

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

November 22, 2024 at 9:30AM, CDT

In-Person Meeting

Country Inn & Suites – Nebraska Ballroom

[North Hotel & Conference Center]

5353 N. 27th 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, CST and the *Pledge of Allegiance* was recited. Quorum was present.

Present: Quinton Corwin, Caiti Donaldson, Jason Gieschen, Brent Hoffman, Dr. Tom Janousek, Shaistha Kiran Karipi, Matt Kaslon, Seamus Kelly, DJ Plautz, Sasha Reeks, Jennifer Severe-Oforah, Mark Shriver, Rachel Siffring, Judy Trent, and Joe Valenti.

Absent: Shauna Graham, Tony Green, George Griffith, Ashley Hansen, Eddie Kraska, Beth Libra, Cheryl Montgomery, Stephen Morton, and Amy Rhone.

Guests: Tiffany Donaldson, Sue Gieschen, Robin Hoffman, Colin Large, Stacy Pfeifer, and Dawn Sybrant.

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

Welcome and Introductions

Matt announced that he was engaged to Emily. Congratulations Matt and Emily!!!

Kristen announced that Dr. Tom Janousek was appointed as the Director of Behavioral Health. Congratulations Dr. Tom!!!

Kristen Larsen explained that the Governor has not appointed new Council members to the Council. So, until the new appointments have been made, Jason Gieschen and Stephen Morton are still acting members of the Council. Dawn Sybrant is in the process of being appointed as the Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging representative to the Council and reappointments of Caiti Donaldson and Shauna Graham have not been made.

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 November 7, 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.

Stacy Pfeifer – Director of Enable Savings Plan – 421 S. 9th Street, Suite 137 Lincoln, NE

Enable is getting close to having entity software up and running. Once the software is live, she will start training with various entities. Instead of having to login to every account to get their reports, this software will allow an entity to have one account and will show everyone under them. Stacy is working with the Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) so she can have office hours at MMI to provide assistance with Enable enrollment. MMI has rooms that can be used and can provide translators. She is looking for additional places around the state to replicate this process.

Approval of Minutes

Rachel S. asked the Council members if there were any corrections to the *DRAFT* August 16, 2024 Council meeting minutes. There were no corrections. Council members were reminded to abstain from voting if they were not in attendance for the August 16, 2024 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 – 11, No – 0, Abstain – 3.*** 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 were asked to verbally declare any potential conflicts of interest. They are noted below.

Quinton Corwin	None
Caiti Donaldson	None
Jason Gieschen	Special Olympics Nebraska, Education Service Unit 16, Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council
Shauna Graham	Absent
Tony Green	Absent
George Griffith	Absent
Ashley Hansen	Absent
Brent Hoffman	Special Olympics Nebraska, Community Supports Network, Integrated Life Choices, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, Enable Savings Plan
Dr. Tom Janousek	Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Behavioral Health
Shaistha Kiran Karipi	None
Matt Kaslon	Special Olympics Nebraska, Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council, Hands of Heartland, The Arc of Nebraska, The Arc of the United States Liberty Healthcare Statewide Human Legal Rights Advisory Committee
Seamus Kelly	Disability Rights Nebraska
Eddie Kraska	Absent
Beth Libra Plisek	Absent
Cheryl Montgomery	Absent
Stephen Morton	Absent
DJ Plautz	Nebraska Department of Education - Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation
(Sasha) Reeks	None
Amy Rhone	Absent
Jennifer Severe-Oforah	Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health – Maternal & Child Health
Mark Shriver	University of Nebraska Medical Center, Munroe-Meyer Institute, University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities, People

Rachel Siffring
Judy Trent
Joe Valenti

First of Nebraska
The Arc of Platte County
None
Governor's Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee,
Munroe-Meyer Institute Community Advisor Board, Olmstead Advisory
Committee

Financial Reports

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) 2024, a handout at the meeting. For FFY2024 (October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024). The Year-to-Date Expenditures were \$418,344 – 100.3% of the FFY2024 budget. Overall, the Council was over budget by \$1,420.

Additionally, Kristen presented the FFY2025 Financial Report, 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 first month of FFY2025 (October 1, 2024 to October 31, 2024) were \$41,260 – 9.2% of the FFY2025 budget.

The report reflects the balance of funds from FFY2023, FFY2024, and partial award of FFY2025 as of October 31, 2024. Available Current Funds totaled \$585,290. Expenditures (obligations) totaled \$497,571. Balance of Current Funds Available was \$87,719.

NOTE: Kristen expects that the Council will receive flat funding for FFY2025. (The same amount as last year.)

NOTE: The Financial Forecast for both FFY2023 and FFY2024 show a negative balance. Council staff are monitoring the budgets closely and made business unit shifts of the FFY2023 obligated subawards to FFY2024 funds to reverse the negative balance. It is possible that some subaward projects will not spend all their obligated amounts. Thereby decreasing the negative balance.

State Plan Needs Assessment Contract with University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) Update

Kristen met with Mark Shriver and Kerry Miller from UNMC MMI on September 30, 2024 to discuss establishing a contract for the new State Plan Needs Assessment. The budget proposal came to \$43,161. This is higher than the estimated \$30,000 that was approved for the budget in August 2024. Kristen is requesting that the Council vote to increase the \$30,000 amount to \$43,161 to account for the increase in salary costs and 40% Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A). Matt made the motion to approve the increase and Shaistha Karipi seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 12, No – 0, Abstain – 1.*** Motion carried. [Seamus Kelly stepped away from the meeting.]

