs Grant that the State of Alaska and Alaska Primary Care Association received in partnership with the Department of Labor is focused on healthcare workforce development. The DSP workforce was not initially included in the project, but with the creation of a new partnership, they hope to develop marketing materials and have a website, DSP Hire, making that part of the collection of websites around healthcare careers.

Employment First

- AADD hosts the Employment Champions Workgroup, which meets monthly. The members include service providers, the SILC, the Governor's Council, and CHD. The workgroup committed to the idea of relaunching APSE. Five different service providers are going to attend the National APSE Conference.
- AADD has also been working in partnership with leadership from SDS and DVR on how to make the Medicaid waiver system and DVR resources integrate more smoothly and flexibly and coordinate it so that service providers can support people receiving employment services to get the jobs they want more quickly.

DD Shared Vision 2.0

Since the DD Shared Vision project began in 2021, a group still had meetings quarterly to check in. The Living Well Grant kept the Shared Vision work going. Since the grant is ending, people need to work more actively to progress towards the Shared Vision. The Shared Vision Collaborative met and decided to relaunch, calling it Shared Vision Collaborative 2.0. AADD is working on creating capacity in ED work to help shepherd the work forward.

Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Nate Kile and **CB Brady** introduced the Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired. **CB Brady** shared his story and noted that like many disabilities, there is a

perception and a spectrum in which individuals are placed. Nate Kile, the program director at the Center, shared that he is involved in the day-to-day operations at the Center. He stated that a big part of the work is connecting with people on an individual level. Nate reported that the Center is involved in travel to rural areas to provide low-vision clinics, home visits to people throughout the state, supporting school districts that do not have funding for braille supplies and devices for blind/low-vision students, and the Center provides a full range of unique, one-on-one services for blind/low vision individuals.

Nate Kile noted that the Center is not immune to the loss of funding, workforce challenges, and diminished services. He said the Center has a long-term vision to serve people today and into the future. The Center understands they have to be visible so people will know the services are available, so there is a focus at the Center on awareness and advocacy. Nate encouraged everyone to show up collectively at events and advocate and share awareness of the challenges faced by people with disabilities.

CB Brady reported that the Center was established in 1977 and was the state's only non-profit vision rehabilitation resource center. He remarked that many optometrists/ophthalmologists and service agencies know nothing about the Center and the services they provide that help people get through activities of daily living and be independent. **CB** invited Council members and guests to stop by the Center for a tour.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

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

RECESS

The meeting recessed at 4:45 p.m.

Friday, May 31, 2024

CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.

MINDFULNESS MOMENT

ROLL CALL/ZOOM REMINDERS – Quorum established

OFFICER ELECTIONS

Patrick Reinhart reminded the Council that the election for Council vice chair happens yearly, and he opened the floor for nominations for vice chair.

Heidi Lieb-Williams **NOMINATED Sabrina Richmond** for the position of vice chair. Sabrina Richmond **ACCEPTED** the nomination.

Hearing no other nominations, **Patrick Reinhart** closed the floor for nominations. **Heidi Lieb-Williams** cast a vote for **Sabrina Richmond** to be vice chair. Hearing no opposition, **Sabrina Richmond** was named Council vice chair.

BUDGET PRESENTATION

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

- Balance remaining, May 29, 2024:
 - Federal funding 477,323.08
 - Interagency funding 191,294.60
 - MHTARR 44,626.36
 - GF/MH 0.00
 - Note: There is an increment returning \$50,000 in GF/MH

Nicole Wery-Tagaban reported that the Council will not be overspent for the fiscal year. The next fiscal year begins July 1, 2024.

OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS, CONTINUED

Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant Update

Samantha Vetter provided the following update on the DIF:

- Mission and goals:
 - The mission is to implement an innovative model in Alaska to address and reduce challenges faced by children and youth with disabilities in preparing for the workforce.
 - Includes goals that focus on inclusivity, equity, empowerment, and sustainable employment.
 - Increase the number of Alaska youth and other individuals with disabilities who are competitively employed through innovative and collaborative programs involving key agencies and organizations.
- Grant events:
 - Presented at the ASSEC Conference with all partners on February 7, 2024
 - Held first Advisory Committee Meeting on March 22, 2024.
- DEED Grant coordination and management:
 - Hiring of Program Coordinator 2 – Kerri Tanet
 - Hosting bi-weekly steering committee meetings
 - Attending monthly meetings with RSA:
 - Finished Cooperative Agreement with RSA
 - Finalizing all MOUs with grant partners, signed on Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
 - Begin website development and publication.

DIF Programs:

- **SILC:**
 - Alaska Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)
 - Completed sections of the curriculum
 - CPR Instructor Training
 - Supported Decision Making
 - Person-Centered Planning
 - Financial Literacy
 - Leadership Skills
 - Working to produce career exploration videos
 - Met with Kenai Alternative High School to offer YLF at least two days in the school year
 - Future: Alumni Association and Youth Advisory Council creation.

- The first event May 15 – 16, 2024: Kenai Alternative School workshop.
 - Immersive Youth Aviation Academy
 - Development of curriculum topics and areas:
 - Finalize and approve materials focusing on ADA and employment rights.
 - Review the website for accessibility
 - Finding a host area for the academy
 - Working with Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation out of the University of Washington. They are going through the ADA training and age-appropriate levels
 - Meet to discuss cross-sectioning.
 - Youth Emergency Management Program (YEMP)
 - Developing/finalizing curriculum and training materials
 - Purchase drone training for the curriculum
 - CPR practice dummy
 - Create videos
 - Future: Create person-centered leadership plans and emergency preparedness training for youth up to age 13.
 - Ordering the go-bags and first aid kits, being stored for YEMP supplies
- **Center for Human Development:**
 - DB 101 School and Work Youth Calculator
 - The World Institute on Disabilities (WID) DB 101 school and work calculator expansion is due to launch on November 30th
 - Larrisa Cummings presented DB 101 at the Full Lives Conference
 - Bi-monthly meetings with WID and CHD to outline website development and updating:
 - Addition of videos (example: Welcome to DB 101)
 - Additional resources tab – Employment Resources
 - Alaskan Indigenous Transition Skills Curriculum (AITSC) Pilot
 - Four Schools Identified: Grayling, Hoonah, Buckland, and Savoonga
 - Rain Van Den Berg and Frances Gage held meetings and trainings with teachers:
 - Found need to develop teacher guide/interviewing for indigenous artist
 - Focus on the transition plan component by matching subsistence and cultural skills with life skills
 - As of March 2024, eight transition plans have included indigenous skills based on the curriculum: three in Grayling and five in Hoonah.
- **SAIL**
 - RecWORKS!
 - Provided Pre-Employment Transition Services for 82 youth
 - Spring Break Camp, Juneau – 8 youth week of 3/18
 - Day skiing with 11 University of Alaska Southeast students
 - Pre-Employment Classes in Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka

- Memorandums of Understanding (MOU): Established 3 MOUs with Independent Living Center, did a 3-day training with staff
 - Summer Work Program on Kenai Peninsula
 - Added Summer Work Program to the community of Gustavus; others also being held in Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, and Haines. Next Transition Camp: May 28-31, 2024 in Juneau.
- **Project SEARCH**
 - Expansion:
 - Visit from Project SEARCH Co-Founder Erin Riehle was vital in talking to business and school district partners about Project SEARCH and gaining new sites
 - Signed agreement with Kenai Peninsula Borough School District potential expansion/other interest
 - Peer Power outreach plans were also vital to the discussion of expansion efforts
 - Representation of Project SEARCH and ACT at the Anchorage Academies Model workgroups.
 - **Peer Power**
 - Student Outreach
 - Organize over the summer with all grant partners to begin the development of the school presentations
 - Developing contract with the Council for work and all outlined activities and outreach
 - Beginning outreach to schools (Anchorage).

