

# Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

August 16, 2024 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 9:31AM, CDT and the *Pledge of Allegiance* was recited. Quorum was present.

**Present:** Quinton Corwin, Caiti Donaldson, Jason Gieschen, Shauna Graham, Tony Green, Brent Hoffman, Shaistha Kiran Karipi, Matt Kaslon, Seamus Kelly, Beth Libra, Stephen Morton, DJ Plautz, Sasha Reeks, Mark Shriver, Rachel Siffring, and Joe Valenti.

**Absent:** George Griffith, Ashley Hansen, Dr. Tom Janousek, Eddie Kraska, Cheryl Montgomery, Amy Rhone, Jennifer Severe-Oforah, and Judy Trent.

**Guests:** Tiffany Donaldson, Sue Gieschen, Robin Hoffman, Stacy Pfeifer, Sherry Stansberry, and Dawn Sybrant.

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

## Welcome and Introductions

A warm welcome was given to newest Council members Brent Hoffman, Ashley Hansen and Joe, Valenti. Brent is a self-advocate. Ashley, who was unable to attend today's meeting, represents a family member. Joe represents an immediate relative/guardian of an individual with a developmental disability (DD) who resides or previously resided in an institution.

Kristen Larsen explained that Dawn Sybrant is in the process of being appointed as the Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging representative to the Council.

## 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 10, 2024).

## 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. No public comments were made.

## Approval of Minutes

Rachel S. asked the Council members if there were any corrections to the *DRAFT* April 19, 2024 Council meeting minutes. There were no corrections. Council members were reminded to abstain from voting if

they were not in attendance for the April 19, 2024 Council meeting. As there were no corrections, Matt Kaslon made the motion to approve the minutes and (Sasha) Reeks seconded. A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 9, No – 0, Abstain – 6.**\* 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.

Brent Hoffman	Special Olympics Nebraska, Community Supports Network, Integrated Life Choices, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation
Joe Valenti	Governor’s Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee, Munroe-Meyer Institute Community Advisor Board

Reeks had an update to her Conflicts of Interest. She stated to remove the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services as a Conflict of Interest.

### **FFY2024 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Financial Report and Approval of FFY2025 Budget**

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 presented the Financial Report for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024, a handout at the meeting. At the August 18, 2023 Council meeting, the Council approved the budget of \$371,459 for FFY2024 (October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024).

**NOTE:** A budget adjustment increase of \$45,465 was approved at the April 19, 2024 Council meeting to adjust Personal Expenses & Benefits, Conference Registrations increase, Support Staff increase for the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) Conference, Supported Employment Summit Expenses, and Travel for the NACDD trip to Washington, D.C.

The Year-to-Date Expenditures for the third quarter of FFY2024 (October 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024) were \$294,310 – 70.6% of the FFY2023 budget.

The report reflects the balance of funds from FFY2022, FFY2023, and FFY2024 as of June 30, 2024. Available Current Funds totaled \$712,954.28. Expenditures totaled \$193,510.73. The Balance of Current Funds Available was \$519,443.55.

The Financial Forecast (what is being anticipated) shows a breakout of income and expenses by Federal Fiscal Year.

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) allowed Councils to seek a No-Cost Extension on FFY2022 funds. Kristen submitted the request for a No-Cost Extension on FFY2022 funds on August 25, 2023 and it was approved. The Council received a new Notice of Award (NoA) from ACL on September 14, 2023. The new revised period of performance for FFY2022 is October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2024.

**NOTE:** This is good news since many of the Council's grantees had funds obligated with FFY2022 funding and did not spend all their funds. The Council will continue to draw down remaining FFY2022 funds during FFY2024 until there is a zero balance. Then funding will shift to FFY2023 funds.

FFY2023 and FFY2024 will follow the normal the regular Obligation and Liquidation Schedule.

**NOTE:** Council staff will monitor FFY2023 funds and make business unit shifts to FFY2024 funds to avoid a negative balance. It is possible that some subaward projects will not spend all their obligated amounts.

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* FFY2025 Financial Budget (October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025). The Estimated Council Expenses for FFY2025 is \$443,664.

- Personal Expenses & Benefits - \$279,468
- Operating Expenses - \$83,215
- Travel - \$54,675
- Functions of the DSA - \$26,306

A motion was made by Quinton Corwin to approve the *proposed* FFY2025 Financial Budget in the amount of \$443,664 and Jason Gieschen seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 15, No – 0, Abstain – 0.\*** Motion carried.

### **FFY2025 Meeting Dates and Location**

Committee and Council meeting dates for FFY2025 were set.

Council meeting – November 22, 2024

Legislative and Advocacy Committee meeting – February 6, 2025

Council meeting – February 7, 2025

Planning Committee meeting – April 10, 2025

Council meeting – April 11, 2025

Grant Review Committee meeting – August 14, 2025

Council meeting – August 15, 2025

It was determined to continue meeting in-person at the Country Inn & Suites [North Hotel & Conference Center – 5353 N. 27<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln] for FFY2024, if possible, except for the February 2025 meetings. The February 2025 meetings will be hybrid (virtual/in-person) meetings held at the Nebraska State Office Building – Lincoln (301 Centennial Mall South) and the Cornhusker Hotel will be utilized for those needing hotel arrangements.

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

Eligible Council members whose term expire on October 1, 2024, 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-reg> 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:

**Caiti Donaldson** (Individual)

**Shauna Graham** (Family)

The following Council members have a term that will expire October 1, 2024 and are ineligible for reappointment due to term limits:

**Jason Gieschen** (Individual)

**Stephen Morton** (Non-Profit Representative)

**NOTE:** If you know someone who meets the above criteria and might be interested in being on the Council, please let Kristen Larsen know at 402-471-0143 or [kristen.larsen@nebraska.gov](mailto:kristen.larsen@nebraska.gov).

Jason thanked the Council for everything you taught him. He has had a great time on the Council and thank you for being patriotic and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. The Council has been very inspiring and he and his mom have decided to work on ending her guardianship of him. Jason left us with a poem by JB Downie.

