

# Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

August 15, 2025 at 9:30AM, CDT

In-Person Meeting

Country Inn & Suites – Nebraska Ballroom

[North Hotel & Conference Center]

5353 N. 27<sup>th</sup> Street

Lincoln, NE

The agenda was mailed to Council members prior to the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Rachel Siffring and called to order at 9:30AM, CDT and the *Pledge of Allegiance* was recited. Quorum was present.

**Present:** Christopher Chambers, Diane Cochran, Quinton Corwin, Caiti Donaldson, Jason Gieschen, Shauna Graham, Tony Green, George Griffith, Brent Hoffman, Shaistha Karipi, Matt Kaslon, Seamus Kelly, Eddie Kraska, Beth Libra, Diana Meadors, Cheryl Montgomery, Sasha Reeks, Jennifer Severe-Oforah, Mark Shriver, Rachel Siffring, Judy Trent, and Joe Valenti.

**Absent:** Ashley Hansen, D J Plautz, and Dawn Sybrant.

**Guests:** Wendy Anderson, Larry Cochran, Tania Diaz, Tiffany Donaldson, Sue Gieschen, Robin Hoffman, Candi Kraska, Stacy Pfeifer, and Sherry Stansberry.

**Staff:** Kristen Larsen, Rachel Ward, Edith Titamoh, and Nikki Krause.

## Welcome and Introductions

Rachel Siffring welcomed new Council members Christopher Chambers, Diane Cochran, and Diana Meadors. Christopher is the Agency Representative for the Department of Education, Office of Special Education. Diane is the Non-Profit Representative. Diana is the Agency Representative for the Division of Behavioral Health.

Kristen Larsen explained that the Governor has not appointed the new self-advocate Council members to the Council. So, until the new appointments have been made, Jason Gieschen and Caiti Donaldson are still acting members of the Council. Additionally, the reappointments of Council members have not been made yet.

## Nebraska Open Meetings Act

Rachel S. explained that Council meetings fall under the Nebraska Open Meetings Act and a copy of the Act is posted on the entrance door by the sign-in table.

The Governor's Public Meeting Calendar referred members of the public and media to the Council's Meetings webpage for additional information (posted July 15, 2025).

## Public Comment Period #1

Rachel S. mentioned that all public meetings must allow time on their agenda for people who are not on the Council to comment. Members of the public, who wanted to address the Council, were instructed to identify himself or herself, including an address and the name of any organization represented.

**Stacy Pfeifer** – Director of Enable Savings Plan – 421 S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 137 Lincoln, NE

Yesterday was Able to Save Day, a national day to recognize Able accounts. They are celebrating 10 years of Enable this year. In May 2015, legislation was passed to allow for Enable accounts and June 2016 it was launched. They are doing various events across Nebraska to celebrate. LB391 passed this past legislative session to create a scholarship fund to start Enable accounts. This will start in January 2026.

**Wendy Anderson** – Policy Chair for the Iowa DD Council – PO Box 351 Trainer, IA

She explained that she takes a vested interest in what happens in Nebraska as her son receives services in Nebraska, but his waivers are set up in Iowa. The *Common Senses Festival* was in May this year. It was a month-long festival that is rooted in celebrating disabilities. Next year it will be held in September. The Iowa DD Council has launched a national initiative to protect the 504.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Rachel S. asked the Council members if there were any corrections to the *DRAFT* April 11, 2025 Council meeting minutes. There were no corrections. Council members were reminded to abstain from voting if they were not in attendance for the April 11, 2025 Council meeting. As there were no corrections, Matt Kaslon made the motion to approve the minutes and Jason Gieschen seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 14, No – 0, Abstain – 7.\*** Motion carried.

### **Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

As required by Council policy, at the first meeting of each federal fiscal year, members of the Council shall verbally declare any potential conflicts of interest of which they are aware. Council members, who had not already done so or had updates, were asked to verbally declare any potential conflicts of interest. They are noted below.

Christopher Chambers	Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education
Diane Cochran	None
Diana Meadors	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavioral Health

### **Financial Report**

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is the Designated State Agency (DSA) for the Council. DHHS is the flow thru for Council funds. However, it is the Council that decides on how Council funds are to be allocated and monitors the allocated funds.

Kristen reviewed the Financial Report for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025, a handout at the meeting. At the August 16, 2024 Council meeting, the Council approved the budget of \$443,664 for FFY2025 (October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025). The Year-to-Date Expenditures for the third quarter of FFY2025 (October 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025) were \$286,705 – 64.62% of the FFY2025 budget.

**NOTE:** Functions of the DSA is listed at \$30,659 (116% of the budget). This should be \$26,306. The DSA can only take 5% of total funds. Kristen will work on getting this adjusted.

The report reflects the balance of funds from FFY2023, FFY2024, and FFY2025 as of June 30, 2025. Available Current Funds totaled \$454,954.68. Expenditures (obligations) totaled \$322,532.63. Balance of Current Funds Available was \$132,422.05.

Kristen explained that Councils were advised not to expect the Notice of Award (NoA) for FFY2026 before October 1, 2026. DD Councils, University Centers of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs), and Protection and Advocacy Organizations (P&As) have been approved for funding by the Senate, but the Budget still needs to pass through the House of Representatives. Therefore, we are going to proceed like funding is coming, but we are going to be conservative with recommended freezes.

Because funds are tight, the freezes Council staff are proposing for the rest of FFY2025. The freezes are in the areas of Out-of-State Travel for Council members and staff, the Leadership Development Funds, and the Collaboration Funds. Matt made the motion to approve the freeze on Out-of-State Travel, Leadership Development Funds, and Collaboration Funds for the rest of FFY2025 and Quinton Corwin seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 20, No – 0, Abstain – 1.\*** Motion carried.

**NOTE:** Kristen expects that the Council will receive flat funding for FFY2026. (The same amount as last year.)

**NOTE:** The Financial Forecast for FFY2026 shows a negative balance. It is possible that some subaward projects will not spend all their obligated amounts. Also, we may be negotiating with Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) to lower Home and Community-Based Services (HBCS) Advocacy Training to \$50,000. Thereby decreasing the negative balance.

For FFY2026, Council staff are recommending continuing the freezes on Out-of-State Travel for Council members and staff, the Leadership Development Funds, and the Collaboration Funds. Additionally, Council meetings will be held at the Nebraska State Office Building (NSOB) in Lincoln. This will save on facility rental fees and food costs. Per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, no more than half of the meetings can be held virtually. Therefore, it was decided that the November 2025 and February 2026 meetings will be hybrid (in-person and virtual). Council members who receive hotel accommodation and/or mileage are strongly encouraged to participate virtually to save on hotel accommodation and mileage costs.