Update on the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Final and Quality Access Rules Training Proposal and Elevating Family Expectations Year Two Proposal

Rachel explained that revisions are still being done on the HCBS Final Quality Access Rules Training Proposal with MMI (Sarah Swanson and her team). Paul Edwards, Division of Developmental Disabilities

(DDD), will be the lead in that area and will pull in Liberty when needed. They are looking at conducting mentoring with pairs, continuation training with Service Coordinators, and the continual sharing of information. This proposal is still at \$75,000 and will have a January start date.

The first year of the Elevating Family Expectations was with B. Kessler Consulting. Sean Roy with TransCen, who does all the training and presentations, will be taking over the second year. It would be the same training and presentations. Since the meeting packet went out, there were some corrections with the budget. The second year requested funding would be \$44,608 with a match of \$14,964.95. Matt moved to fund TransCen in the amount of \$44,608 and Dr. Tom Janousek seconded. A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 13, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried. [Seamus stepped away from the meeting.]

Review Proposal from University of Missouri Kansas City (UMKC) LifeCourse Nexus for Funding to Train a New Class of Ambassadors

The Nebraska Supporting Families Community of Practice (CoP) Workgroup focuses on Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) as the foundation for effective person-centered planning. Rachel W. and Kristen are on the workgroup. The Nebraska CoP team is recommending that Nebraska invest in training up to 45 new Ambassadors in 2025. The cost of training up to 45 new Ambassadors is \$30,000. Kristen shared that the DDD will split the cost and will contribute \$15,000 towards the training. That would leave \$15,000 for the Council to fund. Quinton moved that the Council would fund \$15,000 toward the training of new Ambassadors and Matt seconded.

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

FFY2025 Committee Assignments and Election of Standing Committee Chairpersons

The standing committees include the Planning Committee, the Legislative and Advocacy Committee, and the Grant Review Committee. Kristen and Rachel S. reviewed the Committee Preference forms that were turned in and tried to assign members to their top-rated committee preference. The FFY2025 committee assignments were emailed on October 25, 2024 and were also included in the meeting packet. Council members were asked to review the committee assignments and to contact Council staff if there were any concerns or conflicts about the committee they were assigned to and if they had an interest in running for Chairperson of their assigned committee.

Per the By-Laws, elections for FFY2025 standing committee Chairpersons were conducted at today's Council meeting. Chairpersons of standing committees shall serve at least a one (1) year term and may serve an additional two (2) terms.

Planning Committee Chairperson: Matt Kaslon and Beth Libra had said they would be willing to run for the Planning Committee Chairperson. When asked if there were any nominations from the floor, Judy Trent was nominated. Judy accepted the nomination for the Planning Committee Chairperson.

(Sasha) Reeks nominated Matt for the position of Planning Committee Chairperson and Shaistha seconded. Judy Trent nominated Beth for the position of Planning Committee Chairperson and Quinton seconded. Rachel S. nominated Judy for the position of Planning Committee Chairperson and Matt seconded. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Judy Trent is the Planning Committee Chairperson for FFY2025. (Judy 7 votes, Matt 5 votes, Beth 2 votes) [Seamus stepped away from the meeting.]

Legislative and Advocacy (L&A) Committee Chairperson: Quinton Corwin, Caiti Donaldson, and Beth Libra had said they would be willing to run for the L&A Committee Chairperson. When asked if there were any nominations from the floor, Joe Valenti was nominated. Joe accepted the nomination for the L&A Committee Chairperson.

Jason nominated Quinton for the position of L&A Committee Chairperson and Shaistha seconded. Matt nominated Caiti for the position of L&A Committee Chairperson and Reeks seconded. Rachel S. nominated Beth for the position of L&A Committee Chairperson and Matt seconded. Rachel S. nominated Joe for the position of L&A Committee Chairperson and Matt seconded. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Quinton Corwin is the L&A Committee Chairperson for FFY2025. (Quinton 8 votes, Caiti 0 votes, Beth 2 votes, Joe 4 votes) [Seamus stepped away from the meeting.]

Grant Review Committee Chairperson: Quinton Corwin had said he would be willing to run for the Grant Review Committee Chairperson. When asked if there were any nominations from the floor, Matt Kaslon and Shaistha Karipi were nominated. Matt and Shaistha accepted the nomination for the Grant Review Committee Chairperson.

Jason nominated Quinton for the position of Grant Review Committee Chairperson and Reeks seconded. Reeks nominated Matt for the position of Grant Review Committee Chairperson and Seamus seconded. Judy nominated Shaistha for the position of Grant Review Committee Chairperson and Rachel S. seconded. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Matt is the Grant Review Committee Chairperson for FFY2025. (Quinton 2 votes, Matt 7 votes, Shaistha 6 votes)

University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL) Public Policy Center Proposal

After talking with Procurement, it was determined that the Disability Employment Survey project would better fit as a contract rather than a subaward. Edith Titamoh and Kristen contacted Dr. Stacey J. Hoffman at the UNL Public Policy Center about the possibility of conducting a Disability Employment Survey. Dr. Hoffman determined they could conduct the survey in one year at a cost of \$49,977. Quinton moved to fund the UNL Public Policy Center in the amount of \$49,977 and Matt seconded. A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 13, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried. [Jennifer Severe-Oforah stepped away from the meeting.]