*We can't all play a winning game  
Someone is sure to lose;  
Yet we can play so that our name  
No one may dare accuse;  
That when the Master Referee Scores against our name  
It won't be whether we've won or lost,  
But how we've played the game.*

Stephen commented on the passion that the parents and guardian have and the passion that the agency representative and DD Network Partner representatives have. He has truly enjoyed his time on the Council.

### **Election of FFY2025 Council Officers**

Per the By-Laws, officer elections for FFY2025 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, 2024 through September 30, 2025. 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 June 24, 2024 and July 18, 2024, 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. Matt Kaslon, Rachel Siffring, and Joe Valenti had indicated that they would be willing to run for the office of Chair. There were no additional nominations from the floor.

**NOTE:** Joe withdrew his name for Chair.

Reeks nominated Matt and Rachel S. for the position of Chair and Joe seconded. Each nominee was allotted time to explain why he or she should be elected Chair. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Rachel Siffring will be the Chair for FFY2025. (Rachel S. 11 votes, Matt 5 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. Matt Kaslon, (Sasha) Reeks, Rachel Siffring, Judy Trent, and Joe Valenti had indicated that they would be willing to run for the office of Vice-Chair. There were no additional nominations from the floor.

**NOTE:** Rachel S. and Joe withdrew their names for Vice-Chair.

Quinton nominated Matt, Judy, and Reeks for the position of Vice-Chair and Shaistha Kiran Karipi seconded. Each nominee was allotted time to explain why he or she should be elected Vice-Chair. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Matt Kaslon will be the Vice-Chair for FFY2025. (Matt 7 votes, Reeks 5 votes, Judy 4 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 inclusion in the meeting packets mailed to Council members and the Secretary will present the Council minutes for formal approval at the subsequent Council meeting. Matt Kaslon and Joe Valenti had indicated that they would be willing to run for the office of Secretary. When asked if there were any nominations from the floor, Shaistha Kiran Karipi and (Sasha) Reeks were named.

NOTE: Matt and Joe withdrew their names for Secretary.

Jason nominated Shaistha for the position of Secretary and Tony Green seconded. Matt nominated Reeks for the position of Secretary and Seamus Kelly seconded. Each nominee was allotted time to explain why she should be elected Secretary. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Shaistha Kiran Karipi will be the Secretary for FFY2024. (Shaistha 12 votes, Reeks 4 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 FFY2025 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 FFY2024. Each year you can change your committee preference if you would like.

NOTE: You are also not limited to serving on only one committee. You can serve on two or all three 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 FFY2025 will be held during the November 22, 2024 Council meeting.

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

### **Update on Survey of Employers related to Employing People with Disabilities**

Council staff met with Procurement representatives, and it was determined that conducting a survey of employers related to employing people with disabilities does not fit into the subaward category but fits under contracts. Staff are going to try and directly contract with an entity. Contracting directly with an entity would be much quicker than issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) in which the soonest the entity could start is January 2025 – **if** everything falls into place. Staff have a lead with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL) and will send a letter out next week to see if there is any interest in this project or not.

### **Report of the Grant Review Committee: Formal and Opportunity Recommendations for FFY2025**

Quinton Corwin, Grant Review Committee Chair, reported that the Committee met virtually on August 15, 2024 to review evaluation scores and to make recommendations for FFY2025 subaward funding in response to the Formal and Opportunity Subawards Requests for Applications (RFAs). Quinton explained that the Council will consider the Committee's recommendations, discuss, and vote to approve subaward funding.

Kristen reminded Council members to follow the Conflicts of Interest Policy. Those members who have conflicts of interests will be asked to leave the room for discussion for that application. Members will then be asked to return to the room for voting and should abstain from voting when their name is called during the roll call vote. This will provide transparency in the voting record.

Regarding RFA #6640, the Formal Targeted Disparity Subaward, one application was received from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). UNMC scored 515 out of a possible 600 points. The Committee's recommendation was to fund the proposal for \$49,997 with the contingencies that UNMC update its work plan to include a goal and objective to address sustainability, the narrative indicates that the project meets State Plan Goal Two, Objective B (Targeted Disparity), and that the math is corrected in the budget sheet to reflect a total of \$35,712 instead of \$35,715.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 12, No – 0, Abstain – 2.**\* Motion carried. [Caiti Donaldson stepped away from the meeting.]

In response to RFA #6628, Opportunity Subawards, six applications were received. The applications received were from Bryan Medical Center, Easterseals Nebraska, Goodwill Industries, Lincoln Children's Zoo, Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI), and the Nebraska Association of Service Providers.

Quinton described each proposal and the Committee's recommendation for each proposal. The Council then voted separately on the Committee's recommendations for funding.

#### Bryan Medical Center

Bryan Medical Center submitted an application for *Suicide Prevention through Gun Safe Accessibility and Education*. Bryan Medical Center scored 213 points out of 450 points. The Committee's recommendation was not to fund this proposal since the project does not have a direct correlation to the intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) community.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 14, No – 0, Abstain – 0.**\* Motion carried. [Caiti Donaldson stepped away from the meeting.]

### Easterseals Nebraska

Easterseals Nebraska submitted an application for *Employment First: Informed Choice Matters*.

Easterseals Nebraska scored 275 points out of 450 points. The Committee's recommendation was to fund the proposal in the amount of \$20,000 with the contingencies that:

1. Easterseals provide clarification on the demographic that is not eligible for benefits funding through Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) or Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).
2. Council staff will secure approval from ACL since this will be a "demonstration" project.

The Committee also recommends that the Information Technology (IT) Support in the budget be removed and included as an indirect cost to lessen Council staff burden of source documentation for the \$1,000 of time sheet documentation.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 15, No – 0, Abstain – 0.**\* Motion carried.

### Goodwill Industries

Goodwill Industries submitted an application for *EmployAbility Campaign*. Goodwill Industries scored 206 points out of 450 points. The Committee's recommendation was to fund the proposal in the amount of \$20,000 with the contingency that Goodwill Industries resubmit the budget with a budget justification to be approved by Council staff.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 15, No – 0, Abstain – 0.**\* Motion carried.