One of the responsibilities of Council members, per the DD Act, is to approve the annual Financial Budget. A handout was provided with the *proposed* FFY2026 Financial Budget (October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026). The Estimated Council Expenses for FFY2026 is \$372,718.

- Personal Expenses & Benefits - \$294,928
- Operating Expenses - \$28,624
- Travel - \$22,850
- Functions of the DSA - \$26,316

A motion was made by Joe Valenti to approve the *proposed* FFY2026 Financial Budget in the amount of \$372,718 and George Griffith seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 20, No – 0, Abstain – 1.\*** Motion carried.

**NOTE:** The proposed FFY2026 Financial Budget includes the freezes to Out-of-State Travel, Leadership Development Funds, Collaboration Funds, the change to meetings at the NSOB Lincoln, and having the November 2025 and February 2026 meetings as hybrid meetings.

### **FFY2026 Meeting Dates and Location**

Committee and Council meeting dates for FFY2026 were set.

Planning Committee meeting – October 23, 2025 - Hybrid

Planning Committee meeting – November 3, 2025 - Hybrid

Council meeting – November 21, 2025 – Hybrid  
Legislative & Advocacy Committee meeting – February 5, 2026 - Hybrid  
Council meeting – February 6, 2026 – Hybrid  
Planning Committee meeting – April 16, 2026 - Hybrid  
Council meeting – April 17, 2026 – In-Person  
Grant Review Committee meeting – August 20, 2026 - Hybrid  
Council meeting – August 21, 2026 – In-Person

Meetings will be held at the Nebraska State Office Building – Lincoln (301 Centennial Mall South).

### **Member Reappointments and Recognition of Outgoing Members**

Eligible Council members whose term expire on October 1, 2025, and are interested in continuing to serve on the Council, were encouraged to reapply with the Governor. Applications can be submitted either online at the Boards & Commissions – Application for Executive Appointment webpage at <https://governor.nebraska.gov/board-comm-req> or by mailing a **completed** Executive Appointment Application to Pat Selk at the Office of the Governor. Council members eligible to apply for reappointment are:

**Ashley Hansen** (Family)  
**Eddie Kraska** (Individual)  
**Beth Libra** (Family)  
**Sasha Reeks** (Individual)  
**Mark Shriver** (MMI/UCEDD)

The following Council members, whose second term is ending on October 1, 2025 or who have decided not to seek a second term were recognized for their time with the Council:

**Caiti Donaldson** (Individual)  
**George Griffith** (Family)  
**Matt Kaslon** (Individual)  
**Rachel Siffring** (Family)  
**Cheryl Montgomery** (Non-Governmental)

The outgoing Council members took a few minutes to say a few words about their time on the Council. Outgoing Council members were reminded that they would still serve on the Council until the Governor appoints their replacement.

### **Election of FFY2026 Council Officers**

Per the By-Laws, officer elections for FFY2026 were conducted at today's Council meeting. This included the offices of Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. These officers were elected to serve a term of office from October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026. Officers may be re-elected for a maximum of an additional two (2) consecutive terms. That limit on terms being only for that office; they may be elected to another office without a break in service. Agency representatives are not eligible to serve as Chair or Vice-Chair of the Council. On July 2, 2025 and July 16, 2025, Nikki Krause sent emails to all Council members seeking nominations for Council Officers.

Chair – The Chair presides at all meetings of the Council and the Executive Committee, provides overall direction for Council activities, and is an ex-officio member of all Council standing and ad hoc committees. Beth Libra had indicated that she would be willing to run for the office of Chair. When asked if there were any nominations from the floor, Judy Trent was named.

Quinton nominated Beth for the position of Chair and Matt seconded. Matt nominated Judy for the position of Chair and Cheryl Montgomery seconded. Each nominee was allotted time to explain why she should be elected Chair. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Beth Libra will be the Chair for FFY2026. (Beth 16 votes, Judy 6 votes)

Vice-Chair – The Vice-Chair assists the Chair in the performance of his/her duties and performs all duties of the Chair in his/her absence. Quinton Corwin had indicated that he would be willing to run for the office of Vice-Chair. When asked if there were any nominations from the floor, (Sasha) Reeks was named.

Cheryl nominated Quinton for the position of Vice-Chair and Seamus Kelly seconded. Matt nominated Reeks for the position of Vice-Chair and Judy seconded. Each nominee was allotted time to explain why he or she should be elected Vice-Chair. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Quinton Corwin will be the Vice-Chair for FFY2026. (Quinton 15 votes, Reeks 7 votes)

Secretary – The Secretary (along with the Council Chair) will review the *draft* minutes taken by Council staff prior to them being posted on the Council's public webpage and included in the meeting packets mailed to Council members and the Secretary will present the Council minutes for formal approval at the subsequent Council meeting. Eddie Kraska had indicated that he would be willing to run for the office of Secretary. When asked if there were any nominations from the floor, (Sasha) Reeks was named.

Seamus nominated Eddie for the position of Secretary and Tony Green seconded. Matt nominated Reeks for the position of Secretary and Caiti Donaldson seconded. Each nominee was allotted time to explain why he or she should be elected Secretary. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Eddie Kraska will be the Secretary for FFY2026. (Eddie 13 votes, Reeks 9 votes)

Kristen will forward the Council's recommendation for the office of Chair to the Governor's Appointments Office. Per Council By-Laws, the Governor appoints the Council Chair based on the Council's recommendation.

### **Committee Preferences**

All Council members are expected to serve on one of the standing committees – Legislative and Advocacy, Planning, or Grant Review. Rachel S. gave a summary of the responsibilities of each committee. Members were asked to complete the FFY2026 Committee Preference form included in the meeting packet and return it to Nikki by the end of the meeting. Council staff and the Chair will review Council members' preferences. Committee preferences will be followed as closely as possible while adhering to iTACC's recommendation of being mindful of potential conflicts of interest for those serving on the Planning and Grant Review Committees.

**NOTE:** You do not need to be on the same committee that you were on in FFY2025. Each year you can change your committee preference if you would like. However, if you were on the Planning Committee, you are asked to stay on the Planning Committee for continuity in developing the next 5-Year State Plan.

**NOTE:** You are also not limited to serving on only one committee. You may serve on two or all three committees if you would like. A lot of the discussion/*heavy lift* is done at the committee meeting.

Council members were asked to note their interest in running for Chair of a committee on the Committee Preference form. Committee Chair elections for FFY2026 will be held during the November 21, 2025 Council meeting.

Council members were also encouraged to recommend non-Council members who would make good representatives to one of the three standing committees. Their names and contact information can be listed on the back of the Committee Preference form.