NOTE: This project came out of the Planning Committee recommendation in April 2024.

109th Legislature, 1st Session

For the 108th Legislature, 1st and 2nd Sessions, Senator Arch, Speaker of the Legislature, sped up the hearing process on introduced legislative bills. Hearings started during the bill introduction period. In February 2023, the Legislative & Advocacy (L&A) Committee suggested that the Council could allow Council staff more flexibility to be reactive to introduced legislation. The consensus was that since legislative hearings started earlier during the 108th Legislature than in past years, chances are that the legislative hearings for future sessions would start as early, or earlier. Last year the Council voted to allow the Director and Council staff to take positions on proposed legislative bills with hearings up to and including the day of February Council meeting after conferring with the L&A Chair and both agree on the position the Council should take. It was suggested to continue and approve this process for 2025.

Judy made the motion to allow the Executive Director and Council staff to take positions on proposed legislative bills with hearings up to and including February 7, 2025, after conferring with the L&A Committee Chair and both are in agreement on the position the Council should take. The Executive

Director would then follow-up with the Executive Committee to convey the position the Council will be taking, and Shaistha seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 13, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried. [Dr. Tom and Jennifer stepped away from the meeting.]

CY2024 NE DD Council Executive Director Annual Performance Evaluation

Rachel S. explained that a motion was needed to enter into a closed session to discuss the Executive Committee's recommended calendar year 2024 evaluation of the Executive Director. Matt so moved and Quinton seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 13, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried. [Dr. Tom and Jennifer stepped away from the meeting.]

At 11:10AM, CST, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities meeting entered into a closed session and Council staff and members of the public (non-Council members) left the meeting room while the Executive Committee's recommended Executive Director Annual Performance Evaluation was discussed.

At 11:33AM, CST, Quinton made a motion to close the closed session Matt seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 13, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried. [Dr. Tom and Jennifer stepped away from the meeting.]

The closed session was closed.

The Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities meeting was re-opened to the public at 11:36, CST and Council staff and members of the public (non-Council members) returned to the meeting room. Matt moved to accept and submit the Executive Committee's recommended Executive Director Annual Performance Evaluation to Sue Medinger, the Designated State Agency (DSA) representative: and Shaistha seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 11, No – 0, Abstain – 2.*** Motion carried. [Dr. Tom and Jennifer stepped away from the meeting.]

Council Member Conference Report Summaries

Judy Trent attended the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) 2024 Annual Conference July 22-26, 2024 in Washington, DC. She enjoyed the *Roses and Thorns* presentation and each time she learns something new. She also enjoyed meeting people from other states. It was a great experience and there were a number of new experiences.

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. Amy Rhone was absent and not able to present her report. [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]

Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging (MLTC)

Dawn provided the MLTC report. The COVID-19 unwind is officially done. The total enrollment for the Medicaid program has dropped from about 390,000 to 332,000. Even though the review of eligibility for the unwind is closed, parents and/or guardians are reminded to continue to update their family's information with ACCESSNebraska/iServe. Governor Pillen announced his appointment of Drew Gonshorowski as the new Director of the Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division. He will officially assume this role on December 9, 2024. Medicaid is working to establish the new Beneficiary Advisory Council (BAC) which was required by the "Access Rule" released earlier this year by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

VR is currently in the process of completing initial audits of all supported employment providers and is starting to see some trends. In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, VR hosted the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards and recognized employers across the state who have provided employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities. VR and DHHS are currently working on updating our joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). VR and Assistive Technology Partnership (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 (ATP) and Employment (VR). VR has been collaborating with partners as a result of the Dr. Mills study, action plan, and the recent Tri-Board meeting.

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

The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant/Title V launched the 2025 Needs Assessment on November 8, 2024. The meeting had a record high of 120 registered participants and 92 in attendance. Participants have started to meet in five workgroups. The workgroups will come up with a list of priorities. They usually end up with 18-20 priorities. Then they meet in April 2025 as a large group and decide on 10 priorities.

The cases of Pertussis/Whooping Cough continue to rise in Nebraska. Most cases are in school age children. It is important to be up to date on vaccinations. You can check your status by contacting your provider, or through the Nebraska State Immunization Information System.

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

Colin Large, Policy Administrator for DDD, provided the DDD report. DDD continues to make monthly Family Support Waiver (FSW) offers. To date, 1,175 offers have been made to families and their children. 50% of the offers have been accepted, 18% have been declined, and 32% are awaiting a response from the family. The most common reason for declines is that the family is currently receiving services on the A&D waiver.

DDD is currently in Phase 2: Building Momentum of the Elimination of the DD Waitlist. Current activities include:

- InterRAI Pilot.

- Continued internal and external conversations and engagement.
- Continued FSW offers.
- Collection of stakeholder feedback for proposed waiver service changes.
- Hosting a series of Policy Town Halls regarding proposed changes via Zoom in December.
 - 30-40 minutes presentation
 - 30-40 minutes questions and answers

The State Review Team has moved from MLTC to DDD. As of today, the processes remain the same.

