

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Videoconference Host

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education
550 W. 7th Ave., Suite 1220
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Meeting Date
September 10, 2026
12:30 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Caitlin Poindexter – Co-Chair, Art Delaune – Co-Chair, Corey Gilmore, Sabrina Richmond, Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, CB Brady

GCDSE Staff: Chelsea Burke, Jamie Klimczak, Samantha Vetter, Rich Saville, Ian Miner

Council Members and Guests: Kaleigh Holm, Anna Attla, Judy Edwards, Teri Tibbet, Amanda Coelho

Minutes Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

CALL TO ORDER – 12:35 p.m.
ROLL CALL – Quorum established

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR
Caitlin Poindexter welcomed attendees to the meeting.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION
No conflicts of interest were declared.

APPROVE AGENDA
Corey Gilmore **MOVED** to approve the agenda as written, **SECONDED** by Art Delaune. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

APPROVE PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES
CB Brady **MOVED** to approve the June 2026 meeting minutes as corrected, **SECONDED** by Art Delaune. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

Corey Gilmore **MOVED** to approve the July 2026 meeting minutes as written, **SECONDED** by Sabrina Richmond. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

REPORTS

Co-Chair Report

No updates to share.

Staff Report

Chelsea Burke reported that the fall Council meeting is scheduled for October 5 – 6, 2026. She asked Council members to watch for e-mails related to the upcoming meeting. Chelsea reported that the Council received hiring approval for the vacant planner position.

Samantha Vetter announced that the Employment First Conference registration and information are live, and she encouraged everyone to promote the event widely. It will be held at the Dena'ina Civic Center in Anchorage on October 12 – 13, 2026. The conference will cover topics that include youth in transition and provide information about employment supports for healthcare providers and employers.

BUSINESS

Council Priorities and Support

Caitlin Poindexter reported that discussions on Council priorities are underway, focusing on enhancing legislative support through a new process. Chelsea reported that the new process is designed to concentrate efforts by setting fewer priorities, thus allowing for greater impact. The Council's fall meeting will mark the initial vote on priorities from each committee, which will then be forwarded to the Legislative Committee for final approval. Chelsea reported that this month, committees will discuss and establish their proposed priorities. Once consensus is reached, proposals will be submitted to the Legislative Committee staff for organization ahead of the fall Council meeting, where the full Council will discuss the priorities and vote on which to send to the Legislative Committee for approval. Subsequently, the Legislative Committee staff will draft position papers in November, with formal approval of the Council's priorities to occur before the end of the calendar year.

Art Delaune raised a question regarding the implications of a new administration taking office after eight years as they proceed with their advocacy efforts. Teri Tibbett, the coordinator for a joint advocacy effort involving the Governor's Council, outlined a strategic approach. She stressed the importance of compiling a comprehensive document that includes bios of newly elected officials, detailing their backgrounds, party affiliations, and constituencies, to serve as an educational advocacy resource. Additionally, Teri emphasized the need to monitor legislative organization to identify key power holders, such as majority leaders and speakers, and to develop targeted advocacy strategies aligned with decision-makers. This upcoming document will be a valuable tool for educating stakeholders about all lawmakers and the Governor, allowing for a focused approach on the primary influencers.

Art Delaune asked whether the emphasis should be on the legislature rather than the administration, given the addition of new commissioners alongside the Governor and staff. Teri Tibbett responded by stating that both aspects are important. She suggested that the initial step is to familiarize themselves with all 60 legislators. As the administration begins appointing commissioners, it will be essential to understand who

these commissioners are, particularly those who impact their beneficiaries. This process is characterized as a "watch and learn" situation.

Teri Tibbett highlighted the usefulness of the 2026 general election pamphlet available on the Division of Election website for legislator bios, which she prints as a booklet. Additionally, the Alaska Mental Health Trust is sponsoring an in-person advocacy training session at the Dena'ina Center, in conjunction with the Improving Lives Conference, on September 16, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. This complimentary training, which requires registration through the Improving Lives website, aims to equip participants with skills to present their stories concisely in three minutes or less. The session emphasizes introducing personal narratives and making specific requests. It provides guidance on navigating the legislative process and communicating with legislators on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

Jamie Klimczak reported that the Council has responsibilities related to the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), and the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), which are typically primary advocacy areas. Examples include Infant Learning Program funding, a state funding budget increase in general funds, and funding for Project SEARCH.

Chelsea Burke reported no updates on pre-filed bills. However, she noted that the Council is engaged in initial conversations with SDS Director Newman about how the Council would pursue a state funding budget increase. Chelsea reported that several issues could surface before the legislative session. She noted a resolution for an inclusive diploma proposed by people connected to the Anchorage School Board and the Chugach Partners Club. She said the Council is reviewing the resolution through the Special Education Advisory Panel.

Jamie Klimczak reported that in addition to the Council's priorities, it supports partner agency priorities by providing testimony and letters of support. Amanda Coelho noted that the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) has discussed exploring an independent living bill of rights, given federal rollbacks in disability protections and enforcement.

Federal Updates:

Chelsea Burke reported that *Texas v. Kennedy* is a federal lawsuit challenging the 2024 Department of Health and Human Services regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. She reported that in early September, the federal government, along with five remaining states, requested court approval of a joint settlement agreement to remove specific portions of the 2024 federal Section 504 regulation package concerning services in the most integrated settings. As of now, the court has not yet issued a decision on the request. Chelsea noted that Section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Olmstead decision remain intact, and the proposed changes will not terminate Medicaid waivers or home and community-based services. Nevertheless, there are valid concerns that removing these regulations may undermine federal protections and enforcement, prompting the Council to commit to ongoing monitoring of the situation.

TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

October 5 – 6, 2026

- Fall Council Meeting
 - Propose top priorities at Council meeting
 - No Legislative Committee meeting in October

Legislative Committee schedule:

November 12, 2026

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

- Discuss the top priorities; draft position paper ready for committee review.

December 10, 2026

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

- Legislative Committee votes on top priorities.

January 8, 2027

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

- Finalize and approve position papers.

January (TBD)

- Meet Your Legislator training
- Position paper practice.

February 9 – 11, 2027

Juneau Council meeting and legislative visits.

ADJOURNMENT

Corey Gilmore raised the importance of establishing the Shared Vision and suggested introducing a bill to codify the rights of individuals requiring disability services in Alaska as a priority. Chelsea Burke indicated that further discussions would take place within the CISS committee, which may be a more suitable forum for presenting the matter to the Legislative Committee.

Sabrina Richmond **MOVED** to adjourn at 1:35 p.m., **SECONDED** by Corey Gilmore. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.