### **DD Council Executive Director Annual Evaluation**

One of the duties of Council members is to complete an annual evaluation on the DD Council Executive Director, Kristen Larsen. The shorter and briefer 2025 Executive Director Evaluation was included in the Council meeting packet. The evaluation needs to be completed and returned to Beth by October 1, 2025. Either scan and email the completed evaluation to Beth at [bplisek111@gmail.com](mailto:bplisek111@gmail.com) or snail mail the evaluation to:

Beth Libra  
84816 559 Avenue  
Hoskins, NE 68701

The outgoing Executive Committee (FFY2025 Officers and Committee Chairs) and incoming Executive Committee (FFY2026 Officers) will reference these evaluations when they meet to complete the formal recommended 2025 Executive Director Evaluation, which will be presented and voted on at the November 21, 2025 Council meeting.

**NOTE:** Usually new Council members abstain from completing the shorter and briefer Executive Director Evaluation since they are new to the Council and have not had a chance to work with Kristen.

### **June 13, 2025 Tri-Board Meeting Summary**

The Tri-Board meeting was very successful. It is a good opportunity for the DD Network Partners (Disability Rights Nebraska, Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)/University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), and the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities) Boards to get together. The topic was *Effective Advocacy to Improve Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)*. Jill Jacobs, Executive Director of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), was the keynote speaker. There were 49 in-person attendees and 10 virtual attendees. 92% of all attendees were either “extremely satisfied” or “satisfied” with the Tri-Board meeting.

### **Update on the State Needs Assessment Survey**

Judy and Kristen provided an update on the State Needs Assessment Survey. The Planning Committee met a couple of times this past spring with MMI Contractor, Dr. Kerry Miller, to develop the questions for the Needs Assessment Survey. The survey was launched on June 10, 2025 and ran through July 14, 2025. 296 English surveys were received (187 self-advocate surveys) and 10 Spanish surveys were received (5 self-advocate surveys). The next step is to organize another two focus groups and one will be a Spanish focus group. A self-advocate focus group was completed in May with the University of Nebraska at Omaha Trailblazers program. Dr. Miller provided us with the initial results for the top five areas that hit:

1. Access to Health Care and Medicaid Services
2. Respite and Child Care
3. Housing and Independent Living Supports
4. Direct Support Workforce and Staff Training
5. Transportation and Community Access (Including Recreation and Employment)

### **Updates from State Agency Representatives**

**NOTE:** Agency representatives were asked to briefly touch on any pressing issues or important updates the Council needed to be informed of. The written reports are attached at the end of the minutes and Council members are encouraged to read the written reports in their entirety. DJ Plautz and Dawn Sybrant were absent and not able to present their reports. [Christopher Chambers, Department of Education – Office of Special Education; Tony Green, Division of Developmental Disabilities; Diana Meadors, Division of Behavioral Health; Jennifer Severe-Oforah, Division of Public Health – Maternal and Child Health; DJ Plautz, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation; Dawn Sybrant, Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging]

#### Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) – Office of Special Education (OSE)

The OSE received their 2025 Differentiated Monitoring System Report from the Office of Special Education. The OSE leadership team is currently reviewing the letter and information, and it will soon be made public. OSE is also in the process of providing more timely Discipline Data to Districts with ultimately the goal of helping Districts improve their discipline data. Federal grant allocations have been made to all Districts in Nebraska. Districts have submitted their Federal Applications to NDE and OSE is in the process of reviewing them. OSE will be partnering with SPED Strategies for the 2025-26 school year, as a part of Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusion: convenings to be held at Educational Service Units 6 and 16 sites.

#### Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

The Waitlist is over; it ended in June. Now DDD is monitoring and tracking the time from when an offer for services is made to when the services start. DDD made a total of 3,459 offers to individuals based on their eligibility. Starting on July 1, 2025, as individuals became eligible, they received their eligibility letter and moved right into assignment to a Service Coordinator to talk about waiver and services and could begin services. The new interRAI assessment launched July 1, 2025. It is going well, but slow because of oversight and review.

#### Division of Behavioral Health (DBH)

DBH continues to move forward with the certification of their Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) across Nebraska. CCBHCs are one stop-shop clinic models designed to ensure access to coordinated comprehensive behavioral health care. The Pathways Home waiver also continues to move forward. The Request for Applications for the Opioid settlement dollars and the date for applications has ended. The Opioid settlement dollars are for infrastructure. DBH is currently in the process of scoring the applications. DBH completed all its disaster exercises with all six regions and DBH’s facilities. DBH is in the process of completing its application for federal block grant for substance abuse and mental health and prevention services.

#### Division of Public Health – Maternal and Child Health (DPH-MCH)

Since the last report, Title V has established nine priorities for 2025-2030, two for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSCHN).

1. Increasing Developmental Screening
2. Access to Mental and Behavioral Health Services

The report contains initial strategies on how they plan to address these priorities in the initial years. What they are going to do from a state level working with their partners to increase access to the early developmental screening for children and youth with special health care needs and increasing access to and utilization of mental and behavioral health services. They will come up with more strategies as time goes by.

## Updates from the DD Network Representatives

**NOTE:** DD Network representatives were asked to briefly touch on any pressing issues or important updates the Council needed to be informed of. The written reports are attached at the end of the minutes and Council members are encouraged to read the written reports in their entirety. [Seamus Kelly, Disability Rights Nebraska; Mark Shriver, Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)/University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)]

### Disability Rights Nebraska

Tania Diaz provided the Disability Rights Nebraska report. They have been meeting with their congressional delegation regarding the importance of their work and the proposed Medicaid cuts. They were pleased to see that the Senate did level fund them. The next Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training will take place from September 9 through October 16, 2025. If you are interested in attending, please contact Pat Cottingham at [pat@drne.org](mailto:pat@drne.org). Disability Rights Nebraska has been doing some outreach and did a panel presentation at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln with the Psychology Department on what life is like through lived experience. They continue to monitor the Beatrice State Developmental Center and day programs.

### Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)/University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)

In August 2024, MMI/UCEDD initiated a Transition to Lifespan Care (TLC) clinic designed to serve individuals with DD who are transitioning to adulthood. The TLC clinic offers evaluations and ongoing recommendations to support individuals as they transition to adult providers. The clinic is provided monthly, serving 3-4 individuals each month from across Nebraska. The TLC clinic has served 26 individuals ages 14 and older this past year. There are 22 individuals on the waitlist for this coming year, and they are looking to expand clinic time to meet the increasing need. Their contract with DHHS for administration of the National Core Indicators (NCI) survey was not renewed for this coming year. DHHS will be continuing the NCI survey but will manage the administration of it internally. The Nebraska NCI dashboard will be transferred to DDD. MMI's contract with DHHS for development of a standardized online onboarding training program for Direct Service Professionals was terminated in June due to funding and lack of widespread support by provider organizations. MMI continues development of training and is seeking other funding and is working with provider agencies and independent providers supportive of this effort. Senator Deb Fischer visited MMI for a tour on July 25, 2025 to learn more about UCEDDs and what they do. Representative Don Bacon visited MMI on August 12, 2025 for the same reason. The Senate did add back in funding for UCEDDs and P&As. The Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution (SOAR) conference is October 3-5, 2025 in Omaha, Nebraska. The SOAR conference will bring together self-advocates from Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota to share ideas on how to advocate.