### Lincoln Children's Zoo

Lincoln Children's Zoo submitted an application for *Sensory Zoo Lights Magic for All*. Easterseals Lincoln Children's Zoo scored 226 points out of 450 points. The Committee's recommendation was to fund the proposal in the amount of \$20,000 with the contingencies that:

1. Council staff will secure approval from ACL to ensure that this project is not considered entertainment project that may assist other entities.
2. A deliverable of this project is for the Lincoln Children's Zoo to provide a flyer that the Council will share on the Council Resources webpage sharing accommodation techniques that were successful with this.
3. Lincoln Children's Zoo will remove the smores and hot chocolate expenses from the budget since these costs are not allowable with federal funds. Move the \$6,000 budgeted in this area to the Other Direct/Admission total, changing it from \$10,700 to \$16,700.
4. Lincoln Children's Zoo will note in the Work Plan or Narrative that it will market the event to others besides the Autism Family Network (AFN) and zoo members.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 14, No – 0, Abstain – 0.**\* Motion carried. [Stephen Morton stepped away from the meeting.]

### Munroe-Meyer Industries (MMI)

MMI submitted an application for *Increasing Access to Early Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Toddlers through an Intervention to Promote Community Knowledge of EarliPoint*. MMI scored 337

points out of 450 points. The Committee's recommendation was to fund the proposal in the amount of \$19,918 with the contingency that MMI resubmits the proposal with more details and measurable outcomes. For example, clarify how many more children will be screened with EarliPoint? How many people MMI intends to train? Why are so many trainings (16) being offered? The Committee also recommends that for the Budget Justification and Budget Sheet, MMI should clarify if the Digital Media person is MMI faculty or staff. In the budget, move the Digital Media as an indirect cost, to lessen Council staff burden of source documentation for the \$613 salary and the \$170 of fringe benefits through time sheet and payroll documentation.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 13, No – 0, Abstain – 2.**\* Motion carried.

### Nebraska Association of Service Providers (NASP)

NASP submitted an application for *IDD Advocacy through Education and Social Media*. NASP scored 387 points out of 450 points. After a lengthy discussion, the Committee's recommendation was not to fund this proposal based on the concern that the project would be considered lobbying from the Council's federal funding source, ACL, which is not an allowable expense with federal funds.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 12, No – 1, Abstain – 2.**\* Motion carried.

### **FFY2025 Continuation Subawards**

In general, DD Councils are finding most grantees are needing a second year of funding to affect systems change. This is why our Council has added the following one (1) year optional renewal statement in the RFAs: "*Subawards may be renewed for an additional one (1) year period, subject to DHHS' discretion.*" Since the Continuation Subawards are already in the system with an optional one (1) year renewal period, the continuation proposals do not need to be scored and it is at the Council's discretion whether to renew a subaward or not.

Kristen explained that Rachel Ward and Edith Titamoh will provide a brief summary of the grantee's original work plan, what the grantee has accomplished, and what the grantee is proposing to do for FFY2025. Then the Council will discuss and vote to approve continuation subaward funding. Kristen also reminded Council members to follow the Conflicts of Interest Policy. Those members who have conflicts of interests will be asked to leave the room for discussion for that application. Members will then be asked to return to the room for voting and should abstain from voting when their name is called during the roll call vote. This will provide transparency in the voting record.

### PTI Nebraska

PTI Nebraska submitted a continuation proposal for its *Enhancing the Transitioning of Youth to Adult Services* project. Matt made the motion to fund PTI Nebraska's continuation proposal in the amount of \$30,000 with the contingency for PTI to work with Council staff to correct the budget and Shaistha seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 15, No – 0, Abstain – 1.**\* Motion carried.

### People First of Nebraska

People First of Nebraska submitted a continuation proposal for its *People First of Nebraska* project. Matt made the motion to fund People First of Nebraska's continuation proposal in the amount of \$60,000 with the contingency for People First of Nebraska to work with Council staff to correct the budget and Jason seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 13, No – 0, Abstain – 1.**\* Motion carried. [Caiti Donaldson stepped away from the meeting.]

### Madonna School and Community Based Services

Madonna School and Community Based Services submitted a continuation proposal for its *Family Navigation* project. Beth Libra made the motion to fund Madonna School and Community Based Services in the amount of \$17,456.70 as it is written and Matt seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 15, No – 0, Abstain – 0.**\* Motion carried.

### Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)

MMI submitted a continuation proposal for its *Enhancing Care for Individuals with Disabilities through Virtual Health Care Provider Training* project. Matt made the motion to fund MMI in the amount of \$20,000 as it is written and Shaistha seconded.



A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 12, No – 0, Abstain – 2.**\* Motion carried. [Caiti Donaldson stepped away from the meeting.]

### **Update on the Home and Community-Based Formal Subaward**

Kristen mentioned that Council staff have not had time to set this up. Council staff have met with Paul Edwards and Kristen Smith, DD Division, and they are very interested in supporting the Council's two-year project. The first year would be regarding the Final Settings Rule and the second year would be on Access and Quality. Kristen L., Rachel W. Kristen S., and Paul will meet with Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)/University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), Staff, Mark Shriver and Sarah Swanson, to discuss next steps.

### **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 2024 Executive Director Evaluation was included in the Council meeting packet. The evaluation needs to be completed and returned to Rachel S. by October 1, 2024. Either scan and email the completed evaluation to Rachel S. at [krsiffring@windstream.net](mailto:krsiffring@windstream.net) or snail mail the evaluation to:

Rachel Siffring  
2820 D Road  
Rising City, NE 68658

The outgoing Executive Committee (FFY2024 Officers and Committee Chairs) and incoming Executive Committee (FFY2025 Officers) will reference these evaluations when they meet to complete the formal recommended 2024 Executive Director Evaluation, which will be presented and voted on at the November 2024 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 28, 2024 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 theme was Supported Employment and Dr. Lisa Mills was the keynote speaker and the Nebraska Supported Employment – Action Plan was revealed.