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)

SEAP Chair Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich and Council staff **Rich Saville** shared the following update:

- Panel members:
 - **Chair Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich, Sabrina Richmond, Margaret Evans, Demii van Dusen, Don Enoch,** Heather Batchelder, Lisa Bennett, Joshua Branstetter, Jeannine Bryan, Robyn Capp, Ashley Crace, Amy Hagen, Robert Heide, Jacob Kammermeyer, Mandy Link, Alyssa Rose-Miller, Amy Thomas, and Andrienne Schultz
- Panel staff:
 - **Rich Saville, Patrick Reinhart**
- The 2024 Inclusive Practice Awards were presented at the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference.
 - Paraeducator of the Year, Jenny Miller, Hoonah
 - Inclusive Practices Individual, Dale Ebcas, Kalskag
 - Inclusive Practices Team, Mary Lillie and Lacy Davis, Manokotak School
- Recent activities:
 - Presentation by SERRC on traumatic brain injury in schools
 - Address the gap between medical and school
 - Solutions:

- Legislation – Return to School
- Communication – Back to school questionnaire
- Procedural – Change how diagnosed

Note: 40% of justice-involved youth in Alaska have had a TBI. There is an opportunity to try to make a difference in this area.

Nona Safra shared that the Brain Injury Council of Alaska has a Concussion Guidebook for Alaskan patients and caregivers available as part of its awareness campaign. The guidebook is available online.

Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich asked if anything new is happening at DEED in response to the COVID funding that was earmarked for SPED or compensatory education. Don Enoch responded that the funds explicitly dedicated to COVID relief that came to special education went directly to districts along with their regular special education funding. Most of the districts spent a majority of it. Still, it was a struggle in many smaller districts because they could pay for equipment but couldn't pay for a body to show up and help work with students. Getting staff to come out to remote locations was impossible, no matter how much money was available. DEED did not request an extension on the funds. The funding was not renewed, and the availability expired.

The next SEAP meeting is scheduled for August 27, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

ALASKA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (AHRC)

Robert Corbisier, executive director of the Alaska Human Rights Commission, joined the meeting to share information about the commission. Robert stated that disabilities is currently a growing area for compliance in Alaska and nationwide. He reported that the commission enforces Article 1, Section 3 of the Alaska Constitution, the civil rights guarantee. It states that no person is to be denied the enjoyment of any civil or political right because of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin. The legislature shall implement this section. AHRC is the legislative implementation of that section. Robert highlighted the following information:

- The commission is a quasi-judicial, quasi-independent agency. There are seven commissioners appointed by the Governor in five-year rotating seats.
- Mission: To eliminate and prevent discrimination for all Alaskans
- Vision: An Alaska free of discrimination
- Jurisdiction in five subject matter areas:
 - Employment
 - Places of public accommodation
 - Sale or rental of real property
 - Finance and credit
 - Practice by the state or its political subdivisions
 - Note: 80% of cases are employment-related cases

Robert Corbisier stated that AHRC is an enforcement agency. If someone is discriminated against because of their race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or physical or mental disability, depending on the subject matter area in one of the five areas covered, AHRC can take a complaint and investigate. If evidence is found of discrimination, AHRC attorneys can prosecute the case and have the ability to collect

relief or compensatory damages. AHRC can also take complaints based on age, marital status, change in marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or gender identity or expression.

Robert Corbisier explained the complaint resolution process. When an individual submits an inquiry, the intake process begins, and an official complaint is filed. If it is an employment case, the complaint is co-filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). An investigation is initiated, after which it goes to a resolution conference to work towards a settlement agreement. If a settlement agreement is not reached, the process continues, including further investigation, determination of substantial evidence, and conciliation. If a settlement agreement is not made and conciliation fails, the case continues through filing an accusation, mediation, public hearing, commission decision and order, and case closure.

Robert shared the following data:

- 2023 statistics:
 - 1,255 inquiries
 - 237 had basis
 - 217 went to the intake
 - 166 filed an official complaint.