Division of Behavioral Health (DBH)

Dr. Tom was appointed as the Director of Behavioral Health. They are in the process of hiring for two deputy positions which will hopefully be filled in December/January. He aims to reduce barriers in behavioral health service provision and expand crisis services.

Dr. Tom Janousek provided an implementation update on Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC). CCBHCs are one-stop-shop clinic models designed to ensure access to coordinated comprehensive behavioral health care. Seven initial sites have been selected and they are on track for a soft launch in the summer of 2025. They are currently working with providers on cost modeling, core services, and contracting.

DBH is working on establishing a Serious Mental Illness Coordination 1915(i) Waiver. This would work similarly to some of the services in the DD Waiver – supported living, supported employment, transitional supports, therapeutic rehab, and targeted case management. It went out for public comment on the Medicaid Public Notice Website on November 18, 2024.

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, consulted with Caleb Kuddes, Douglas County Public Health Department, on their upcoming Tabletop Exercise focusing on people with disabilities/functional needs. Brad was invited to the exercise and asked to identify/invite some people with disabilities/organizations.

Disability Rights Nebraska released its report on the status of guardianships in Nebraska, “Guarding from the Guardians”. It is very informational and highlights areas that need to be worked on when guardians are not acting in the best interest of their charge. It was suggested to have Amy Miller, Disability Rights Nebraska, present on this report at a future DD Council meeting.

Disability Rights Nebraska also has a number of vacancies on their Board of Directors. If you know someone interested in serving on the Board, please contact Seamus or Tania Diaz.

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

In October, annual training was completed with surveyors for the National Core Indicators – Intellectual Developmental Disabilities (NCI-IDD) In Person Survey. Additionally the NCI-IDD dashboard has been updated to include data from the 22-23 cycle year, which is the most current data available.

MMI received a \$9.82 million Disability Innovation Fund grant from the Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. This five-year award will support employment assessment and training, including virtual reality applications and driving simulation, for individuals with IDD ages 14-26 and is in collaboration with Nebraska VR. The name of the project is the Nebraska EmployABILITY Project.

MMI has a contract with DDD to develop an online asynchronous training program for Direct Service Professionals (DSPs). The goal is to implement training in January 2026. This will serve as a required onboarding training DSPs in Nebraska at the start of their employment and will encompass seven topics:

- History of DD in Nebraska
- Abuse & Neglect
- Individual Choice, Civil Rights, Dignity/Respect
- Confidentiality and Consent
- Individual Support Plans
- DHHS Structure/Organization and Service Impact
- Emergency Procedures/First Aid/Medical Support Plans

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.

MMI is also looking for Community Advisor Board (CAB) members. If you know someone interested in serving on the CAB, please contact Mark. The Tri-Board Meeting will be June 13, 2025 at MMI.

Council Chair and Staff Updates

Rachel S. thanked those that helped with the Executive Director Evaluation and reminded everyone that the next Council meeting will be on February 7, 2025 and will be a hybrid meeting (in-person and virtual) at the Nebraska State Office Building in Lincoln.

Kristen had a few updates to share.

- In September, Kristen attended the Imagine the Possibilities: A Path to Employment *Success* with Council staff in Kearney. Then in October, she attended a virtual family workshop. An on-site workshop will take place in Omaha on December 3, 2024.
- Kristen attended the Executive Leadership Summit in October. Various topics were discussed such as the DD Act, collection of data, burnout, and the election. Jill Jacobs, the new Executive Director of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) announced NACDD's breakup with The Arc of the United States. NACDD has a strong stance against subminimum wage workshops. The Arc of the United States receives money from providers and some of the providers are running sub-minimum wage workshops. Additionally, NACDD is not going to partner with The Arc of the United States on the Disability Policy Seminar. It is getting so the congressmen/women are going to The Arc for information instead of people with lived experiences.
NOTE: This does not mean that state Councils must break up with their local or state Arc chapters if they have a strong relationship.
- She attended the Supported Decision-Making Summit with Rachel W. on August 24, 2024.

- She attended Day One of the Eliminating Health Disparities Conference on October 16, 2024.
- She attended the ACP Conference with Council Staff October 17-18, 2024.
- She Serves on the Governor’s DD Advisory Committee. This is a very active committee. Director Tony Green shared *DDD Home and Community-Based Waiver Transformation: “Access for All” Creating a Needs-Based, Participant-Driven Model of Service Delivery to Eliminate the Waitlist* report at the October 9, 2024 meeting. She also met with members of the Governor’s DD Advisor Committee between meetings to discuss key components of the plan.
- She attended the Legally Responsible Individual/Paid Caregivers workgroup with Director Green, Kristen Smith, and Colin Large with DD Network partners and Edison McDonald on October 11, 2024. They have a follow-up meeting on December 6, 2024 to discuss recommendations.
- The Program Performance Report (PPR) for 2024 is now due in March 2025.

Rachel W. presented at the Central Transition Conference on Charting the Life Course. There is a All Project meeting (for subrecipients) coming up to discuss the data needed for the Administration on Community Living (ACL) PPR.

Edith attended the Health Disparities Conference and the Maternal Child Health Needs Assessment Kick Off meeting.