## Council Chair and Staff Updates

Rachel S. mentioned that she was selected to serve on the iTACC Chairperson Training Workgroup. They are updating the Chairperson Training information.

Kristen had a few updates to share.

- New Council Member Orientation will be on September 4, 2026 at 2:00PM, CDT. She will either record the session or schedule a make-up session for those who are unable to attend.
- A NCDD Impact Statement has been developed. This statement includes what we do and why we should be kept funded. This was sent to our federal delegation.
- Contingency plans have been developed to cover what we do if the Council does not get funded or is only partially funded.

- The DD Network Partners met a couple of times with CEO Corsi, Director Green, Director Gonshorowski (Medicaid and Long-Term Care) about Medicaid cuts and DHHS leaders were confident that HCBS services would not be impacted. The cuts would mostly impact individuals on the expansion side.
- The Supported Employment Action Plan – We are focusing on data for the Comprehensive Review Analysis and are going back to the 11 priorities that Dr. Mills provided to identify what is manageable. Becki Koehler's contract runs thru September 30, 2026. Then Kristen will assume that role as we continue and develop the next State Plan.
- The Annual Workplan and State Plan Updates have been submitted.

Rachel Ward shared that at the end of April they went to the Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) Showcase and presented. Nebraska has 67 CtLC Ambassadors. Next year she plans on hitting the schools to share CtLC information and tools. We have the Nebraska Community of Practice for Supporting Families and we fashioned the Ambassador Folder, which has the CtLC tools and a directory of Ambassadors. Disability Pride Day was July 26, 2025 and there was a good turnout. The Council had a table at the event and was able to spread the word about CtLC.

Edith Titamoh mentioned that three individuals participated in the Leadership Development Fund and attended the CtLC Showcase. Two of the three reports were included in your meeting packet. She is working with the UNL Public Policy Center on the Employer Survey: Why employers are hesitant to hire people with disabilities. They have met and discussed the goals of the project. The survey questions have been determined and sent out. They have received 60% of the surveys back and will review the data at the next meeting.

Nikki reminded the Council members to turn in the Committee Preference Forms before leaving.

### **Council Member Updates**

Matt mentioned that he has been on one of the federal policy trainings with The Arc of the United States. He has participated in the bi-weekly NACDD calls where one of the focuses has been funding. He had his benefits meeting yesterday and is on the HCBS waiver.

Quinton shared that he is trying to schedule meetings with Congressional delegates. The only one they have met with is Representative Flood. He is also working on setting up meetings with State Senators Conrad, Quick, Hughes, and Hardin.

Reeks mentioned that she won her arbitration against Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS). Now she is waiting to hear back from NDCS. Hopefully winning this arbitration will help other people when they ask for an accommodation.

Beth shared she gave three more presentations on CtLC. She chaired the Disability Pride in Norfolk. The *Night to Shine* event in Norfolk is on September 20, 2025. Ellie is going to the SOAR Conference with her friends. To wrap up, she mentioned she got married in May! Congratulations, Beth!!!

George mentioned he is a Superintendent of Schools and that school just started.

Brent participated in the Summer Games in Omaha. He placed 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in swimming and 2<sup>nd</sup> in track.

Jason has been busy writing delegates. He is also mentoring a 6<sup>th</sup> grader with autism at work at ESU 16.

Sue Gieschen said it was nice to see everyone again.

Judy mentioned that they have been busy with Special Olympics. She also participated in the *Pathways and Paradises* training. She learned about Alzheimer's and its relation to Down Syndrome.

Cheryl mentioned that the Holy Cow! What Now? Transition Conference is on October 1, 2025. The Association of Community Professionals (ACP) Conference is October 23-24, 2026.

Shauna said Bailey turned 16 and she might be doing unified track and is taking a leadership class at school.

Shaistha Karipi mentioned she attended the Tri-Board in June. She completed CtLC Ambassador Training. She went to a Nebraska Caregiver Tax Credit training.

Seamus said he also went to the Tri-Board meeting and encouraged others to attend.

Eddie has four roles in the *Looking Glass*, a twist on *Alice in Wonderland*.

Candi Kraska mentioned she and Eddie went to the Tri-Board meeting too. They travelled to New York to visit family and saw the *Subway Series*. Life this summer has been baseball. She mentioned that there are two dates for the *Looking Glass*.

Caiti joined a dance team and will be on the performance team this year. Remember to advocate with kindness, respectfulness, and be consistently persistent in the best manner possible. Even when it seems like you are not making a difference, you are planting the seeds. Life is not just about us; it is about people who come after us.

Tiffany Donaldson shared that in the last three years, this group has helped Caiti to grow and mature and it makes her heart so happy. Thank you to everyone!

Diane said that self-determination is an important ability and is well versed by all the self-advocates here today. Because if you do not start at a very young age, it is hard to develop that as an adult. She started developing a new curriculum (pre-k through adulthood) and will be meeting with school districts and other organizations to encourage people to implement that if it has not been implemented already. More people need this opportunity. The young people she has met today, they obviously have great self-determination skills and have a lot to give to this community and to the world. More kids need this opportunity.

Rachel S. attended the Tri-Board meeting as well. Braxton participated in State softball for the first time and is on the Youth Activation Committee for Special Olympics. She and Braxton are on the Board for The Platte County Arc so she and Braxton presented to the United Way Board to secure funding. Braxton started his senior year and started a business, *Braxton's Blooms*, with spider plants. He took about 22 plants to the farmer's market and sold about 14 of them. If he makes projects in shop class, he may start *Braxton's Boards*. Braxton also got Reserve Champion Market Lamb in 4-H.

## **Public Comment Period #2**

Rachel S. mentioned that all public meetings must allow time on their agenda for people who are not on the Council to comment. Members of the public, who wanted to address the Council, were instructed to identify himself or herself, including an address and the name of any organization represented. The following public comments were made.

