



COUNCIL MEMBER UPDATE

August 25, 2026

From the Desk of the Executive Director:

August brings the familiar transition back to school, a time of new routines, new opportunities, and, for many students and families, some added challenges as everyone settles into the year ahead.

This month also marks an exciting milestone for the Council: **we submitted our new Five-Year State Plan!** After nearly two years of planning, input, and hard work, we are thrilled to have the process complete and hope to receive approval, or contingent approval, by the end of September.

We are also busy preparing for our October Council meeting and are pleased to **welcome our newest Council member, Alicia Brankel of Juneau.** I look forward to having Alicia join us and introducing her to everyone this fall. At the same time, we say **farewell and thank you to Kayla McDonogh** for her service to the Council and her contributions to special education in Alaska. We wish her all the best as she pursues higher education out of state.

Behind the scenes, we continue to await approval of our waiver to hire our Planner position and are moving forward with significant work to launch the Universal Changing Table Assistance Fund this fiscal year.

I'm incredibly proud of our team and all that is underway. Wishing our Council members, families, educators, and students a wonderful start to the new school year!

Chelsea

AUGUST ACTIVITY RECAP

Embracing AK Disabilities Expo / Shining Abilities Craft Fair at the Alaska State Fair: The event featured over 25 crafters and entrepreneurs alongside informational and resource vendors. This general public outreach was held at the Main Events Hall on the state fairgrounds, and generated lots of interest from the public walking through and learning the things Alaska has to offer.

GENERAL COUNCIL NOTIFICATIONS

September is National Preparedness Month! Council will be sharing Emergency Preparedness information - follow us on Facebook where posts with resources and topics will be added through the month. To kick us off we shared the Alaska's Get Ready! Toolkit. Making an emergency plan and putting together your emergency kit is a big job. Your plan may include family, friends, neighbors, and organizations that support you and can help you make decisions. Your toolkit does not have to be perfect, but it is important to plan ahead. Share the Toolkit [here](#)!

Council's Virtual Training Event - ADVOCACY: We Can Make a Difference: On Sept 1 - 2 from 10 AM to 4 PM each day our S.A.L. Committee worked to design an event with sessions including Disability History 101, I Have Rights, Voting Access and Rights, Legislative Advocacy and Telling Your Story. Share the event with those you know and they can register online [here](#).

NACDD is launching Home Sweet Home: Your Community. Your Choice.: It's a new public information campaign to help everyone advocate and build relationships where it matters most – in their hometown. The campaign is focused on the needs and stories about community living; NACDD is going to provide educational topics including talking to lawmakers and your neighbors. See more [here](#).

504 Lawsuit (Texas vs. Kennedy): Chelsea was invited and will be giving an update and overview on the September 9th ECHO session about the Texas vs. Kennedy lawsuit. Reminder the CHD ECHO series provides many topics for families and individuals; if interested to register go to <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/AK-ECHO/index.cshhtml>

Statewide Summit on Aging this October: Register Now!

Join this fall, either virtually or in-person at Turnagain Social Club in Anchorage for the Statewide Summit on Aging October 15-17th.

Alaskans ages 65+ and individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) have waived in-person registration fees. These spaces are limited, and registration is required. There will not be accepting walk-ins at this time. Register [here](#).

We kindly request that you only register for the day(s) you plan to actively attend and participate in sessions. If registering online is not possible, please call the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) at 907-328-9737 or 907-230-0871 to register. *If you prefer to attend virtually instead, please contact SILC to complete registration.*

PARTNER INFO, POLICY WATCH, AND UPDATES

NACDD Policy Regular Meetings: Want to stay engaged with regular updates with various federal and state policy? Join the NACDD Policy meetings:

- NACDD Policy Committee Monthly Meeting: first Thursday of the month
- NACDD State Policy Task Force Meeting: last Thursday of the month
- NACDD Medicaid Task Force Meeting: also last Thursday of the month
- NACDD Public Policy Hours: Every other week on Fridays

To register for any of these go to the policy listserve to sign up [here](#).