Rachel W. and Edith provided brief summaries regarding completed projects, to include:

- Munroe-Meyer Institute – *Public Workforce Project*
- Easterseals Nebraska – *The Opportunity App Project*
- Madonna School & Community Based Services – *Family Navigation Project*
- Munroe-Meyer Institute – *Enhancing Care for Individuals with Disabilities through Virtual Health Care Provider Training Project*
- People First of Nebraska – *State Advisor Project*
- PTI Nebraska – *Enhancing the Transitioning of Youth to Adult Services Project*
- University of Nebraska at Omaha – *Family-Engaged Educational Training Project (Project FEET)*
- Answers4Families – *Professional Development Educational Clearinghouse Project*
- NOTE: Final Reports for these projects were included in the Day Of Handouts.

Council Member Updates

Rachel S. mentioned that they moved her daughter to college and was not sure how Braxton was going to take it. He’s nonverbal, so he finds pictures or videos that relate to what is going on. For a while, he was playing a song that went “lonely, I am so lonely, I have nobody”. Well, her daughter came home from college and he perked right up and was so happy!!! Now that she comes home often on the weekends, they have not heard the song since! Her son is the student manager for the school’s football team and they made it to the quarter finals. It is great to see him there on the sidelines participating. He loves it! Now it is unified bowling season. Braxton is on the Youth Activation Committee, a new leadership committee, to promote Special Olympics.

Matt wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving, Holiday, and New Year. He is looking forward to getting the new State Plan done. This will be a special year for him because he got engaged.

Judy mentioned that Justine is doing unified bowling and Special Olympics basketball.

Shaistha mentioned that in October, she participated in the Nebraska Part C Results-Driven Accountability stakeholder meeting, contributing to discussions on improving early intervention outcomes

for children with disabilities and their families. She was invited to join a focus group aimed at enhancing accessibility and inclusivity at the Omaha Children’s Museum at the Riverfront. In November, she completed Social Role Valorization training through Disability Rights Nebraska, deepening her understanding of fostering dignity and social value for individuals with disabilities. She was also invited to participate in a Part B Parent Focus Group, by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education in late August. Her daughter, who has special needs, participated in enriching activities this fall, including the Arnold Stern Teen Group at UNMC MMI, Nebraska Miss Amazing, and outings to the zoo and Vala’s Pumpkin Patch. In response to challenges at her new school, they recently developed a revised Individualized Education Program (IEP), behavior intervention plan, and elopement plan to ensure her educational and safety needs are met effectively.

Brent has been bowling and hanging out with his niece and nephew.

Reeks has been trying to find a job and has been enjoying time with her daughter.

Jason mentioned that Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council has approved reciting the *Pledge of Allegiance* at their meetings. He went to a Red Rocks Concert and Shaq shook his hand, hugged him, and invited him up on stage!!! He also wished everyone a great Thanksgiving.

Sue said it was great to see everyone and when they count their blessings, they count us (the Council) twice!!!

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. No public comments were made.

Adjourn

Quinton made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Matt seconded. By unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 3:07PM, CST.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for February 7, 2025 and will be hybrid (in-person and virtually). The Legislative and Advocacy Committee meeting will be held the afternoon of February 6, 2025 and will also be a hybrid meeting. Both meetings will be held at the Nebraska State Office Building – Lincoln, 301 Centennial Mall South.

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

November 22, 2024

Representative: Colin Large, Policy Administrator, for 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 1,175 offers to families and their children.
 - 50% (584) of the offers have been accepted.
 - 18% (213) of the offers have been declined.
 - Most common reason for declines:
 - currently receiving services on the A&D waiver (71% (152) of all declines)
 - services not needed (17% (37) of all declines)
 - 32% (378) of offers are awaiting a response from the family.
- Utilization of Intermittent Supports
 - DDD has collaborated with diverse stakeholders, including from NASP, to brainstorm ideas and develop solutions for overcoming current barriers that limit the ability to provide timely, intermittent support tailored to each individual's needs and life choices, while promoting maximum independence.
 - Our team is actively reviewing the feedback and suggestions provided. We encourage stakeholders to continue sharing ideas and potential solutions to address the existing challenges by emailing the DDD Provider Relations Manager at Shauna.Adams@nebraska.gov

Elimination of the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waitlist

- The Division is currently in Phase 2: Building Momentum. Current activities include:
 - interRAI Pilot (see below for more information).
 - Continued internal and external conversations and engagement.
 - Continue Family Support Waiver (FSW) offers.
 - Collection of stakeholder feedback for proposed waiver service changes.

- Policy Town Halls regarding proposed changes will take place through ZOOM on December 10th (5:30 PM CT), 13th (11:30 AM CT), 16th (4:00 PM CT), and 20th (11:30 AM CT)
- The timeline and other information on the elimination of the waitlist can be found at <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/DD-Wait-List.aspx>.

interRAI Functional Needs Assessment:

- The Division continues working closely with Myers and Stauffer LC to implement the interRAI ID and interRAI ChYMH-DD for the DD waivers. These validated, standardized assessments will, when approved by CMS, be used for the following:
 - Determining Level of Care (LOC) eligibility
 - Supporting Person-Centered Planning
 - Establishing individual participant budgets
 - Assessing needs to determine the appropriate waiver or services for enrollment (including the pathway to the Comprehensive DD Waiver)
- We are currently in the pilot phase, running from September 2024 to January 2025. During this time, DDD staff are conducting concurrent assessments, which include administering the Developmental Index (DI), the ICAP, and an interRAI tool (selected based on the participant's age). The goal is to evaluate whether the interRAI ID and ChYMH-DD tools could serve as suitable replacements and to analyze the relationship between the determinations and scores produced by each tool.
- As we near the halfway point of our pilot, we are on track to complete this initiative on time, and we remain committed to ensuring the process is thorough and effective.