Robert Corbisier fielded various questions from the Council members and offered the AHRC contact information. He noted that more details can be found on the AHRC website.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS and DIALOGUE

Division of Public Assistance (DPA)

Director Deb Etheridge joined the meeting and reported that in January of 2023, the division was coming out of COVID, had a decrease in staffing, and had a fairly significant backlog in the SNAP Program. Since then, the division has cleared the SNAP backlog and is operating at approximately 90 percent timeliness for processing applications. The division is moving from telework and reopening offices to direct service. The Kenai, Wasilla, Homer, and Juneau offices are open to direct service. The division tries to be accessible and process cases on the same day. Deb is working very closely with the Change Innovation Agency, which assists the division in ensuring it stays on track with the workload.

Deb Etheridge reported that an unintended consequence of the pandemic impacted Medicaid eligibility determinations. Recently, the division began redetermining for Medicaid, which has proven challenging. The division is required by CMS to make Medicaid determinations on an individual level. She reported that when the division started unwinding Medicaid, they looked at the individual level. However, if one person in the household could not make the determination, they would close the entire household, not looking to see if one person should have maintained eligibility. Once that was discovered, the procedural closures were paused for Medicaid. If a person doesn't return the form, they are not automatically closed. The division is rolling those determinations forward until the system is fixed in order to make individual determinations. The division plans to make those individual determinations through the

ex parte process that starts in July for a September benefits start period. If individuals don't return their forms for Medicaid, the procedural closures will begin in September. She encouraged people to renew their benefits.

Deb Etheridge reported that some individuals are part of the Long-Term Care Unit and are managed differently. The division does manual ex parte for those individuals. The division has undergone a year of manual ex parte and is seeing a higher percentage of individuals renewing automatically.

Deb Etheridge stated that another struggle at the division coming out of COVID is that because Medicaid continued on, there was often no updated information on recipients, which caused a delay in information and notices to clients. DPA is working with SDS to reduce the unintended closures of Medicaid.

Deb Etheridge stated that it has come to her attention that the cost of care has become an issue for clients, particularly nursing home care. Once the public health emergency ended, the division began recalculating the cost of care. In the meantime, many people found themselves over the asset limit, creating an unintended consequence for individuals. The division sends a 10-day notice of negative action, and individuals can file an appeal. The division encourages individuals to spend down during that time so that there is no lapse in care for individuals; however, that may not always be an efficient way to manage if an individual is on a home and community-based waiver. The division is conducting outreach with SDS to work through the unintended consequences of not changing the cost of care during COVID and people being over-resourced.

Deb Etheridge reported that regarding disability determinations and TEFRA, the applications the division receives are being processed within 30 days, which doesn't mean processing to completion. Often, a referral may be made to Disability Determination Services (DDS) for a disability determination, and they are also experiencing a backlog and are short-staffed, so the disability determinations are taking a significant amount of time. Deb reported that the division is changing its forms to accommodate DDS to make it easy to input the division forms into its system. The division will ask the families to request medical records to send with the division forms to DDS. The division is exploring ways to be more helpful to individuals in the Long-Term Care Unit to expedite the process. DPA is renewing its MOA with DDS, and they plan to leverage a staff member to support DDS.

Deb Etheridge reported that the division has a roadmap for technology. They have recently launched an online application for SNAP and are working on an all-programs application. Deb noted that the virtual contact center contract will continue until the division is successfully staffed.

Division of Senior and Disability Services (SDS)

SDS Director Anthony Newman shared the following update for SDS:

Budget changes from the legislature (on their way to the Governor for consideration):

- Adult Day Services Grants - \$1.5M
- Community-Based Grants - \$1.5M

- Environmental modifications intent language: Raise the \$18,500 per project cap for e-mods to \$40,000 per project and extend the project time
- General relief: Assisted living homes, increase the daily rate from \$104.30 to \$112.55
- A rate increase for Medicaid home and community-based services - \$10M
- Autism services rate increase – overall increment of a \$518,000 increase coupled with a 13% inflationary increase

New federal rules impacting SDS:

- Medicaid Access Rule, including but not limited to:
 - New rules for Medicaid Advisory Committee
 - Create a committee of beneficiaries of Medicaid who gather and consult with the state
 - Create an advisory group (Interested Parties Advisory Group) consisting of direct care workers, recipients, and families who will consult and make sure the requirements are met
 - New rules around critical incident reporting ensuring that the state has electronic incident reporting practices
 - A rule that states have written grievance procedures
 - Rules around performance and quality measures, assurances on person-center planning, and timeliness of services
 - Transparency on the waitlist
 - A requirement that 80% of a Medicaid rate be distributed to the direct care provider providing personal care
 - Vast differences in timelines for individual rules.
- Older Americans Act Rule
 - This was the first significant change to the act in 36 years, including:
 - New definitions, policy recommendations, and policy and procedure development.
- Adult Protective Services Rule
 - New rules around APS which have never existed at the federal level, including:
 - National standards, response timeframes, and community collaboration.
- Disability Discrimination and Accessibility Changes
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
 - Americans with Disabilities Act
 - Affordable Care Act

Initiatives:

- Comprehensive Medicaid Rate
 - Methodology analysis
 - SDS rates, Behavioral Health rates, and other rates offered through Medicaid
 - Currently selecting a vendor.
- Direct Care Workforce
 - Technical assistance for Alaska:
 - One of six states selected to receive technical assistance from the ACL Direct Care Workforce Strategy Center

- 300 hours of technical assistance to improve the direct care workforce in Alaska.

Corey Gilmore asked about the DD Shared Vision, how SDS views the vision, and what action it intends to take to further the vision goals. **Director Newman** responded that he plans to embrace the vision with the available resources. He said the new assessment instrument is the key to realizing some of the goals and is the best way to fully realize the Shared Vision. He said it would take time because there is a constraint when it comes to resources. He commended the advocates' efforts to unite around the assessment instrument. **Director Newman** said it was a textbook example of how advocates are impactful.

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority CEO Steve Williams shared the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority update as follows:

- The budget cycle just concluded in the legislature and is expected to be transmitted to the Governor, who can review the budget and exercise his authority to change it. The Trust is hopeful that the Governor will not negatively impact beneficiaries, programs, and services that serve beneficiaries. On a positive note, while working through the budget process, there's been great collaboration with the state departments providing services to beneficiaries.
- FY '26 – '27 Trust budget:
 - The Trust is actively engaged in reviewing its proposed budget, which it will present to the Board of Trustees. The first presentation is scheduled for the end of July and the second at the end of August, where the board will then sign off on a budget that statutorily is submitted to the executive branch and the legislature no later than September 15, 2024.
- The Trust held a board meeting in Ketchikan last week. The meeting was focused on engaging with the Ketchikan community. The panel presentation included providers from Metlakatla, Prince of Wales Island, and Ketchikan Community Connections. There was a mission moment that involved the Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program (EI/ILP) prevention and the importance of EI not only for individuals but for the family as well to provide support so the individual can have the best opportunity to move forward and engage and get the support needed so they can be as productive as possible. They also did a site visit at Community Connections and the Opportunities House, an independent group living situation for eight individuals who experience some form of intellectual and developmental disabilities in a neighborhood in Ketchikan. The trip wrapped up with a community reception that was well attended.
- In the next three to four months, the Trust will undergo an organizational transition, which happens annually and includes changes in the Board of Trustees through elections, retirement, and terms ending.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Acting Director Gina Bastian joined the meeting to offer a DVR update as follows:

