



MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain
2025 East River Parkway
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414

MINUTES

Members Present

Lee Shervheim (Chair)
Jason Blomquist
Dupree Edwards (virtual)
Amy Hewitt
Lisa Jemtrud
Heather Kainz
Joel Liestman
Elizabeth Marsh (virtual)
Katie McDermott
Chris McVey
Christine Mueller
Garrett Petrie
Jenny Santema (virtual)
Bonnie Jean Smith
Heather Stillwell
Garret Zayic

Members Excused

Jenny Arndt (Vice Chair)
Lesli Kerkhoff
Abdi Matan
Alan Morrison
Mary Raasch
Connie Rabideaux
Sumukha Terakanambi

Guests

Dan Reed
Heidi Holste

Staff

Stephanie Nelson
Paul Nevin
Colleen Wieck

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Lee Shervheim called the meeting to order at 12:15 pm.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Shervheim invited all present to introduce themselves.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Shervheim called for approval of the Agenda. **MOTION:** Smith moved, seconded by McDermott, to approve the Agenda. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES (December 3, 2025)

Shervheim called for a motion to approve the Minutes from the December 3, 2025, meeting. **MOTION:** Liestman moved, seconded by Stillwell, to approve the Minutes. Motion passed.

V. PROGRAM PRESENTATION

Heidi Holste, Executive Director of Access Press, gave an overview and update about this news resource. Heidi has a long history of legislative advocacy, nonprofit management, residential services, and lobbying. Holste does not come from a newspaper background, but does understand nonprofits. Joey Carlson is the managing editor. Both recently started working for Access Press. Access Press is 35 years old. The mission of Access Press is to inform, amplify, and unify the disability community.

Access Press will host events to introduce its staff to the community. They want to recruit as many people as possible to provide content, write stories, and letters to the editor. The current distribution is 5,000 people: 3,000 sent by mail, with the rest distributed through drop sites. It costs \$40,000 to print 12 editions of the newspaper. Access Press would like to increase its social media reach.

Heidi urged people to subscribe, share Access Press with friends, attend events, donate, advertise, and introduce the staff to community groups. Heidi has experience in writing grants and working at the Legislature. Minnesota is one of the few states with a news outlet devoted to disability issues. Council members generated ideas for consideration, including a series on the ADA noncompliance, more focus on self-advocacy, and more stories about children's issues.

Appearing in the directory costs \$72.00 annually. The Council has funded the History column in Access Press for over 20 years. When asked about the vast diversity of opinions, Holste emphasized the need for fact-based articles, and individuals can submit articles about their personal experiences. Joey Carlson handles editorial duties. The Council members thanked Heidi Holste for her presentation.

VI. GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Grant Review Committee received 16 applications requesting a total of \$32,000 for training co-sponsorship funding. Only \$20,000 is available for this program goal. Eleven applications were approved for a total of \$20,000. All members signed conflict-of-interest forms prior to voting. The Five-Year Plan states that the Council will:

Provide ongoing education and training that reflects and addresses the outcomes (independence, productivity, self-determination, integration, and inclusion) identified in the DD Act in programs and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

The Grant Review Committee recommends approving funding for the following 11 applications:

1. **Accord** proposes working with Cow Tipping Press and offering in-person creative writing sessions for 12 participants.

The Committee recommends funding Accord for \$2,000.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Hewitt, to approve funding for Accord. Motion carried. There were no abstentions.

2. **Autism Society of Minnesota** has requested funding for scholarships and a keynote speaker for their Annual State Conference to be held on April 15-16, 2026, and their remote event will reach about 250 individuals.

The Committee recommends funding the Autism Society of Minnesota for \$2,000.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by McDermott, to approve funding for the Autism Society of Minnesota. Motion carried. Garrett Petrie abstained.

3. **Cow Tipping Press** will offer in-person creative writing sessions for up to 15 participants with a special guest author trainer, Kao Kalia Yang. Funds are requested for the guest trainer and individualized accommodations.

The Committee recommends funding Cow Tipping for \$2,000.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Stillwell, to approve funding for Cow Tipping Press. Motion carried. There were no abstentions.

4. **Fraser** will hold a remote training course entitled *Disability Advocacy in Action: Turning Lived Experience into Community Change*. \$1000 is requested for a self-advocate panel and \$1000 for translation services.

The Committee recommends funding Fraser for \$1,000.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by McDermott, to approve funding for Fraser. Motion carried. There were no abstentions.

5. **Health EQ Solutions'** Nurtured Paths Initiative requests \$2000 for the *Act Early Family Empowerment Series: Navigate Advocate and Thrive*. The training sessions are targeted at families in the Black Diaspora.

The Committee recommends funding Health EQ Solutions for \$1,600.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Zayic. Motion carried. There were no abstentions.

6. **Highland Friendship Club** requests funding for Personal Safety Training to be presented by Mad Hatter Wellness. Half of the funding will be used for scholarships and accommodations.

The Committee recommends funding Highland Friendship Club for \$2,000.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Liestman. Motion carried. Garrett Petrie abstained.

7. **Living Well Disability Services** proposes working with Cow Tipping Press and offering in-person creative writing sessions for 10 participants.

The Committee recommends funding Living Well for \$2,000.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Mueller. Motion carried. There were no abstentions.

8. **Proof Alliance** requests funding for two full-day sessions for caregivers of persons with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. Funds will be used to cover speaker fees and scholarships for 12 of the expected 230 attendees.

The Committee recommends funding Proof Alliance for \$2,000.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Zayic. Motion carried. There were no abstentions.

9. **The Education Law Advocacy Project of SMRLS** proposes two virtual training sessions on special education rights for families of children. Training sessions will be repeated live in Spanish and will reach an estimated 100 individuals in total.