Future/Upcoming Agency Activities:

- Monthly HCBS Stakeholder Meeting – December 2, 2024, 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM CT Zoom Meetings. Link on the DD Event Calendar
- Policy Open House on Waitlist Elimination – December 10, 2024, 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM CT Zoom Meetings. Link on the DD Event Calendar
- DD Advisory Committee Meeting – December 11, 2024, Conference Room P, 5220 South 16th St, Lincoln, NE. Public Comment at Noon.
- Policy Open House on Waitlist Elimination – December 13, 2024, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM CT Zoom Meetings. Link on the DD Event Calendar
- Policy Open House on Waitlist Elimination – December 16, 2024, 4:00 PM - 6:30 PM CT Zoom Meetings. Link on the DD Event Calendar
- Policy Open House on Waitlist Elimination – December 20, 2024, 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM CT Zoom Meetings. Link on the DD Event Calendar

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative
Report to Council Members

Representative: Thomas Janousek

Agency: Division of Behavioral Health

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

1. New Director and hiring updates
 - a. Dr. Thomas Janousek, Director of Behavioral Health
 - b. Hiring for two deputy positions
 - c. Aiming to reduce barriers in behavioral health service provision and expand crisis services.
2. CCBHC Implementation updates
 - a. Selected our sites
 - i. Lutheran Family Services
 - ii. Centerpointe
 - iii. Heartland Family Services
 - iv. Community Alliance
 - v. South Central Behavioral Health Services
 - vi. The Well
 - vii. Heartland Counseling Services
 - b. Working with providers on cost modeling, core services, and contracting
 - c. On track to soft launch in the summer of 2025.
3. Serious Mental Illness Coordination Waiver
 - a. Establishing a waiver for the SMI population that will work similarly to some of the services in the DD Waiver
 - i. Supported Living, Supported Employment, Transitional Supports, Therapeutic Rehab, and Targeted Case Management

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:

- VR is currently in the process of completing initial audits of all supported employment providers.

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

- In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, VR hosted the SRC Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards on October 1st. VR staff also recognized employers across the state who have provided employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities.
- VR and DHHS are currently working on updating our joint MOU.
- VR has been collaborating with partners as a result of the Dr. Mills study, action plan, and the recent Tri-Board meeting.
- 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.

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative
Report to Council Members

Representative: Amy Rhone

Agency: Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education

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

The Office of Special Education at NDE has been undergoing The Federal Office of Special Education Programs Differentiated Monitoring over the last several months with the onsite visit occurring October 21-25th. The Nebraska Part B and Part C - OSE Team wrapped up Phase 2 of the 3 Phase, Differentiated Monitoring and Support (DMS) activities with The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) as part of the Results Driven Accountability System. DMS 2.0 uses a cyclical cycle to assign States to cohorts, and monitoring will be conducted in three phases: Phase 1) document request and protocol interviews; Phase 2) on-site/virtual visit through the issuing of the monitoring report; Phase 3) follow-up and close-out.

The team was busy in October as well bringing Stakeholders information related to both the Part C and Part B statewide efforts towards improving results for infants, toddlers, families, and students with disabilities. The RDA Stakeholder Meeting is an opportunity for all stakeholders (parents, EI/SPED Leadership, Administrators, Superintendents, Advocates, providers) to come together to receive updates regarding the federally required State Performance Plans, including the State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP), and advise on data targets for the 2021-25 Annual Performance Reports.

In addition, stakeholders come together to continue the development and collaboration needed to support all of the statewide activities laid out in those State Systemic Improvement Plans intended to improve the results outlined by OSEP.

The Office of Special Education Programs' (OSEP's) vision for Results-Driven Accountability (RDA) is that states will target their work and investments to best support Districts in improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

We want to thank all Nebraska Stakeholders for all you do to continue to strive improved results and for the children in all of our Early Intervention Programs and receiving special education services and support.

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

November 1 was the due date for districts to submit their District Monitoring Questionnaire to their monitoring lead as OSE begins the Part B Focused Monitoring of districts. The Comprehensive Review will be done by monitoring teams between November 15 and February 15, 2025. In February districts will engage in Clarification Meetings with their monitoring team to discuss the Comprehensive Review.

2024 Alternate Assessment Participation			
Subject	ALT	ALL	Percent
ELA	1806	164162	1.10%
Math	1798	164032	1.10%
Science	771	69811	1.10%
2023 Alternate Assessment Participation			
Subject	ALT	ALL	Percent
ELA	1775	163991	1.08%
Math	1773	163849	1.08%
Science	745	70210	1.08%

OSE has received the participation data for the alternate assessment for 2024. As you can see by the chart we increased again this year. We have continued to increase our participation numbers since 2021. This is a big cause for concern since it has been shared by the federal Department of Education that no state should be over the 1%. States have had plenty of time to meet this requirement. The alternate assessment is only for those students who have a most significant cognitive disability and so when a state is over the 1% threshold, they must request a waiver and develop an action plan to ensure that students are appropriately identified and receiving alternate education. Due to the continued increase, districts must now review how your district determines this. This will be a continued area of needed support that the OSE will be addressing this year with districts who are over the 1% threshold.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

Indicator 13 – Post Secondary Transition Planning Self Assessments have been completed and the OSE has begun to verify the self-assessment responses. After review – OSE will be developing a list of 5 or so of the most common corrective action items/ issues the department has seen with Indicator 13 and guidance to support districts in the continued improvement of this area.

