

Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council
Draft Quarterly Meeting Minutes ~ December 7, 2023
via Microsoft Teams and In-Person / Approved March 28, 2024

North Branch Nature Center
713 Elm St, Montpelier, VT 05602

In Person:	Justin T. Bear Deth, Anastasia Douglas, David Frye, Johnathan Gardner, Michelle John, Lindsey Owen,
In MS Teams:	Amanda Bianchi, Melanie Feddersen, Beth Sightler, Jesse Suter, Crista Yagjian
Absent:	Kele Bourdeau, Danielle Brier, Betsy Choquette, Kate Daly, Steve Kieselstein, Candice Price, Adam Poulin, John Spinney, Collins Twing, Courtney Quinlan, Havah Walther, Emerson Wheeler
Support Staff:	Carmen Phillips
Guests:	Sheryl Matney from ITACC
VTDDC Staff:	Kirsten Murphy, Susan Aranoff, Chelsea Hayward

1. Welcome:

Anastasia called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM. She welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. There was a quorum.

- **Ice Breaker**

Everyone introduced themselves, said their preferred pronouns, and answered the ice breaker question: *“It’s cold and dark at this time of year. What gives you comfort?”*

The answers fell into one of three categories. Members talked fondly of good food, holiday movies, and spending time with their family.

- **Assign roles**

- Jargon Buster was Lindsay
- Keeper of the Rudder was Johnathan
- Keeper of the List was Justin
- Processor was Amanda

- **Adopt Meeting Minutes from September 28, 2023**

Motion: Amanda made the motion to accept the meeting minutes from September 28, 2023, with a correction to the date. David seconded. Motion accepted unanimously with no abstentions.

Motion passed.

2. Policy Committee Report

Members were given a handout summarizing the four proposed platform items. Crista explained why the Policy Committee chose these issues. She read through each one.

- **Platform for the 2024 Legislative Session**

- “Housing Justice. The State should fund new housing for adults with developmental disabilities.”
- “Inclusive schools. Support students with disabilities by reducing the use of exclusionary discipline, restraint, and seclusion.”

Council members discussed the study “Kicked out.” They wondered how Act 35 applied to public schools, as opposed to private schools, and what were the checks and balances to make sure all schools that received public funding followed anti-discrimination laws.

- “Medicaid Justice. Invest more in new Home and Community-based Services for people with disabilities.”

Invest less in new, locked institutions for people with disabilities. Do not open a new forensic facility in Vermont for people with intellectual disabilities.”

The Policy Committee’s main reason for taking this position is the Council’s commitment to serving people with disabilities in the community.

Melanie, as a representative of the Agency of Human Services, said that it wasn’t about whether or not folks were viewed as “too

challenging” to support. She assured everyone that those with disabilities who have been relocated to such facilities would not have to worry about being there for long.

Lindsey said that this was a difficult issue for the Protection and Advocacy agency to address. On the one hand, Disability Rights Vermont and the Disability Law Project opposed sending people with intellectual disabilities to the planned forensic facility in Berlin. However, if the legislature moved in this direction, DRVT wants to argue for strong protections and oversight. She emphasized that any stay in such a facility must be temporary.

Beth Sightler shared that this has been a very difficult issue for agency directors. Directors disagree about whether a forensic facility is needed for the people with intellectual disabilities.

Kirsten reminded everyone that it was okay to disagree, and she encouraged them to vote for, against, or abstain from any motion.

- “Cancel the ABLE Claw Back. VTDDC and the Vermont Treasurers office have worked hard to make sure that Vermonters with disabilities have a solid, reliable option to build their savings without affecting their benefits, Kirsten explained. The federal law allows Medicaid to retrieve remaining funds from the ABLE account of an individual after they die. At least 15 other states had already ended this practice.

Motion: Crista made the motion to accept the four platform items as proposed by the policy committee. Justin seconded. There were 2 abstentions.

Motion passed: 7-0-2.

- **Make a Date**

Susan invited Council Members to “make a date” with her to meet at the Statehouse. She encouraged members to visit the State House anytime between January and June, where they can meet one-on-one with their legislators. Susan can schedule a lunch date, give a tour, educate members about current policy issues, and support members during their visit.

3. Board Training with Sheryl Matney:

- **Understanding the role of the Council Chair, the Council, and Staff**

Sheryl shared a power point presentation. She explained the different roles of Council staff, members, and the Executive Director. "Who does what?" She listed basic tasks as examples of what each role is responsible for.

She emphasized that DD Councils runs best when members and staff stay within the roles assigned them by the DD Act. Members govern the Council and set Council priorities through the Five-Year Plan and the annual budget. Staff have the job of implementing the plan based on their knowledge of government systems, their advocacy, and the financial resources available to the Council.

Sheryl said that everyone who participates in Council work shares the same focus and outcomes. They give each other mutual respect, trust and support, and meaningful communication. (power point attached)

- **Game, Whose Job is it? – small groups**

Council Chair Anastasia led a fun game of multiple choice for members to answer about their roles and the roles of staff.

4. Chair's Report by Anastasia Douglas:

- **Meeting locations for FFY'24.**

Anastasia reported that the Executive Committee has decided to return to the practice of holding quarterly meetings in different parts of the State. This may help with attendance and increase the ability of the Council to attack local legislators for the lunch hour.

- **Membership.**

Anastasia reported that Ted Looby has asked to step down from the Council for health reasons.

5. Lunch:

Lunch went from 12:00pm to 1:00 pm.

Council members chatted casually while they ate. The online meeting room was left open for remote attendees.