The Committee recommends funding Southern MN Regional Legal Services for \$1,400.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Stillwell. Motion carried. There were no abstentions.

10. **Special Olympics Minnesota** has requested funding for an in-person Fitness Academy Conference to be held on May 31st and estimated to reach 300 individuals.

The Committee recommends funding Special Olympics Minnesota for \$2,000.00. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by McVey. Motion carried. Jenny Santema abstained.

11. **The Arc Minnesota** requests funding for training and accommodations for self-advocates to attend Disability Day of Advocacy at the Capitol.

The Committee recommends funding for The Arc Minnesota for \$2,000. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Stillwell. Motion carried. Katie McDermott and Dupree Edwards abstained.

MOTION: Shervheim requested a motion regarding any grantee that does not spend all its allocated training funds. Those unspent funds should be reallocated to the Five-Year Plan program goal of Publications, Online Courses, and Websites. Motion by Shervheim, seconded by Smith. Motion carried.

VII. PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Petrie summarized the committee's discussion today. The Public Policy Committee reviewed the list of topics submitted through the Public Comment period. These topics did not directly relate to the three program goals. The members discussed what actions can be taken. In some cases, the comments will be forwarded to the responsible state agencies. In other cases, the Committee can discuss the topics at future meetings.

Lisa Harrison-Hadler, Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, described the work completed by their office. The most recent OMHDD report to the Legislature was distributed to all Council members.

Sumukha Terakanambi discussed concerns about Medicaid funding and proposed changes to special education at the federal level.

VIII. EDITING PROPOSED GOALS FOR THE NEXT FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The members were asked to review the compilation of all public input and the memo that summarized the comments specific to each program goal. Shervheim asked members to present their editing suggestions. The federal law requires the Council to consider feedback and, if a substantive change is required, to provide another 45-day public comment period. Substantive is defined as changing the goal's direction. Refining language is not subject to the 45-day comment period.

- a. Goal 1: Self Advocacy-No changes were recommended.
- b. Goal 2: Employment-minor edits to emphasize individual choice to address public comments.
- c. Goal 3: Education, Resources, Research, and Continuous Improvement-minor edit to clarify the intent of the goal by removing the phrase, “have opportunities to.”

Shervheim asked for a motion to accept the edited goal language. **MOTION:** McDermott moved, seconded by Zayic, to approve the three goals as amended. Motion carried.

GOAL #1: SELF-ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

People with developmental disabilities (youth and adults) and families will have increased access to educational and skill-building resources that promote self-advocacy and community leadership, as required by the federal Developmental Disabilities Act. The Council will promote outreach, alliance-building, and networking initiatives, expanding opportunities for all.

GOAL #2: EMPLOYMENT

Youth and adults with developmental disabilities will be individually supported in their choices of services and opportunities, including achieving, retaining, and advancing in self-employment and competitive integrated employment, while maintaining access to other essential benefits.

GOAL #3: EDUCATION, RESOURCES, RESEARCH, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Council will remain a nationally recognized archive of easy-to-access, high-quality information, education, and training materials in multiple formats. People with developmental disabilities and families, along with their supporters, will develop knowledge and skills through ongoing education and training resources that support the federal Developmental Disabilities Act's goals. The Council will sponsor research evaluating the outcomes of the Developmental Disabilities Act using qualitative and quantitative survey methods, and Council practices will be regularly reviewed and continuously improved.

Other discussion.

1. Can we add multiple languages and formats? Yes, multiple languages and formats can be described in the activities section of the work plan.
2. Can we recommend other resources in addition to Disability Hub? Yes, there are many resources for individuals with autism (portal), 211, and the Aging Pathways (formerly the Senior Linkage Line).

3. Can we mention Plain language because this is a Governor's Executive Order? Yes, this can be described in the activities section of the work plan.
4. Can we mention resources available for language translations? Yes, this can be described in the activities section of the work plan.

IX. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

The January Activity Report and an updated Council Member Directory were distributed.

Federal Funding: The 2026 federal allocation received to date totals \$385,106.00, about 33% of last year's total allocation. We expect level funding for FFY 2026, and we will share more details at the April meeting.

The Treat People Like People Campaign is currently funded by the Minnesota Council on Disability. The new content includes children's activities, and do-it-yourself merchandise. Social media decks are prepared and approved for each month.

Olmstead Plan: State agency teams and inclusion consultants have been meeting and preparing draft goals. There are 60 proposed goals and sub-goals, carryover goals, and data development goals. This number does not include the proposed DHS goals. We will work with Council members and Partners in Policymaking graduates to provide public comment and feedback about the proposed Olmstead goals.

Five-Year Plan Next Steps: Once the goals are finalized, then objectives must be prepared, activities described, and outputs and outcomes projected for the next five years. Each goal must include a budget. The planning document requires a description of the Open Appointments process. The planning document consists of a Comprehensive Review and Analysis section on 23 state-level programs and services, including healthcare, education, employment, services and supports, and interagency initiatives.

The planning document requires documenting barriers, describing financial resources, and outlining eligibility requirements across state agencies. The planning document must describe the public input process, the rationale for each goal, the public comment period, and the actions taken by the Council.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

- The Arc Minnesota will hold its Gala on March 7, 2026, and its Comedy Open Mic night on March 20, 2026.
- Thriving Together, Health Needs Series sponsored by PACER and MDH (Heather Stillwell) is being held in February.
- The MN State High School Tournament for adapted floor hockey will be held on February 27-28, 2026.
- Highland Popcorn is now three years old.
- The Senior Linkage Line is now called Minnesota Aging Pathways
- Dupree Edwards has his own radio show on KFAI. His fifth show will be on February 22, 2026. Dupree was recently interviewed, and the interview appears on YouTube.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Wieck, Executive Director