**NOTE:** A copy of the Nebraska Supported Employment – Action Plan was included in the meeting packet.

### **Nebraska 2023 Supported Employment Summit Next Steps Update and Becki Koehler Proposal**

A recommendation from Dr. Mills was to have a contract with a person/entity to coordinate the implementation of the Nebraska supported Employment Summit Action Plan that was developed from recommendations obtained during the September 20, 2023 Nebraska supported Employment Summit. Dr. Mills recommended Becki Koehler. Disability Rights Nebraska has a contract with Becki to keep things going with the Employment Summit Action Plan, however, the contract ends on September 30, 2024. The proposal, included in the meeting packet, from Becki would keep the momentum going for a year at a cost of \$49,500. A motion was made by Matt to approve Becki Koehler's proposal in the amount of \$49,500 and Quinton seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 15, No – 0, Abstain – 0.**\* Motion carried.

## Council Member Conference Report Summaries

Matt attended the Association of Community Professionals (ACP) virtual 2024 Spring Conference on April 24, 2024. The morning session was *An Introduction to the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) Code of Ethics* and the afternoon session was *The Role of the Frontline Supervisor*. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) have an ethical obligation to treat everyone the same whether you like them, love them, or cannot stand them. DSPs help their clients understand the consequences of their actions while having a trusting relationship with their client. Young DSPs want a “leader” not a “boss”. Leaders are less directive and more supportive. One interesting tidbit was that John F. Kennedy, Jr. was the founder of NADSP in 1966.

Quinton, Caiti, Jason, Matt, Beth, Rachel S., and Judy Trent (absent) attended the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) 2024 Annual Conference July 22-26, 20-24 in Washington, DC. Some of the highlights were:

- This was a fun experience that allowed people to get to know one another better.
- The Showcase was a blast seeing all the different things that Councils are doing.
- Learning more about how to advocate for yourself and others.
- Inspired to work harder.
- FEMA presentation and how to prepare.
- Learned more about developing the next 5-Year Plan. What is expected and important to have.
- There was a music teacher who presented on music therapy that was inspiring.
- Dealing with grief and loss.
- Learned about the North Dakota Peer-to-Peer Leadership Model.
- Benefits of mindfulness
- Nebraskans can count on each other but we are metro challenged!
- Proud to be an American!
- Don't go to Chinatown!

Council members were reminded to turn in their *Council Member Conference Request Form* to Council staff 2 ½ weeks prior to the Council meeting, so copies of the requests can be made and sent out in the meeting packets. Council members may request to attend two in-state conferences and one national conference per FFY (October 1 – September 30) as funds allow, and the conference relates to one of the State Plan goals. Upon return from a conference, Council members need to submit the *Council Member Conference Report Summary* and report on the conference at the Council meeting following the conference. Expense Reimbursements and receipts must be submitted and approved no more than 60 days after the final day in which the expenses were incurred.

## 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 in their entirety are attached at the end of the minutes for review. Tony Green, Dr. Tom Janousek, Amy Rhone, and Jennifer Severe-Oforah were not present to give their reports. [Tony stepped out briefly to take a call with the Governor.] No written report was submitted for the Department of Education – Office of Special Education. [Tony Green, Division of Developmental Disabilities; Dr. Tom Janousek, Division of Behavioral Health; Jennifer Severe-Oforah, Maternal and Child Health – Division of Public Health; Amy Rhone, Department of Education – Office of Special Education; DJ Plautz, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation; Dawn Sybrant represented Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging]

### Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

In July, VR provided training to DHHS service coordinators on the agency's processes for providing supported and customized employment services. New service agreements with providers went into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>. VR currently has agreements with 38 supported employment providers (32 agency and 6 independent). VR is preparing for future opportunities to collaborate with partners as a result of Dr. Mills' study, action plan, and the recent Tri-Board meeting. Nebraska's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan was approved and took effect July 1, 2024, officially eliminating the Order of Selection and the Waitlist for Nebraska VR. October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and VR will be hosting the Disability Employment Inclusion Awards and the VR Lincoln office location on South 84<sup>th</sup> Street on October 1, 2024.

### Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging (MLTC)

Dawn provided the MLTC report. On August 31, 2024 the COVID-19 unwind will be officially done. Many bills were passed during this year's regular legislative session which resulted in quite a few changes to the Medicaid program. Many Provider Bulletins communicating some of these changes have already gone out and many more will go out in the coming weeks. MLTC has paused the implementation of the August 14, 2024 Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) system changes. MLTC heard the concerns of providers and want to ensure providers are supported. The new implementation date will be January 8, 2025.

### **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 in their entirety are attached at the end of the minutes for review. [Seamus Kelly, Disability Rights Nebraska; Mark Shriver, Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)/University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD)]

### Disability Rights Nebraska

Brad Meurrens, Public Policy Director, continues to work with Mary Phillips and Jonathan Martinis on year two of the Supported Decision-Making Project. A Summit on Supported Decision-Making is scheduled for August 24, 2024 in Omaha with a hybrid/Zoom option. Jonathan Martinis will be the featured speaker. Beatrice State Development Center (BSDC) monitoring continues. The 9<sup>th</sup> cohort of the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training was completed on April 18, 2024. Five new advocates were added to a total of 45 who have been trained throughout Nebraska since September 2019. In May, the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) asked Disability Rights Nebraska to participate in an interview with the Carter Center (a national nonprofit human rights organization) as one of a small sample of Protection and Advocacy (P&As) entities chosen to describe their work to ensure that voting is accessible. NDRN is collaborating with the Carter Center to do a nationwide review of accessibility activities to help inspire new work in every state. It was an honor to be selected for the interview.