- DVR is housed under the Department of Labor and Workforce Development

- It's an eligibility-based program that assists people to gain skills and start and advance careers
- DVR offers guidance and counseling to individuals to ensure they make an informed choice about a career path and understand how they fit in the world of work.
- DVR works with regulated timeframes, and details about it can be found on DVR's website. There is an orientation video for individuals to learn how the DVR process works.
- Data (April 2024):
 - DVR is serving 1,917 clients
 - 765 applicants so far in 2024
 - 286 individuals secured employment
 - 953 cases currently serving are classified as most significantly disabled
 - Since 2014, WIOA has required that DVR does business engagement services.
- DVR has worked diligently on that through the Business Engagement Services Team. The purpose is a dual customer model of the client and the employer.
 - The client services are short-term, with an average of approximately 22 months. The employer services are ongoing.
 - This year, DVR provided 323 services. Some business engagement services are training with the primary purpose of reducing barriers for people with disabilities to go to work and giving businesses tools to effectively hire people with disabilities in that role. They also assist veteran employees.
 - One of the services includes regular JobX meetings in each of the five regions. JobX is an opportunity for employers to meet with job developers in their area.
- DVR is actively involved with JBER and reaches out weekly to the transitioning soldiers to ensure they are aware of DVR services. DVR works with JBER to address its hiring needs.
- DVR has served approximately 900 youth with Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). There are 16 camps occurring statewide this summer. DVR is responsible for reaching out to students with an IEP or 504 plan. Last year, DVR served 1,300 students.
- DVR completed the Alaska Work Matters Task Force report and continues pursuing the goals in the final report.
- Gina Bastian serves on the Academies Program with the Anchorage School District as the co-chair of the Transitions Program.
- DVR is in the process of hiring two new counselors.
- DVR's Business Enterprise Program is for people with visual impairments as vendors on state and federal sites. The program is currently overhauling and updating various sites.
- DVR currently has 88 participants in the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) Program.
- DVR is working with DPA on the TEFRA waitlist.
- DVR's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services held an Alaska BizTown event in Anchorage, and 16 students attended the event.

- DVR's Vocational Evaluation Services continues to evolve and expand to provide services that meet a person's needs. They continue to increase training, documentation, and the utilization of technology to provide services.
- DVR participates in weekly meetings with agencies within the Department of Labor.

Gina Bastian shared the DVR website and encouraged Council members to look at the website for detailed information on DVR services.

RECOGNITION OF HEIDI LIEB-WILLIAMS

Lieutenant Governor Nancy Dahlstrom joined the meeting and briefly shared her appreciation to the Council members and others who volunteer their time for the betterment of Alaskans. She took the opportunity to honor Council member **Heidi Lieb-Williams** and read a letter from Governor Dunleavy that expressed the state's appreciation for Heidi's dedicated service to Alaska as a member of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. Governor Dunleavy noted in his letter that the spirit of volunteerism goes beyond individual concerns to help others, and it is an essential component of a healthy Alaska. He said that **Heidi's** care and compassion for Alaskans facing physical and mental challenges has impacted families, community partners, and her colleagues. The law and policy changes brought about by her advocacy will benefit Alaskans for years to come. Lieutenant Dahlstrom presented **Heidi** with a Lieutenant Governor's personal coin.

Heidi Lieb-Williams shared a short presentation with the Council members, marking the end of her service as a member of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

OUT-OF-STATE SELF-ADVOCATE PRESENTATION

Sydney Krebsbach, co-chair of the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council, joined the meeting, introduced herself, and noted that she served on the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education in Alaska from 2018 – 2021, which opened many doors for her as a self-advocate and as an individual with autism. Thanks to her service on the GCDSE, she was chosen to serve on the Washington State DD Council. Sydney shared details of her service on the Governor's Council, noting she served on various committees, took part in various disability-related events, shared her story as part of Key Campaign and other events, and testified at many legislative hearings.

Sydney Krebsbach shared that in August 2020, while on the Governor's Council, she was inducted into the NACDD National Self-Advocate Leadership Circle. They recognized the work she had done with self-advocacy. She was inducted alongside Corey Gilmore and Heidi Lieb-Williams. After her service on the Alaska Governor's Council, she relocated to Spokane, Washington. In 2021, she applied for the Washington State DD Council, interviewed, and received an appointment to the Council. In April of 2023, she became the Washington State DD Council co-chair.