**Stacy Pfeifer** – Director of Enable Savings Plan – 421 S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 137 Lincoln, NE  
On the national level they have introduced the Able Employment Flexibility Act which will allow employers to be able to contribute to Enable Plans in lieu of retirement plans. It is kind of an expansion on Enable to Work and has been written not to count as income.

### **Adjourn**

Matt made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Quinton seconded. By unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 12:24PM, CDT.

**The next Council meeting is scheduled for November 21, 2025 and will be hybrid (in-person and virtual).**

**NOTE:** Council members who receive hotel accommodation and/or mileage are strongly encouraged to participate virtually to save on hotel accommodation and mileage costs.

## **Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities**

### **Mission**

The Council engages in **Advocacy**, **Capacity Building**, and **Systemic Change** activities that assure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design and have access to needed community services, individualized support, and other forms of assistance that promote *self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion* in all facets of community life.

## Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

### State Agency Representative Report to Council Members

Representative: Christopher Chambers, Part B Specialist

Agency: Office of Special Education at the Nebraska Department of Education

Update on activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD since the last Agency update:

- The Office of Special Education received our 2025 DMS Report from OSEP, as the members of OSEP were onsite at NDE in October 2024. The Office of Special Education leadership team is currently reviewing the letter and the information from the 2025 DMS report from OSEP will soon be made public.
- The Office of Special Education is in the process of providing more timely data Discipline Data to Districts with ultimately the goal of helping Districts improve their discipline data.

Current Agency activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD:

- Federal grant allocations have been made to all Districts in Nebraska; Districts have submitted their Federal Applications to NDE and the Office of Special Education is in the process of reviewing them.
- The Office of Special Education will be partnering with SPED Strategies for the 2025-26 school year, as apart of Nebraska's Journey to Inclusion; convenings to be held at ESUs 6 and 16.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

- RoadTrip: 2025 NeMTSS Summit: Navigating Literacy on the MTSS Highway at the North Younes Center in Kearney, Nebraska
- 2025 Tri-State Regional Special Education Law Conference- November 13, 2025- November 14, 2025

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative: Tony Green, Director

Agency: Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Developmental Disabilities and Home & Community Based Services

**Update on activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD since the last Agency update:**

***Elimination of the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waitlist***

- The Division received approval on submitted amendments to the CDD, DDAD, FSW, and AD waivers to CMS on July 1, 2025.
- The Division made a total of 3,459 offers to individuals based on their eligibility
  - The Division made 77 offers for the CDD waiver, 100% of which have been accepted
  - The Division has made 859 offers for the DDAD waiver, of which 405 have been accepted (47%), 295 have declined (34%), and 159 are pending (19%).
- The timeline and other information on the elimination of the waitlist can be found at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/DD-Wait-List.aspx>.

**Future/upcoming Agency activities:**

*All Information available on DD Calendar of Events page on DD Homepage*

- Person-Centered Planning Champions – Dive into Charting the Life Course Tuesday, September 2, 2025
- Monthly DHHS Stakeholder Meeting – Monday, September 8, 2025
- DD Advisory Committee Meeting – Wednesday, September 10, 2025
- Olmstead Advisory Committee Meeting – Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative:       Diana Meadors, Deputy Director of Administrative Operations      

Agency:       Division of Behavioral Health      

Update on activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD since the last Agency update:

DBH continues to move forward with the certification of our CCBHC's. Our Pathways Home waiver also continues to move forward. We posted the Request for Applications for the Opioid settlement dollars and the date for applications has ended. We are currently in the process of scoring the applications. We hope to have them completed and award letter sent out to those that are selected. DBH completed our disaster exercise with all 6 regions and DBH's facilities.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

Our OCA team is currently working on activities for recovery month in September.

## Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

### State Agency Representative Report to Council Members

Representative: DJ Plautz

Agency: Nebraska VR

Update on activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD since the last Agency update:

- Nebraska VR continues to provide technical assistance to agency providers in an effort of improving the quality of service delivery.
- Nebraska VR and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) partnered to host a training on the best practices of supported employment on July 1st at the Lincoln VR office. Virtual follow up sessions are scheduled for August 5<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Successful SE/CE outcomes for PY 2024 = 178
  - Additional SE/CE data elements are currently under review with the Olmstead Employment Workgroup
- Nebraska VR continues to collaborate with Becki Koehler and agency partners as a result of the Dr. Mills study and subsequent action plan.
- Nebraska VR and ATP continue to be actively engaged in the development and implementation of Nebraska's Olmstead Plan. The VR Director leads the employment workgroup and the ATP Director is the chair of the housing workgroup. The agency's involvement in this critical planning helps to ensure employment and accessibility remain a priority for Nebraskans with disabilities.
- On July 15-16 Nebraska VR, ATP, Client Assistance Program and IT staff from across the state met in Kearney for its first in-person conference in nearly a decade. A variety of breakout sessions were offered with internal and external presenters. Two national speakers gave keynote presentations highlighting their life experiences and the power of hope and perspective.
- Nebraska VR is funding 17 short-term summer programs (serving up to 316 students). The programs are designed to provide career exploration, job readiness, and work based learning opportunities for students with disabilities. Summaries for each of the summer programs can be found by visiting <https://vr.nebraska.gov/students/tsp.html>

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative: Jennifer Severe-Oforah

Agency: DHHS, Division of Public Health

Since the last report, Title V has established 9 priorities for 2025-2030, two for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN), increasing developmental screening, and access to mental and behavioral health services. The following is an excerpt describing proposed strategies and activities as well as how Title V will monitor progress:

**Priority: Increasing access to early screening and identification for CYSHCN**  
Performance Measure: Percent of children with special health care needs, ages 0 through 17, who have a medical home

**Objective SHC1: Increase the percentage of families who have a medical home**

**Strategy SHC1a:** Increase Educational Service Units (ESUs) awareness of patient-centered medical homes and capacity to refer families to potential medical homes in their community

**Strategy SHC1b:** Continue the Family Care Enhancement Project (FCEP) through UNMC MMI that uses a parent resource coordinator to support CYSHCN families through a medical home

**Strategy SHC1c:** Support CYSHCN families through the MHCP and DCP

Title V will work with Nebraska's ESUs to promote awareness of patient-centered medical homes and materials for families that encourage them to lead connections between school services and clinical services. Title V will build relationships with school-based health centers in Nebraska and inquire about their needs to promote medical homes with the families they serve. Title V will partner with NDE to work with each ESU across Nebraska, leveraging the examples of ESUs who are promoting school/medical collaboration.

UNMC MMI provides care coordination services through parent resource coordinators as peer specialists who can walk alongside families, helping them navigate care and make informed decisions. The FCEP has staff who can provide services in English and Spanish. Additional support for families with limited English proficiency could be addressed by partnering with community health workers (CHWs) in the community who speak the same language as the families seeking care. Title V will encourage collaboration between FCEP staff and CHWs to provide culturally appropriate care and help families understand their medical information and referrals when possible.