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

The purpose of the Nebraska Connecting Families project is to expand knowledge and create a framework for sharing and advancing skills to navigate family support and maximize the interaction of family and service providers relating to Behavioral and Mental Health in Schools. MMI hosted a summit of families and leaders in behavioral health and schools from across Nebraska on April 29, 2024 to bring together diverse perspectives on how we can improve family's access to needed mental health services and resources. Information from this summit is being used to guide their next steps for improving family access to mental health services in collaboration with school systems.

In collaboration with the Midwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center, the MMI/UCEDD hosted a summit of leaders in developmental disabilities and behavioral health from across Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri on June 27, 2024 titled the United Minds Summit to share ideas on how to improve systems of care for individuals dually diagnosed with IDD and Mental Health. There were terrific ideas shared between state teams and a summary report is being drafted of the findings to help states determine next steps for their respective systems.

The MMI/UCEDD and People First Nebraska will be hosting the Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution (SOAR) conference in October 2025 in Omaha. 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. Planning is starting now and will be led by self-advocates with support from MMI/UCEDD.

Rachel Ray collaborated with Nebraska VR to submit a Disability Innovation Fund grant with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation for a project to utilize technology, such as virtual reality and online simulation training, to develop a program to assess and train employment skills for individuals with disabilities throughout Nebraska. This grant was submitted July 5, 2024 and will start October 1, 2024 if funded.

### **Staff Updates**

Kristen had a few updates to share.

- Kristen and Matt were panelists at the 2024 Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) Technical Assistance Institute and highlighted how the Council supports self-advocates to help them develop their leadership skills. It was very well received.
- Kristen had met with Sue Medinger, DSA representative, and Sue encouraged Kristen to pursue a Memo of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and DHHS. There has been a lot of turnover at DHHS and there is a need to educate DHHS staff on what the Council is and what the Council does. Kristen has not had a chance to work on this.
- Kristen went to Kansas City to meet with other Regional DD Executive Directors and Jill Jacobs, the new NACDD Executive Director. As part of Jill's onboarding, Jill has been visiting with all DD Executive Directors. This gave her an opportunity to get to know the unique strengths and needs of each state/territorial Council.
- The ACL workplans were due yesterday and were submitted.
- Kristen participated in a MMI Dental Clinic visit and Health Resources Service Administration grant meeting with Dr. Craft.

Rachel W. noted that Disability Pride Day was July 27, 2024 and was very successful. She was able to talk with a lot of people about the Council and Charting the LifeCourse. The final report from the University of Missouri – Kansas City for the *Charting the LifeCourse* project and the Assistive Technology Partnership final report for the *Parent Educator Training Project* were included in the meeting packet for your review.

Edith mentioned that Joshua Whitfield's Leadership Development Fund (LDF) Conference Report Summary was also included in the meeting packet for your review. Joshua attended the 2024 Charting the LifeCourse Showcase April 23-25, 2024. The LDF was established to make funds available to defray the costs for self-advocates and/or parents/family members/guardians of children/adult children with IDD to participate in conferences, workshops, and other training opportunities that would increase their

knowledge of disability issues and increase their skills as advocates for people with developmental disabilities.

### **Council Member Updates**

Matt mentioned that he is planning on becoming a trainer with Melanie Davis and will start Self-Advocate Leadership Training (SALT) in September. He is also going on a cruise to the Bahamas in September and September marks the one-year anniversary of his sister's passing.

Jason thanked everyone for their kind words for him and his mom. He is going to Colorado for a Red Rocks Concert where Shaquille O'Neal will be a DJ.

Caiti is getting her Individualized Service Plan (ISP) adjusted and her niece was born on June 1, 2024.

Stephen mentioned that his son moved to Omaha and involved in activities at MMI. July 31, 2024 was Norfolk's Disability Pride Day, and it was packed and very well attended. He is looking forward to next year's Disability Pride Day.

Beth mentioned that by rough count, there were over 500 people at Norfolk's Disability Pride Day. Beth will be presenting at the Supported Decision-Making Summit and has been attending monthly CtLC Ambassadors' meetings. She will also be going to the People First of Nebraska Conference in October.

Shauna mentioned they will be selling Bailey's store next week. However, there will be a next step for Bailey.

Reeks' daughter started the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She mentioned she has done some speaking at a Zoom meeting with a domestic violence program in Minnesota. She also mentioned that she is no longer a state employee because she asked for accommodations. She is currently going through the grievance process to get her job back, but does not have the help she needs.

Quinton is working with Beth to get Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) in Nebraska. He and Beth are following the Special Legislative Session.

Joe mentioned his son is at BSDC and works 10-15 hours independently on campus. He does have a choice to work off campus but chooses to work on campus.

Rachel S. stated that school has started and Braxton is a junior. Braxton is starting EPIC soccer. Yesterday they moved their daughter to college in Beatrice. September 24, 2024 Rachel S. will be speaking to families about starting transition early.

### **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.

**Stacy Pfeifer** – Director of Enable Savings Plan – 421 S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 137 Lincoln, NE  
She spent a lot of time last month going to various Disability Pride Celebrations. She has many presentations coming up and the "Give to Enable" webpage launched this week.

## **Adjourn**

Quinton made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Matt seconded. By unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 2:54PM, CDT.

**The next Council meeting is scheduled for November 22, 2024 and will be in-person.**

## **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

**August 16, 2024**

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:**

**Family Support Waiver**

- The Division continues to make monthly Family Support Waiver (FSW) offers. To date, we have currently made 800 offers to families and their children.
  - 44% (350) of the offers have been accepted.
  - 15% (121) of the offers have been declined.
    - Most common reason for declines: currently receiving services on the A&D waiver (80% (97) of all declines)
  - 41% (329) of offers are awaiting a response from the family.

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

- The Division is approaching the end of Phase I of the Waitlist Elimination Projected Timeline. August activities include:
  - Launching of the interRAI pilot (see below for more information).
  - Continued internal and external conversations and engagement.
  - FSW August offers.
  - Initiating the collection of stakeholder feedback for proposed waiver service changes.
  - Planning for Phase II activities and stakeholder events.
- The timeline and other information on the elimination of the waitlist can be found at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/DD-Wait-List.aspx>.