Sydney Krebsbach stated that her public speaking started after being invited to be a keynote speaker for the Community Employment Alliance Conference in 2022. In September of 2022, she spoke at the Washington APSE Chapter, shared her

employment history from past to present, and hosted a Q&A at the event. In September 2023, Sydney and a group of self-advocates participated in a panel discussion on autistic advocates. In 2024, she attended the Disability Policy Seminar in Washington, D.C. She met with the Washington state delegation to discuss issues facing people with disabilities in Washington. She was part of a panel focused on employment and housing opportunities.

Sydney Krebsbach shared that in 2022, she received The Arc of Spokane's Self-Advocate Rising Star Award and was recognized for her self-advocacy during her time in Spokane. Also in April of 2023, she was invited to be a runway model and keynote speaker for the Rock the Runway event hosted by The Arc of Spokane, where she shared her journey in front of 300 people.

Sydney Krebsbach shared the similarities and differences between the Alaska GCDSE and the Washington State DD Council. She shared her appreciation for the opportunities she had to serve as a self-advocate to benefit the DD population.

NATIONAL CORE INDICATORS (NCI) SURVEY

Tamara Douglas with the Center for Human Development joined the meeting and shared the NCI survey's purpose, how it was implemented in Alaska, and demographics. She reported the following data from the *NCI Adult Family Survey and Child Family Survey Results 2021 – 2022*:

- Adult Family Survey 11,989 valid surveys collected across 12 states
 - 176, Alaska
- Child Family Survey 7,902 valid surveys collected across 7 states
 - 163, Alaska

• Survey content:			
<u>Information and sharing:</u>	<u>Alaska</u>	<u>National</u>	
Do you get enough information to take part in planning services?	52%	35%	Adult
	44%	26%	Child
Is the information you get about services and supports easy to understand?	34%	32%	Adult
	35%	24%	Child
Does your family member get all the services listed in the plan?	66%	83%	Adult
	62%	81%	Child

Workforce:
Do support workers

have the right information and skills to meet your family needs?	43%	45%	Adult
	48%	48%	Child

Choice, decision-making and control:

Can your family choose or change the agency that provides services?	77%	65%	Adult
	67%	55%	Child

Involvement in the community:

Does your family member do things in the community?	86%	80%	Adult
	79%	71%	Child

Health, welfare, and safety:

Does your family member's PCP understand your family member's needs related to their disability?	55%	61%	Adult
	60%	60%	Child

Family satisfaction:

Are services and supports helping your family member to live a good life?	95%	92%	Adult
	98%	91%	Child

Tamara Douglas noted that there are over 100 questions on the survey. She shared a link to the entire online survey report. She said that each year, a different type of survey is conducted. Next year, the survey will focus on staff stability; the year after, they will analyze data.

CO-OCCURRING MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES TRAINING PROJECT, Sondra LeClair, CHD

Sondra LeClair and Lucy Cordwell with UAA CHD joined the meeting to share information about CHD's Co-Occurring Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Training Project as follows:

Five-Year Grant Goal:

- To improve services and support for people with co-occurring I/DD and mental health concerns that are consistent with the Alaska DD Vision.

- Approximately 40% of those with ID/DD have co-occurring mental ill-health, and 30% have persistent mental ill-health (Munir, 2016). However, clinical training programs across the U.S. rarely include therapeutic treatment modifications for this population.

Main Activities in Year 1:

- Establish a Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities Council to advise on project activities.
 - Patrick Reinhart is the GCDSE representative.
- Complete a landscape analysis.
 - Recommendations include:
 - Priority training for mental health providers – dual diagnosis presentation, communication strategies, adapting therapies.
 - Priority training for direct support professionals – supporting someone with co-occurring mental health disorders.
- Hold stakeholder summit
- Create a training action plan.

Main Activities in Year 2:

- Trained Alaskan mental health clinicians, DSPs, and other supports.
- Total: 44 hours of training, 1,592 session attendees (604 unique attendees).
- Incentives: 976 hours' worth of attendance certificates, 338 National Association of Social Workers-Alaska Chapter (NASW-AK) contact hours.
- Pilot program
 - Training agency staff while simultaneously integrating behavioral health and DD electronic records systems.
- Began speaking with university faculty about adding to psychology and social work courses.