MHCP and DCP can support CYSHCN families across Nebraska by supporting the care they receive in the community. MHCP provides services through medical clinics, traveling to rural

parts of the state to provide services in a clinical team approach. Clinical notes are sent to the family's primary care provider. The DCP can help families to attend medical appointments by addressing barriers like mileage, lodging, home/vehicular modifications, etc. This system of care can move towards a more equitable distribution of resources to enable all families to receive care without significant burden, especially those who are under-resourced and have CYSHCN.

**Objective SHC2: Increase the percentage of families who receive developmental screenings between 9 and 35 months**

**Strategy SHC2a:** Promote screening tools and early intervention materials to health care providers, ESUs, maternal health care provider clinics, and community-based organizations to increase timely developmental screenings

**Strategy SHC2b:** Address family barriers to receiving developmental screenings

Developmental screenings are a key to ensuring CYSHCN can get connected to support services, and all children should be screened at intervals identified by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Title V will leverage parent resource coordinators, home visitors, and CHWs to address family barriers to receiving developmental screenings. Depending on the program, some visitors complete developmental screenings as part of their programming. When this is done, home visitors share the results with the family they're serving, reflect on the results together, and encourage the family to talk to their primary care provider (or get one) about their concerns. Title V will explore if there is interest from school-based medical centers, daycare centers, and youth programs in hosting screenings for children aged 0-5. If interested, Title V will provide training on administering the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and referring families to additional services. In each situation, the staff can help make sure the loop for referral is closed and families get the services they need when they need them. While it may require further exploration, using these familiar, accessible settings could help reach more families earlier.

Title V will partner with each Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) in Nebraska to promote primary care screenings. CCBHCs provide around-the-clock crisis care to anyone in need of mental health or substance use assistance. One of the nine integrated services that CCBHCs offer is a whole health approach, with outpatient primary care screening and monitoring. Title V will work with CCBHCs to support screening and referral.

After receiving a referral based on a developmental screen or someone who suspects a delay, EDN works with children from birth to age 3 to connect them to professional services to further screen, diagnose, and treat underlying causes of delays. Nebraska ChildFind works with children age 3-21 to provide similar services through their school districts. Some families receiving these supports also need additional services through private health care providers. Coordinating this level of care can be a significant burden for families, especially those with multiple children, limited time, and travel constraints.

Community support may be available for these families, depending on where they live. Early Head Start allows CYSHCN to qualify for preschool programs that offer more care and daily support. Childcare providers can help connect families to care when they suspect a developmental delay. In Lincoln, there is a strong group of home daycare staff who are advocating for more training on how to approach families they serve when there are possible developmental delays. Title V will support childcare providers, community-based organizations, and healthcare providers by sharing the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." materials from the CDC.

**Priority: Increasing access to mental and behavioral health services for CYSHCN**  
SPM: CYSHCN who received all the mental health care or counseling that they needed  
ESM: None

**Objective SHC3: Increase the percentage of CYSHCN with mental and behavioral health needs who are receiving services**

**Strategy SHC3a:** Use community health workers, parent resource coordinators, and patient navigators to provide care coordination services for mental and behavioral health

**Strategy SHC3b:** Bridge existing resources with expertise in triage, screening, referral, and support services for CYSHCN experiencing mental health crises, as part of a five-year plan

**Strategy SHC3c:** Build family awareness and knowledge of existing programs and support by hosting sessions at family-centered conferences in Nebraska

Building on work discussed with the previous priority, Title V will use CHWs, parent resource coordinators, and patient navigators to provide care coordination services for mental and behavioral health services. These staff work in health departments, clinics, hospitals, and community-based organizations around Nebraska. These staff often being members of immigrant, refugee, or disadvantaged communities, have ties to the communities they serve. This goal aligns with the work of the Nebraska Partnership for Mental Healthcare Access in Pediatrics (NEP-MAP). NEP-MAP will provide funding to support care coordination efforts across the state.

As mentioned above, Nebraska is supporting the development of seven Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics in 2025. They will start to serve clients by the end of the year. The CCBHCs have targeted case management staff to help connect families to routine outpatient care. Title V will support the implementation of the CCBHC model and buoy connections between the clinics and the other systems of care for children and youth with mental health needs in Nebraska. Title V will connect the targeted case management staff to community health workers, parent resource coordinators, and family navigators across Nebraska.

Building on work from the 2020-2025 five-year plan, Title V will support the Connecting Families Project as it aims to address gaps in accessing, engaging with, and benefiting from available resources statewide. Title V will support collaboration between all partners to increase awareness of available resources. Further, Title V will support the utilization of resources and work with staff like community health workers, to identify barriers to using available resources.

Partnership collaboration is relevant for CYSHCN and is in the NDHHS' Olmstead Plan for SFY 2026-2032. Nebraska's Olmstead Plan has a vision for reducing reliance of individuals with disabilities on institutional care and expanding access to home and community-based services. The 2026-2032 plan includes a goal to strengthen collaboration to support access to services across the lifespan. With Title V support special attention is also being given to support the development of medical homes for CYSHCN as well as transition supports with respect to medical care as well as employment and community-based services and supports. NDHHS will engage NDE, Managed Care Organizations, and other key partners and stakeholders to support these initiatives.

Title V will promote awareness and utilization of services by hosting sessions about available resources at events where families are likely to attend. Examples include Joni & Friends' Family

Retreat Nebraska (a summer camp for families living with disability), the Nebraska Young Child Institute, and the School Mental Health Conference. These gatherings offer opportunities to meet families where they are and provide them with useful information and support.

Title V will collaborate with organizations that serve families directly, like PTI-Nebraska (Nebraska's Family 2 Family Health Information Center), Project Everlast, and the Arc of Nebraska. In the next five years, Title V would like to center family leadership in the promotion of existing resources. That may involve the Families Advising on MCH Interests Through Leadership and Community (FAMILY) Committee, school based behavioral awareness points of contact, parent resource coordinators, or some combination of these. In the next five years, Title V wants to lean into the peer support model to help encourage local access to available resources.

For more information:

<https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Title-V-Needs-Assessment.aspx>

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative:       Dawn Sybrant      

Agency:       MLTC      

Update on activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD since the last Agency update:

- **Beneficiary Advisory Committee (BAC)**  
Nebraska Medicaid held our first BAC meeting on July 17, 2025. Participation in the BAC provides an opportunity for current or former Medicaid members, their guardians, or their caretakers to share their lived experience with MLTC. We have 10 new members, some of which are caregivers or family members of IDD. At the first meeting, BAC members shared insights on the strengths, barriers, and opportunities they have encountered within Medicaid programs.