**Katie Beckett Program Expansion:**

- The Katie Beckett program expanded to include the level of care for Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IFF) on July 1<sup>st</sup> and for Nursing Facility (NF) level of care on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. This expansion will provide greater access to critical Medicaid services for individuals with disabilities.
- The Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care (MLTC) will submit the State Plan Amendment (SPA) for these changes within the current quarter.
- More information about the Katie Beckett Program can be found on the MLTC website:

<https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Medicaid-Home-and-Community-Based-Programs.aspx>

**interRAI Functional Needs Assessment:**

- The Division is working closely with Myers and Stauffer LC to implement the interRAI ID and interRAI ChYMH-DD for the DD waivers. These tools are validated, standardized assessments that will be used for the following reasons:
  - Level of Care (LOC) eligibility determinations.
  - Person-centered planning.
  - To determine participant individual budget amounts.
  - As a needs assessment to determine the appropriate waiver or services to enroll in (pathway to the Comprehensive DD Waiver).
- Myers and Stauffer are assisting DDD to conduct concurrent assessments (pilot) between September 2024 and January 2025. During this time, DDD staff conducting initial assessments and redeterminations for the three DDD waivers will administer the Developmental Index (DI), the ICAP, and one of the interRAI tools (based on age of the participant) to determine if the interRAI ID and ChYMH-DD may be appropriate replacements to implement.
- More information, including a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ), about the interRAI can be found on the Elimination of the Waitlist website:  
Eliminating the DD Waitlist Website: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/DD-Wait-List.aspx>.  
Direct Link to FAQ: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/DD%20Documents/interRAI%20FAQs.pdf>

**Future/upcoming Agency activities:**

- Monthly HCBS Stakeholder Meeting – August, 9 2024, 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM CT Zoom Meetings. Link on the DD Event Calendar
- DD Advisory Committee Meeting – October 9, 2024 Conference Room P, 5220 South 16<sup>th</sup> St, Lincoln, NE. Public Comment at Noon.



Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities  
State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

**August 16, 2024**

Representative: Thomas Janousek /Tony Green

Agency: Division of Behavioral Health

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

**1. CCBHC Implementation updates**

- a. What are CCBHCs: Clinic model is designed to ensure access to coordinated comprehensive behavioral health care. CCBHCs are required to serve anyone who requests care for mental health or substance use, regardless of their ability to pay, place of residence, or age - including developmentally appropriate care for children and youth.
- b. We have selected 9 potential CCBHC candidates and are working to select up to six of them to begin implementation.
- c. We are developing our billing and data collection systems and will be working with our providers on the technical details of these systems in the coming months.

**2. Integrated Health Project**

- a. We have been working with Nebraska Medical Association to develop integrated medical and behavioral health care clinics in rural areas.
- b. The project aims to increase access to behavioral health services for medical providers who may not know how to establish a referral relationship with a behavioral health provider or establish a BH provider on site.
- c. We have established 8 integrated sites across the state in the last year.

**3. Huskers and 988**

- a. This fall we will be kicking off an ad-campaign with the Huskers to promote 988
- b. We will have radio ads, banner ads and features during Husker sporting events including football and basketball.

## 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:

- In July VR provided training to DHHS service coordinators on our agency's processes for providing supported and customized employment services.
- The new service agreements with providers went into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>. VR currently has agreements with 38 supported employment providers (32 agency/6 independent).

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

- VR and DHHS are currently working on updating our joint MOU.
- VR is preparing for future opportunities to collaborate with partners as a result of the Dr. Mills study, action plan, and the recent Tri-Board meeting.
- Nebraska's WIOA state plan was approved and took effect July 1, 2024 officially eliminating Order of Selection and the waitlist for Nebraska VR.
- CPAP 2.0 continues to provide outreach to the ID/DD population in an effort to help prior clients advance.
  - Read more about CPAP @ <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/pathways>
- VR and ATP are actively engaged in the Olmstead Advisory Committee. VR and ATP have been asked by the Advisory committee to lead/facilitate two work groups: Housing (Tobias/ATP) and Employment (Lindy/VR)
- VR leadership has been closely monitoring discussions happening in Washington DC related to Fiscal Year 2025 Labor HHS-Education appropriation legislation.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

- VR and VRTAC-QE will be offering additional training opportunities that will complement the recent trainings offered through NEON.
- VR will be hosting the Disability Employment Inclusion Awards at the VR Lincoln office location on S. 84<sup>th</sup> on October 1<sup>st</sup>

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative: Jennifer Severe-Oforah

Agency: Division of Public Health, DHHS

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

Since June, Nebraskans have the option to securely download their personal (or their child's) immunization information from the Nebraska State Immunization Information System (NESIIS) to their Android or iOS mobile device. This will enable the option to share immunization records from NESIIS quickly and easily with their healthcare providers, schools, or other organizations.

For more information visit: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/NESIIS-Resources.aspx>

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

September is Newborn Screening Awareness Month, Nebraska first began screening newborns in 1967, with a simple blood spot test requiring only a few drops of blood taken from a newborn's heel. Today, the newborn screen includes bloodspot, hearing, and pulse oximetry testing for critical congenital heart disease. The Nebraska newborn screening panel screens for all 35 disorders recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and is required by Nebraska law, as it can help prevent intellectual disabilities, brain and organ damage, seizures, stroke or other long-term problems. The program is administered by the Division of Public Health and screens, follows-up, and provides newborn screening awareness and education in order to help our youngest Nebraskans live better lives.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

The Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant's 5-year Needs Assessment will be conducted in 2024/2025. The goal of the assessment is to identify 7-10 priority needs to be addressed (2025-2030). The assessment covers women, infants, children, adolescents and Child/Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSCHN). Nebraska's process is stakeholder and data-driven. The stakeholder portion will begin this fall and will invite members of the DD council to participate.