Main Activities in Year 3 (current year):

- Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (MHDD) ECHO, February – May 2024.
- 686 attendees (285 unique attendees), excluding the May 30th session
- Certification and credits:
 - This series offered credits or contact hours for attending live sessions in:
 - American Psychological Association – APA Contact Hour
 - Nursing – ANCC Contact Hour
 - Association of Social Work Boards – ASWB Contact Hour
- MHDD ECHO sessions included:

▪ The Importance of Person First Language	▪ Trauma Responsiveness
▪ Diagnostic Considerations	▪ Cognitive Considerations
▪ Complex & Challenging Behaviors	▪ Managing Grief & Crisis Intervention
▪ Resource Accessibility	▪ Putting it all together - What's next – How do we facilitate change
▪ Biological Considerations	
- Trauma-informed support and positive identity development for individuals with I/DD:

- Looking forward to bringing Dr. Karen Harvey back to Alaska to present on positive identity development. The free, in-person training will be held on July 22nd in Anchorage, July 24th in Kotzebue, July 26th in Kenai/Soldotna, and July 29th in Fairbanks.

Mental Health Provider Training:

- August 8, 2024: Dr. Marti Romero, Licensed Psychologist, Director of Behavioral Health Services, Assets Inc. and Chris Sturm, Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), Effective Behavior Interventions Clinical Director, will provide training focused on trauma responsive therapy in and out of session and tailoring environments for non-verbal individuals with I/DD and trauma.
- August 15, 2024: Dr. Marti Romero and Susan Fawcett, PhD, RSLP, Director of Therapy, Behavior & Family Support, will offer training focused on working with very low-functioning individuals, adapting therapy and using multiple modalities, and Therapy/Counseling Adaptation and Planning Strategy (TCAPS) with different popular modalities.
- August 29, 2024: Dr. Marti Romero and Stephanie Shaw, an advocate for better services for individuals with co-occurring diagnoses, will offer training focused on how to make mental health therapy effective for people with ID/DD and modifying therapy.

Sondra LeClair shared contact information and a link to the UAA CHD's website for more information.

ROUND-ROBIN AND WRAP-UP

Chair Jena Crafton opened the floor for Council member comments. In summary, the Council members reported that the meeting was good, and they were provided a tremendous amount of useful information. They felt the meeting was organized, and it was good to hear about the positive things happening by state and provider agencies. Overwhelmingly, the members reported that hearing the stories from Nate Kile, CB Brady, and others truly resonated and was most enjoyable. The presentation from the Alaska Human Rights Commission was fantastic. Many Council members noted that a meeting full of PowerPoint presentations with a remarkable amount of information and data was difficult to absorb. Many members recommended curtailing the amount of PowerPoint presentations.

The Council members had comments related to the diminished work of the Council on FASD issues and suggested revitalizing those efforts. Other Council members noted they are looking forward to the changes at SDS and the Division of Public Assistance, which they believe will improve things for people with disabilities.

Council members had a brief discussion related to the meeting format. It was relayed that as good as it is to hear what partner agencies are doing, the Council could discuss what it wants to do and its priority issues. It was suggested to have a pre-meeting to have those discussions before the Council meeting. It was brought up that there are a lot of services for people with waivers, but it's likely the people who need services but aren't eligible for waivers far outnumber those who are eligible, so there is a whole population of people needing some sort of support services to be successful, and that is an issue the Council should be addressing.

Council staff agreed that they enjoyed seeing everyone in person, listening and learning from the presenters, and being inspired by the success stories shared at the meeting.

Council members and staff thanked **Heidi Lieb-Williams** for her dedication and service to the Council for many years. They wished her well as she leaves the Governor's Council in pursuit of other dreams.

Patrick Reinhart commented that it is always an honor to work with everyone involved with the Council, and he feels that the face-to-face meetings are very important. **Chair Jena Crafton** thanked the Council members for their time, the Council staff for their efforts, the partners for their work, and **Patrick Reinhart** for being a good leader and guide during the meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

Caitlin Poindexter **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by **Garrett Dominick**. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.