Districts who were found to have noncompliance in Indicator 13 for 2023-24 are closing out the required corrective action currently.

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative
Report to Council Members

Representative: Jennifer Severe-Oforah

Agency: NDHHS, Division of Public Health

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

The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant/Title V launched the 2025 Needs Assessment on November 8th at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln, NE. The meeting has a record high 120 registered participants and 92 in attendance.

An animated video illustrating the process can be found here: <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Title-V-Needs-Assessment.aspx>

Participants have now started to meet in workgroups. The process will be complete in April 2025.

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

The cases of Pertussis/whooping cough continue to rise in Nebraska, most cases are in school age children. It is important to be up to date on vaccinations, you can check your status by contacting your provider, or through the Nebraska State Immunization Information System here:

https://nesiis-dhhs-prod.ne.gov/prd_ir/public/clientSearch.do?language=en

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative
Report to Council Members
November 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:

Emergency/Disaster Planning:

Public Policy Director Brad Meurrens consulted with Caleb Kuddes from the Douglas County Public Health Department on their upcoming Table Top Exercise focusing on people with disabilities/functional needs. Brad was invited to the exercise on November 7 and asked to identify/invite some people with disabilities/organizations.

Public Policy Internship Program:

Disability Rights Nebraska staff selected two students in the Trailblazer program at Munroe Meyer Institute for our interns this year.

Mary Angus and Brad Meurrens worked with the two students to analyze Legislative Bill 1285 (2023). The internship activity was for the students to analyze the bill and develop a short "position statement" about the bill or employment and people with disabilities. We also wanted to teach them how to read a bill, understand the purpose and actions of the bill, and develop an evaluation of the purpose and actions. We asked the two students to address their statements as if they were writing to NCDD Director Kristen Larsen (since the council was the impetus behind LB 1285).

Outreach Plan:

Based on the data and discussion from the Team, the Community Engagement Director drafted an outreach plan for the remainder of the Strategic Planning period (FY 2024 – FY 2028). The team met on September 26 to review the proposed plan.

Conclusions from analysis of People Served statistics from FY 2020-FY 2023 were as follows:

1. **Minority groups** under-represented
2. Lack of representation for **people over 60** statewide
3. Low representation of **transition-age youth (16-24)**
4. Low number of **Assistive Technology** cases
5. Low representation from Northeast Nebraska, North Panhandle, Sandhills, South Border Nebraska (basically anywhere that is not along the Interstate or near the Metro areas of Omaha or Lincoln).

The Team agreed that the needs of people over 60 and people with Assistive Technology concerns are mostly addressed by organizations such as Aging Partners, the Aging & Disability Resource Centers, and the Assistive Technology Partnership, though the P&A would still be addressing abuse & neglect related to disability, technology denials and Lemon Law issues. Minority groups, transition-age youth and geographic representation will form the basis of our outreach.

Planned geographic focus areas will be cumulative and are proposed as follows:

1. Focus Areas 2025-2026:
 - a. Panhandle: Scottsbluff/Gering, Sidney, Alliance, Chadron, Ogallala.
 - b. Hastings / Community Impact Network area (Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties in South Central Nebraska)
 - c. Northeast Nebraska: Schuyler, Columbus, Norfolk, Wayne, Winnebago/Macy, South Sioux City
2. Focus Areas 2027-2028:
 - a. Interstate Cities: Grand Island, Lexington, Kearney, North Platte.
 - b. Central / Sandhills: O'Neill, Albion, Broken Bow, Ainsworth
 - c. Southwest: McCook, Imperial

The plan also addresses strategies, indicators of success, and guidelines for determining which invitations for presentations and trainings to accept, along with alternatives for maintaining the relationship when we are unable to accept an invitation.

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

Lay Advocacy Program:

- The 10th cohort of the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training began on September 10, 2024. Eight (8) participants began the training but two had to drop out due to conflicts, leaving 6 participants. At the end of the training there will be a total of 51 advocates trained since the program's inception in 2019.
- Thirteen (13) families were referred to the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy. Nine (9) families were assigned advocates. Two families were assisted in filing a state complaint regarding the failure of the school to provide appropriate educational services. All families were provided information on strategies to advocate for their child.
- The Nebraska Values Based Education Coalition met on August 30, 2024. Coalition members discussed the upcoming Building Valued Social Roles training scheduled for October 23rd, November 7th and November 18th 2024. There have been no registrations for the Norfolk and Scottsbluff sites, so those have been canceled. There will be sites in Lincoln.

Beatrice State Developmental Center:

During routine monitoring at Beatrice State Developmental Center this quarter, we discovered that several of the long-empty buildings on campus were finally being demolished. In questioning leadership about the long-term plans for the campus with the ever-shrinking population, we were informed that the state has considered placing a PRTF (psychiatric residential treatment facility for youth) on the site but no concrete plans have been made. While new admissions to the crisis center periodically occur for individuals who are stabilized and then returned to the community, BSDC leadership continues to assert that they are not accepting new long-term residents, so the population continues to hover around 80 people. Some deaths of aged and medically fragile residents have occurred in the last year, offset by temporary new residents at the crisis center.