Current Agency activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD:

- **State Plan Amendment (SPA) NE 25-0001: Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC)**  
This SPA would create the CCBHC program, effective January 2026. CCBHCs will focus on providing integrated and comprehensive behavioral health services (such as crisis mental health response, mental health and substance use evaluation and treatment, and psychiatric rehabilitation).
- **1115 Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Waiver Amendment**  
On July 18, 2025, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) posted a public notice of its intent to submit an amendment application to CMS under Section 1115 of the Social Security Act. DHHS is seeking approval from CMS for a five-year amendment to the Nebraska 1115 SUD demonstration.

This demonstration waiver amendment would allow Nebraska Medicaid to cover the following:

- Short-term medically necessary residential and inpatient stays primarily for mental health treatment within settings that meet the regulatory classification of an Institution for Mental Disease (IMD) for people with Serious Mental Illness (SMI)/ Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) who are otherwise eligible individuals, and

- Medical respite care services provided to adults age 19 and older, who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, and are recovering from acute or acute-on-chronic physical health conditions post-discharge from an eligible setting.

Nebraska Medicaid held public hearings for the waiver on August 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. The public comment period is from July 18, 2025, to August 18, 2025. Comments pertaining to the public notice may be submitted to:

- The Department of Health and Human Services Nebraska Medicaid, 301 Centennial Mall South, P.O. Box 95026, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026.
- Faxed to 402-471-9092
- E-mailed to [dhhs.demonstrationwaivers@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.demonstrationwaivers@nebraska.gov).

Use ATTN: Crystal Georgiana

Find more information at the [Substance Use Demonstration](#) webpage and the [Medicaid Public Notices](#) webpage.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

## Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

Disability Rights Nebraska  
Report to Council Members  
August 2025

Representative: Seamus Kelly/ Tania Diaz

Agency: Disability Rights Nebraska

Update on activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD since the last Agency update:

### **Advocacy Example:**

Disability Rights Nebraska intervened to prevent an Omaha-area high school from pushing a 17-year-old student with disabilities to graduate prematurely. The girl had failing or nearly failing grades in multiple classes and was not meeting her Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. The girl's mother wanted her daughter to continue her education in the Adult Transition Program designed for students ages 18-21, where she would learn life skills and have daily structure during those important developmental years.

The student has diagnoses of ADD/ADHD, anxiety disorder and autism. Her mother contacted our agency after school officials misled her into signing paperwork for graduation, rather than the transition program. The mother contacted the directors of both the state and school district to object.

The school arranged a meeting on the last day of the academic year. Our Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Program Coordinator attended the meeting to assure the student will be enrolled in the Adult Transition Program with appropriate goals.

### **Advocacy Example:**

As young adults with disabilities approach the age of 19, we sometimes receive calls from parents seeking advice about obtaining legal guardianship over their offspring.

Generally, our agency discourages legal guardianships, because they remove many of a person's rights. Instead, we advocate for alternatives such as

Supported Decision-Making. Supported Decision-Making (SDM) allows people with disabilities to make choices about their own lives with support from a team of people they choose. Instead of having a guardian make decisions for the person with the disability, Supported Decision-Making allows the person to make his or her own decisions with input from the chosen team.

We discussed Supportive Decision-Making with the parents of an 18-year-old from Lincoln with severe intellectual disabilities. The parents liked the concept, but were uncertain if Supported Decision-Masking would be a good fit for their son. Therefore, we gave them links to credible sources of information about legal guardianship in Nebraska: the Nebraska Judicial Branch and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Furthermore, we provided our own agency's information about Health Care Power of Attorney for their son.

### **Lay Advocacy Program:**

The spring Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training concluded on April 3<sup>rd</sup> with 5 new advocates trained. Three advocates were from the Omaha area, one from Lincoln and one from Scottsbluff.

Eight referrals were made to the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy program during the third quarter. Three of the families had an advocate to help them with their special education concerns. The others were provided with information to assist them.

A meeting was held with the outside collaborators who assisted with the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training on April 29<sup>th</sup>. The potential impact of future budget cuts was discussed. All of the collaborators agreed to continue to work with the project regardless of the outcome.

A meeting with advocates was held on June 18<sup>th</sup>. The potential impact of future budget cuts was discussed. The advocates were advised that collaborators were willing to continue to work with the project regardless of the impact and that program staff would continue to support them in their advocacy efforts.

The next Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training will take place from September 9- October 16<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in attending, please contact Pat Cottingham [pat@drne.org](mailto:pat@drne.org).

### **Medicaid Fact Sheet:**

Disability Rights' Leadership team members coordinated to gather information and create a fact sheet demonstrating the impact of potential cuts to Medicaid. Using the Lived Experience Listing in Bloomerang, we solicited quotes from three families about how their family member utilizes Medicaid to remain independent and be an active part of their community. The educational fact sheets were initially distributed to Nebraska congressional representatives but have also been shared with reporters and other interested parties.

### **Meeting with Representative staff:**

Members of the Leadership Team met via Zoom with staffers from Representative Flood's and Bacon's offices and with Representative Adrian Smith to provide information about Nebraska's Protection & Advocacy system and how potential Medicaid cuts could impact people with disabilities in the state. Follow-up emails included the Medicaid Fact Sheet.

### **Meeting with Health and Human Services Leadership:**

DD Network Partners (Kristen Larsen, Mark Shriver and Tania Diaz) met with CEO Steve Corsi, Director Tony Green and Director Drew Gonshorowski sharing our concerns with Medicaid cuts and people with disabilities on June 2. DD Network Partners also had a follow-up meeting with Director Tony Green and Director Drew Gonshorowski to learn what they are hearing about how Nebraska will be affected by the Medicaid cuts going into effect in 2026/2027.

### **UNL Psychology Dept Panel presentation:**

We were contacted by Chelsea Witt, an Assistant Professor at the UNL Department of Psychology about the possibility of participating in a panel on Ableism for her Psychology of Diversity class to give the students the perspective of people with lived experience of disability. Sharon Ohmberger worked with Dr. Witt and reached out to three advocates with physical and mental health disabilities about participating (Jill Flagel, Jody Faltys, and CJ Zimmer). The panel was well received by Dr. Witt's class and a number of students stayed after to talk with the panel members individually. Dr. Witt gathered Jill, Jody and CJ's contact information with the intention of having them speak for future classes. Approximately 100 students were in attendance.