These are open to all NACDD members including DD Council members and staff.

Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Updates: Every Friday Alaska Department of Health (DoH) will announce further awards from the RHTP funds. DoH has over \$272 million to award by end of September with around \$35 million currently awarded. In addition, DOH is facilitating regional RHTP meetings for the following locations soon: Valdez on September 3, Greater Anchorage Area on September 22, Utqiagvik/North Slope on October 27 and Juneau on November 12. To join those meetings ensure you pre-register [here](#).

SHARED FROM AADD Newsletter:

AADD seeking additional board members: AADD is recruiting provider leaders interested in helping to shape the future of Alaska's developmental disability service system. Serving on the AADD Board is an opportunity to contribute your experience, perspective, and leadership to statewide discussions affecting providers, the DSP workforce, and Alaskans who rely on community-based services. Candidates should have an interest in contributing to AADD's statewide mission and advocacy efforts. Interested in serving? Email AADD board member Amanda Elder – aelder@fcsonline.org by September 18.

Get Out the Vote resources: AADD has joined the Alaska Voter Hub coalition with the goal of encouraging members of the disability community to vote. This includes employers, direct support professionals, people who receive services and family members. AADD hosted a virtual Hot Topic "Count Us In" - here's the [recording link](#). There are lots of tools and resources available! Consider hosting a workshop within your organization or providing access to these resources to your team members and the people you support. AADD monthly newsletter contains tools DSPs and other allies and supporters can use to talk through issues and candidates.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

C.I.S.S.

- September 22, 11-12:30 PM

S.A.L.

- September 17, 11 - 12:30 PM

Employment

No September Meeting

Legislative

- September 10, 12:30 - 2 PM

S.E.A.P.

- September 1, 10 AM

S.E.S.A

- Fall Board Meeting,
September 30, 9-12 PM

SEPTEMBER UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Improving Lives Conference:

Sept 17-18 at the Dena'ina Center

Optional Council Training:

Sept 23rd @ 11am on Council Bylaws.

NOTE: This session is intended **for review and learning only**. We will explore the current bylaws and answer questions to support understanding.

Looking further ahead (save the dates):

- Statewide Summit on Aging, October 15-17
- Employment First Conference, October 12-13

REMINDER FOR THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETINGS

- **Fall Council Meeting October 5 - 6, 2026**
- **Winter Council Meeting Feb 9-11, 2027 in Juneau**



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

550 W 7th Ave. Suite 1220
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Main: 907.269.8990
Toll Free: 1.888.269.8990
Fax: 907.269.8995

ADVOCACY: WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



VIRTUAL TRAINING EVENT

Sept 1-2 , 2026 10 AM to 4 PM



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON
DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Information for:

- Self-Advocates
- Family Members/Guardians
- Professional Staff serving People with Disabilities



REGISTER HERE



October 12 & 13, 2026 | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Dena'ina Civic & Convention Center, Anchorage, Alaska

Do you want to learn how people with disabilities positively impact the Alaskan workforce? Are you a business looking to widen your talent pool?

Join us for insightful discussions, networking opportunities, and hands-on workshops as we champion integrated, competitive employment for Alaskans with disabilities.

Whether you're an employer, provider, jobseeker, or community member, this conference has something for everyone!

Visit EmploymentFirstAlaska.com for more information

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2nd Annual



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Join **LINKS Community Parent
Resource Center, MSBSD,**
and **IDEA Homeschool** for a

FREE

one-day Transition Summit &
Resource Expo connecting
students with all disabilities
ages 14–21, families,
educators, and community
partners to resources for a
successful transition to
adulthood.

SAVE THE DATE!

NOVEMBER

2
2026

1 PM-5 PM



**Mat-Su Career & Tech
High School**

2472 N Seward
Meridian Pkwy, Wasilla



**ATTEND FOR OUR GRAND
Prize Drawing!**



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BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT



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