6. Executive Director's Report by Kirsten Murphy:

- **Budget Update**

Congress still has not agreed on an appropriation for DD Councils for Federal Fiscal Year 2024. Kirsten said that it was possible the Council would receive the same amount from the federal government as it had last year. To trim costs, Council staff may move their offices from the third floor of the Capitol Plaza. They would share office space on the second floor with the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

- **Five Year Plan Update – highlights from 2023**

Kirsten shared her screen to talk about the Five-Year State Plan. She highlighted all of the work done by Council members, staff, and grantees to fulfill the plan's four goals: Empowering people, Gaps in Services, Underserved populations, and Systems change.

7. All Inclusive, taking stock of how VTDDC is doing:

Anastasia talked about the importance of respecting all cultures, genders, abilities, etc. As hard as we try to be inclusive, there was always more work to be done. She gathered feedback and asked several "True or False" questions for everyone to weigh-in on.

Members said...

- "Meeting locations must be tested for true accessibility."
- "Pronouns should be mentioned and honored as everyone answers the icebreaker."
- "More diversity among members."
- "Everyone respects everyone."

Anastasia asked true-or-false: "When our Council meets, we point out false ideas of people because of what we think we know of their culture..."

Members said...

- "We talk about the developmental disabilities community and within our community we may use terms or discuss concepts and still mean different things."
- "Hear something offensive? Say "Ouch." People can explain why what was said was wrong or offensive. We all make mistakes. We can all help each other learn."

- “Sometimes people do not want to be corrected. As part of recruitment, Council Members should know they may hear “ouch” from others and they must be open to feedback.”

As for Language access, folks said to make sure there is always Spanish options.

8. Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

9. Summarize Meeting:

As the Meeting Processor, Amanda mentioned that there were lots of important topics to tackle and that we work well together.

Johnathan said his role was too easy and he’ll have to pick a harder one next time. Lindsey thanked everyone for being jargon busters.

10. Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chelsea Hayward

Att.

Attachment A – legislative platform

Attachment B – slides, ITACC technical assistance



2024

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

1. HOUSING JUSTICE!

- **Fund new housing** for adults with disabilities.

2. INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS!

- **Support students with disabilities** by reducing the use of exclusionary discipline, restraint, and seclusion.



3. MEDICAID JUSTICE!

- **Invest more in new Home and Community Based Services** for people with disabilities.
- **Invest less in new locked institutions** for people with disabilities.
- **DO NOT OPEN a new forensic facility** in Vermont for people with intellectual disabilities.

4. CANCEL THE ABLE CLAW BACK!

- **Cancel a provision that allows Vermont Medicaid to reclaim funds from an ABLER Savings Account** upon the death of the account holder. At least 15 other states have ended this practice.

For more information about our platform, contact Policy Analyst Susan Aranoff at [1 \(802\) 828-1311](tel:18028281311) / vtddc@vermont.gov

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Vermont

Council Work: Members and Staff – who does what?

Roles in governance and management

Council Members Govern

- Governance is the “what”
- The planning and leadership of the Council is carried out by members.
- Provides overall direction of the Council.

The Executive Director (with staff) Manages

- Management is the “how”
- The day-to-day running of the Council is carried out by staff.
- Makes the Five-Year Plan happen

Helpful viewpoints

The Council

Does not control or tell the Director or staff how to do their jobs.

Maintains a focus on governance.

Is Council focused.

The Council Executive Director

Does not control or make decisions for the Chair or the Council.

Maintains a focus on managing the Council program.

Is staff focused.

Primary Duties – Members, Staff, and Director

The Council member role and three key duties:

- Direction
- Oversight
- Resources

Primary role of staff

- The staff helps the Executive Director implement the Plans set by the Council.

The Director is responsible for making things happen with the help of the rest of the staff

Basic Task Chart

Activity/Decision	DD Council	Executive Director
Budget	Approves	Recommends and provides input
Staff Evaluations	Evaluates Executive Director	Evaluates all other staff
Day-to-day operations	No role	Makes all management decisions
5-Year Plan	Develops and approves	Ensures full implementation



Shared Responsibilities

SHARED FOCUS

SHARED EFFORTS

SHARED OUTCOMES

Shared Focus

Mutual respect

- Respect for members, the public and each other is the foundation of a successful Council.

Trust

- Having confidence in each other and the Council supports strong oversight and information flow.

Support

- Providing useful and necessary assistance in everyone's role.

Reciprocal communications

- Back-and-forth conversation formats support a meaningful, working relationships.

Shared purpose and mission driven

- Clearly defining goals and the overarching purpose supports collaboration and keeps everyone focused on the mission.

Shared Efforts

Social stewardship

- Working toward collective goals at the Council level, and realizing impacts for people with I/DD, families, systems of services and supports as well as the State or Territory.

Fiscal Stewardship

- Committing to ethical, efficient, and responsible financial decision-making a use of Council resources.

Succession planning

- Allows for recruitment of highly effective Council members
- Ensures diversity among Council members, which results in more inclusive thinking.
- Maintains required membership compliance.

Strategic planning and program evaluation

- Planning and reflecting on the impact of Council work supports purpose.

Shared Outcomes



5-Year plan impact

Reaching the goals and objectives of the State plan



Council growth

Diverse perspectives and lived experiences

Understanding the needs of the I/DD community



Healthy, functional Council

Council member engagement

Working together in a unified way

Contact information

Contact:

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This training was supported through services funded by contract #75P00121C00067 from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201 to provide training and technical assistance services to State and Territory Councils on Developmental Disabilities. The contents are those of the presenters and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.