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative: Dawn Sybrant

Agency: DHHS - MLTC

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

### COVID-19 Unwind:

- As you all know, after the pandemic, we resumed regular reviews of eligibility on a month-by-month basis until April 2024.
- A dashboard containing information on the unwind can be found at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Medicaid-MOE.aspx> and metrics from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). These resources are updated monthly.
- <https://datanexus-dhhs.ne.gov/views/MedicaidUnwindPublic/MedicaidUnwindPublic?%3Aemb ed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>
- As of May 24, 94% of cases have been reviewed. Of the members who have been reviewed, 69% of members and households remain enrolled.

### Member Renewals

- A quick update on the end of the unwind: April to August renewals. The unwind will be completed by 8.31.2024.
- Members who have not yet had their renewal completed can update their information in the following ways:
  - o Online: at <ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov>
  - o Email: [DHHS.ANDICenter@nebraska.gov](mailto:DHHS.ANDICenter@nebraska.gov)
  - o Fax: (402) 742-2351
  - o Over the phone by calling ACCESSNebraska at:
    - Omaha: (402) 595-1178
    - Lincoln: (402) 473-7000
    - Toll-Free: (855) 632-7633
    - TDD: (402) 471-7256

- Even though the review of eligibility for the unwind is coming to a close, we want to remind parents and/or guardians to continue to update their family's information with ACCESSNebraska/iServe. Spring Listening Tour: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/MLTC-Listening-Tour.aspx>
- Please note, you can click on the "Listening Tour Archives" dropdown box to see more detailed recaps and information/updates.

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

- Many bills were passed during this year's legislative session which resulted in quite a few changes to the Medicaid program. Our providers have already received many Provider Bulletins communicating some of these changes. We still have many more that will continue to come out in the coming weeks. If you are getting questions regarding upcoming changes due to the legislature, please direct providers to our provider bulletin page and encourage them to be on the lookout for more information soon. <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Medicaid-Provider-Bulletins.aspx>
  - o Each provider bulletin outlines the best contact for questions on the changes outlined. If providers have any additional questions, we encourage them to contact the individual listed on the bulletin.

#### Future/upcoming Agency activities:

- MLTC is pausing the implementation of the August 14, 2024, EVV system changes. The new implementation date will be January 8, 2025. MLTC heard the concerns of providers and want to ensure NE providers are supported.
- Medicare now recognizes Licensed Mental Health Practitioners (LMHPs). Due to this change, LMHPs will need to bill Medicare prior to billing Medicaid. MLTC will continue to recognize Provisional LMHPs.

## Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members  
August 2024

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:

Supported Decision Making:

Brad Meurrens, Public Policy Director, continues to work with Mary Phillips and Jonathan Martinis on this project. A Supported Decision Making Summit is scheduled for August 24<sup>th</sup> in Omaha. Please join us to learn about supported decision making. Registration is found here:

- Information about the event [Supported Decision Making Summit \(disabilityrightsnebraska.org\)](https://www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org)
- In-person seating is limited to 50 people, buffet lunch provided.
- A hybrid / Zoom option is available to attend remotely. Link will be sent upon registration.
- Registration: <https://www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org/how-to-help/event-calendar.html/event/2024/08/24/supported-decision-making-summit/483638>
- Vendor form: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScs8mcQrdHfUVERkf3F4wgoSP3HRQ5jLEUuznkeZUSL\\_XrbPg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScs8mcQrdHfUVERkf3F4wgoSP3HRQ5jLEUuznkeZUSL_XrbPg/viewform)
- Sponsorships form [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeTtd5Apd-jFzeYNCLHLeH\\_hpNNXqaJUByeYs\\_YR9QvYYxMmw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeTtd5Apd-jFzeYNCLHLeH_hpNNXqaJUByeYs_YR9QvYYxMmw/viewform)

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

Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC)

This quarter included the chance to do a deeper dive into BSDC admissions policies and practices through the investigation of an individual case that

was brought to us by the Office of Public Guardian (OPG) in early April. The OPG asked our assistance in reviewing the state's decision to remove their ward from a Shared Living Provider (SLP) in the community to the much more restrictive setting of BSDC. With their release and our access authority, we obtained a substantial amount of documentation relating to this individual ward's situation as well as the governing policies. The OPG had been verbally advised that all new intakes "must" stay for at least 90 days before they could be considered for discharge: the written policies belied that statement. The SLP also relayed concerns about the resident being blocked from making phone calls to them: the written policies appropriately ensure phone access for residents to call family and friends. Upon admission, this ward's medications were changed because his community psychiatrist had him on an anti-psychotic with a known side effect of causing "gray man syndrome" and BSDC identified the initial visible signs of that. Unfortunately, the medication change at the same time as the upheaval in this man's life resulted in dramatic and concerning behavioral outbursts. When we took up the investigation and began attending team meetings between the OPG, SLP, case workers at BSDC and the state psychiatrist, the state began providing the OPG with much more documentation and information than she was previously able to get from them. In our final team meeting, the CEO of BSDC and an attorney from DHHS also attended, indicating that our presence at the table had lifted up this individual for thorough consideration. The OPG told us that before our attendance, the ward's interjections and questions in the team meetings were "shushed" or ignored: during the meetings we attended, the resident was allowed to express himself and was courteously addressed by everyone.

Ultimately the individual facts of this single investigation resulted in the decision to have the OPG evaluate whether their legal counsel wanted to file a formal administrative appeal of their ward's placement or not and we closed our file at the end of the quarter. Through this individual investigation, we were able to learn much more about BSDC processes for new intakes in a way that I hope will benefit our ongoing work there. It was also gratifying to learn that by being at the table, we ensured that BSDC was not just rubber stamping a decision and that we helped the OPG get access to documentation that wasn't being provided when she asked for it.

#### Case Example:

We worked diligently to secure documents from a private day program that we are investigating after a report of a sexual assault of a vulnerable adult

by a staff member. The day program hired private counsel and took several months to comply, but we have now received the requested documentation. In the next quarter, we will have finalized our plans on next steps with this serious matter.