## **Panhandle Pride – June 1 | Frank Park, Scottsbluff**

Staff attended the Panhandle Pride Festival in support of LGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities. Through direct engagement, we shared resources on legal rights and promoted an inclusive vision for disability advocacy. This event helped strengthen community ties and amplify intersectional voices.

## **Veterans Stand Down – June 11**

This one-stop community event focused on serving the needs of Veterans. Our team provided information on disability benefits, mental health support, and legal advocacy services. We connected with Veterans who may face service barriers due to disability and ensured they had access to information about their rights.

## **Email Newsletters:**

Seven email newsletters were sent out to our list during this quarter. Open rates on most continue to be around average (42.35% industry-wide, 53.21% for nonprofits). An additional email was sent out on 5/5/25 for Give to Lincoln.

Content was as follows:

- 4/21/25: Zip-code focused announcement of Sen. Pete Ricketts live town hall meetings in Kearney, Valentine and Scottsbluff; resources to contact elected officials about concerns about possible Medicaid cuts; announcement of Social Role Valorization training in August.
- 5/16/25: National Medicaid Call-in Day reminder; congressional plan summary; resources to respond.
- 5/21/25: Zip-code focused announcement of Rep. Mike Flood's live town hall in Seward, NE; resources to contact elected officials.
- 5/29/25: Announcement of annual public meeting of the Board of Directors; SRV; Give to Lincoln.
- 6/19/25: Message from the CEO on funding, Medicaid, Donate button included.
- 6/25/25: Announcement of Rep Mike Flood's mobile office hours in Papillion.
- 6/27/25: Announcement of Public Comment opportunities, SRV and ENABLE trainings.
-

The Blog Team met 5/15/25 to review the content calendar and schedule posts for the remaining months of FY 2025. Three blog pieces were written by team members and published on the website during this quarter:

1. 4/11/25: [Autism Awareness Month: Fostering Understanding, Empathy, and Inclusion](#) by Pat Cottingham
2. 5/14/25: [Medicaid + Congress = Uncertainty: What You Can Do](#) by Sharon Ohmberger
3. 6/16/25: [Disability Rights Nebraska Receives 2025 Advocacy Award](#) by Molly Klocksinn.

### **Monitoring:**

BSDC and Day Programs for people with developmental disabilities.

BSDC:

We have learned that they are considering an expansion of the Crisis Stabilization Unit, which is currently only short term stays for younger people who had significant behaviors in the community. The plan is to bring home system-involved youth who are currently placed out of state due to the lack of placements in Nebraska for youth whose IQ tests under 80. BSDC Director asserted there are currently only four such placements in the whole country: in Arkansas, Georgia, South Carolina and Texas. He characterized these youth as “extremely problematic” in their behaviors and said that the out of state places simply hold them in a secure manner without preparing them for a return to socialized community services. The current Crisis Stabilization Unit has capacity for ten people, and he hopes to expand to be able to take twenty people. The unit would physically be in Building 411 (now known as 3071 State), cottages that have not been in use for several years but that are in good condition.

Developmental Disabilities Day Programs:

Day Programs:

We had a report of a staff member who sexually assaulted a program participant at one location. We completed in-person monitoring of four-day program sites, completed interviews with the victim and her parents, and received the final record production showing the Department of Health and Human Services’ investigation into the assault.

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative: Mark Shriver

Agency: Munroe-Meyer Institute University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

Update on activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD since the last Agency update:

In August 2024, MMI/UCEDD initiated a Transition to Lifespan Care (TLC) clinic designed to serve individuals with DD who are transitioning to adulthood. The TLC Clinic is interdisciplinary and includes a nurse manager, pediatric internist, care coordinator, psychologist, occupational therapist, and physical therapist. The TLC clinic offers evaluations and ongoing recommendations to support individuals as they transition to adult providers. Some individuals may need a one-time visit, while others may need multiple visits over several years. The interdisciplinary care team develops a personalized plan to support the youth as they move from pediatric to adult medical care and related (e.g., educational, employment, housing, social services) adult-level services. The clinic is provided monthly serving 3-4 individuals each month from across Nebraska. Youth and families from outside the Omaha metropolitan area are connected with service in their local area and on-going support is provided by our TLC team for the youth, family, and local providers as needed. The TLC clinic has served 26 individuals ages 14 and older this past year. There are 22 individuals on the waitlist for this coming year, and we are looking to expand clinic time to meet the increasing need.

We have hired a primary care physician who will start working in September 2025. We are actively recruiting for another physician and 1-2 psychiatrists.

Our contract with NE DHHS for administration of the National Core Indicators survey was not renewed for this coming year. NE DHHS will be continuing the NCI survey, but will manage the administration of it internally.

Our contract with NE DHHS for development of a standardized online onboarding training program for Direct Service Professionals was terminated in June due to funding and lack widespread support by provider organizations. We are continuing development of training and seeking other funding and working with provider agencies and independent providers supportive of this effort.

Current Agency activities/trends/improvements/issues impacting individuals with I/DD:

Senator Deb Fischer visited MMI for a tour on July 25, 2025 to learn more about UCEDDs and what we do. Representative Don Bacon visited MMI on August 12, 2025 for same reason. We

continue to advocate with federal legislators regarding the importance of UCEDDs and the DD Partner Network as they work on appropriations bill.

Rachel Ray collaborated with Mike Messerole, Professor at UNO, to submit a grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Education for Transition Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities in Higher Education (TPSID). IF funded, this grant would support expansion of our post-secondary inclusive college program with UNO and help us work toward sustainability.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

SOAR Conference is October 3-5, 2025 in Omaha, NE.

SOAR stands for Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution. This event brings together self-advocates with disabilities from around the Midwest to exchange ideas and learn from each other about advocacy. At the SOAR Conference, self-advocates from Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming have opportunities to grow their advocacy skills by attending presentations and connecting with other advocates.

Please help spread the word. More information can be found at our MMI website on SOAR [SOAR Conference 2025 | Munroe-Meyer Institute | University of Nebraska Medical Center](#)

We are also in need of Sponsors, so if you know if anyone interested, please have them contact me or they can find more information on our website.

Please help us continue to enrich self-advocates lives through this exhilarating conference, by sponsoring this event and bringing support to self-advocates across the Midwest.

Friend - \$1000

- Includes a vendor table, registration and meals, evening event and breakfast vouchers, and your name in the program.

Ally - \$2500

- Includes all Friend level benefits, as well as an acknowledgement in the opening ceremony, an inclusion on conference banner, and a social media shout-out.

Advocate - \$5000

- Includes all Friend and Ally level benefits and a half page ad in the program, a full slide in the opening ceremony presentation, and your name on the back of the conference T-shirt.

We also have vendor tables available for \$150 at the conference.