During our in-person monitoring, we continued to maximize the most “bang for our buck” by folding voting education into the monitoring visits and by trying to ensure that a road trip could have double purposes to stretch our money and resources as far as possible. For example, while staff attended the town hall held by US Department of Justice attorneys in Kearney, we didn’t just drive to Kearney for that event: we also researched the local day programs and selected one for a first-time monitoring visit.

#### Lay Advocacy Program:

- The 9<sup>th</sup> cohort of the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training was completed on April 18, 2024. Five (5) new advocates were added to a total of forty-five (45) who have been trained throughout Nebraska since September 2019.
- Twelve (12) families were referred to the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy. Two (2) families were assigned advocates. Information was provided to all the families on strategies to advocate for their child.
- The Nebraska Values Based Education Coalition met in May and again in June to discuss the Role Development training that will take the place of a Three-day Introduction to Social Role Valorization workshop that was canceled due to presenter time conflicts. Coalition members have agreed to be small group leaders for the training.
- Dates have been set for the Role Development training to take place in the fall. Training will take place on October 23, November 7, and November 18, 2024. The Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Coordinator is working with consultant, Darcy Elks, to develop the three-day workshop. The training is designed to be a hybrid model with some participants joining on zoom and others attending at locations in Lincoln, Norfolk, Scottsbluff, and York. Other locations are being explored.

#### Voting and Resources:



Nebraska had its first election since the passage of Voter ID this quarter, and it seems to have gone smoothly despite the new requirement. We continue our collaboration with the Nebraska Civic Engagement Table and Coalition for a Strong Nebraska, which means we were able to connect with a wide range of partner organizations after the election to debrief and ensure that we didn't miss any reports of Voter ID causing a problem. Of course, we cannot know if any individual voter stayed away from the polls due to lack of ID, but none of our sister nonprofits heard of any systemic issues, which is a relief.

In May, the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) asked us to participate in an interview with the Carter Center (a national nonprofit human rights organization) as one of a small sample of P&As chosen to describe our work to ensure that voting is accessible. NDRN is collaborating with the Carter Center to do a nationwide review of accessibility activities to help inspire new work in every state, so it was an honor to be selected for the interview. We provided them with an overview of how we have done polling place surveys with staff and volunteers for years, the recent contracted work to have every county's election website reviewed for accessibility for voters who are blind or low vision, and our ongoing collaboration with the Secretary of State to provide continuing education to county election officials. When their final report comes out, we hope to learn new ideas from other states, but we are very gratifying to share our work to inspire others.

- Our 3-minute [Voter ID video explainer](#) that tells which IDs can be used to vote and how to obtain a State ID if people don't already have one of the other options listed in the video.
- Our video on how to use the Express Vote [https://youtu.be/g\\_OEeNdqx\\_M](https://youtu.be/g_OEeNdqx_M)
- Our [Voter Information web page](#) that allows people to register to vote, check their registration, volunteer to conduct a quick survey of their polling place for accessibility, and other resources including links to the Secretary of State's office.

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative: Mark Shriver\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

The Nebraska Connecting Families project is supported by funding from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services Medically Handicap Children's Program through funding from Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant (CFDA #93.994). The purpose of the project is to expand knowledge and create a framework for sharing and advancing skills to navigate family support and maximize the interaction of family and service providers relating to Behavioral and Mental Health in Schools. We hosted a summit of families and leaders in behavioral health and schools from across Nebraska on April 29th to bring together diverse perspectives on how we can improve family's access to needed mental health services and resources. Information from this summit is being used to guide our next steps for improving family access to mental health services in collaboration with school systems.

Melanie Davis held a pilot Self-Advocate Leadership Training (SALT) June 11-14 with 5 individuals with developmental disabilities. Survey data indicated high satisfaction and interest in by 2 to become trainers themselves. Melanie is working on next SALT to be presented in September and also developing a train-the-trainer program so that others may provide training throughout Nebraska. Also we will be adding program evaluation to assess outcomes (e.g., are participants more likely to become involved in advocacy?).

In collaboration with the Midwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center, the MMI UCEDD hosted a summit of leaders in developmental disabilities and behavioral health from across Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri on June 27 titled the United Minds Summit to share ideas on how to improve systems of care for individuals dually diagnosed with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health. There were terrific ideas shared between state teams and a summary report is being drafted of findings to help states determine next steps for their respective systems.

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

MMI UCEDD annual report was submitted to the Administration on Community Living July 26, 2024. Some highlights include: MMI UCEDD provided over 109,000 interdisciplinary health care services to 22,477 individuals at MMI or in community-based clinics across the state. We provided training to 190 long- and medium-term trainees. We presented 159 posters or papers at state, regional, national and international conferences. Our faculty and staff wrote and disseminated 22 reports and monographs, 56 peer-reviewed publications, and 13 more manuscripts currently in submission, and 5 book chapters. We have 67 active research and program evaluation projects. Of note, is that we had 682 adults with disabilities participate in community trainings offered this past fiscal year.

Our Family Care Enhancement Project (FCEP) which provides parent resource coordinators in clinics and agencies at MMI and across Nebraska. For the fiscal year 2024, the FCEP served a total of 2,322 unique families. Outcomes included assisting families with accessing Medicaid programs and applying for social security, providing information and referral on service denials and appeals, helping families understand the procedures for enrollment into state DD and Early Intervention services, locating respite and childcare services, and referrals to obtain addition information and support with school accommodations.

**Future/upcoming Agency activities:**

Rachel Ray collaborated with Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation to submit a Disability Innovation Fund grant with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation for a project to utilize technology such as virtual reality and online simulation training to develop a program to assess and train employment skills for individuals with disabilities throughout Nebraska. This grant was submitted July 5<sup>th</sup> and will start October 1<sup>st</sup> IF FUNDED.

MMI Website revision is nearing completion and will hopefully be live by our next DD Council meeting for review.

The MMI UCEDD and People First Nebraska will be hosting the SOAR conference in October 2025 in Omaha, NE. 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. Planning is starting now and will be led by self-advocates with support from MMI UCEDD.