The crisis center continues to be the least homelike setting at BSDC. In this quarter, there were two residents who were living on different floors from each other. While other BSDC residents are in "cottages" with a living room, kitchen, a yard, and personal decorations, crisis center residents are living in a small bedroom on an otherwise-empty floor. They eat and sleep on this

floor alone except for staff. Interactions with other BSDC residents occurs during the day at some of the recreational opportunities.

Review of the monthly incident reports continues to show low level injuries caused by peer-to-peer conflicts or by a resident falling through no fault of anyone. No significant concerns arose from the incident reports this month.

Guarding the Guardians:

Report on the status of guardianships in Nebraska

["Guarding from the Guardians"](#).

Alongside traditional in person monitoring work, we released our report on observations and research on guardians and inadequate ALFs, "Guarding from the Guardians." The final report was released in late July with a copy being sent to every state senator, every county court judge, sister organizations working in this field, and government officials such as the state auditor and DHHS leadership. DHHS Interim Director of Behavioral Health Tony Green did reach out and requested a meeting with our CEO, Legal Services Director and Monitoring Attorney. The meeting allowed us to suggest collaboration on a number of points, including: having service coordinators report concerns with facilities to Disability Rights Nebraska, having the licensure unit stop granting extensions and continuances to ALFs found out of compliance with regulations, having supported decision making training for DHHS employees, and the possibility of cooperative lobbying on any bills arising from the report. We also expressed our concern that failing ALFs were given too long to remedy unhealthy and unsafe conditions,

Just a few weeks after this meeting with DHHS Leadership, we learned that the license of Life Essentials in Central City was revoked by DHHS. Shortly after that news, we also learned that Hope Wymore, the ALF where a resident died under suspicious circumstances early this year, had closed their doors. While we were gratified to see definitive strides on these most troubled facilities, we will be continuing to monitor the owners of both facilities.

Subminimum Wage:

Brad Meurrens presented to 90 Nebraska High School students at the "Employment Seminar" Rachel Ray (from MMI) coordinated. Brad's presentation focused on the history and current status of the subminimum wage for people with disabilities nationally and in Nebraska. Rachel and Brad

also discussed with the students Competitive Integrated Employment and the benefits of employment. Brad used some of our policy interns' language from their letters to Kristen Larsen to show the direct and indirect benefits of employment.

Supported Decision Making Summit:

On August 24, Disability Rights Nebraska hosted an all-day summit on Supported Decision Making. The intent was to raise awareness of Supported Decision Making as a tool for increased self-determination of people with disabilities (and others) and a means to check undue or overbroad guardianships. We brought Jonathan Martinis from the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University to Nebraska as our keynote speaker and facilitator. The event had two types of participants: people who attended the Summit in-person and those attended virtually (by Zoom). Approximately 37 people attended in person and approximately 20 attended virtually. Brad also worked to prepare the Ambassadors to present at the summit.

Collaborators for the Summit were: Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities, Jonathan Martinis, Syracuse University, AARP, ACLU, ElderLaw of Omaha, Arc of NE, NAMI Omaha and the Nebraska Respite Network.

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:

In October, annual training was completed with surveyors for the NCI-IDD In Person Survey. We currently have five surveyors residing in Scottsbluff, Hastings, Dakota City, Blair, and Omaha and all surveyors have extensive experience within the disability community.

Nebraska NCI Data dashboard: The NCI-IDD dashboard has now been updated to include data from the 22-23 cycle year, which is the most current data available. The team is now finishing up the NCI-AD dashboard which will include data from five survey cycles.

In September, Rachel Ray presented at the Re-Inventing Quality Conference with Kristen Smith, Deputy Director at Nebraska DHHS regarding the Nebraska NCI Data Dashboard as a tool to disseminate information to stakeholders and policy makers.

In November, the NCI team (Rhonda Hartz and Rachel Ray) presented at Association for University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) with representatives from Wyoming and West Virginia on rural access to health services and importance of data definitions. This was well received and there is interest from additional states to continue the conversation with potential collaboration.

For more information:

Nebraska NCI Dashboards: <https://www.unmc.edu/mmi/family-resources/community-services/nci/dashboard-reports.html>

NCI: <https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/about/>

NCI-AD: <https://nci-ad.org/>

Nebraska's NCI Results: <https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/states/NE/>

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

We received a \$9.82 million Disability Innovation Fund grant from the Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. This five-year award will support employment assessment and training, including virtual reality applications and driving simulation, for individuals with

IDD ages 14 – 26 and is in collaboration with NE-VR. The name of the project is the NE EmployABILITY Project.

We secured school contracts with OPS, Millard, and Papillion-LaVista school districts for 2024-25, and we are serving over 180 students per week across all programs.

We have 5 MMI-UNO Trailblazers this year. Both students from the 2023-24 cohort will continue with the 4-year program. We will begin taking applications for the 2025-26 cohort in January 2025.

Three Advocacy and the Arts students, Genisa Neil, Da’Jore Bell, and Robert DeWaele, have their artwork on display at the BFF Petshop Gallery in Benson. Crrated by Tom McLaughlin, the artwork can be viewed in person or online and purchased online at [PETSHOP Gallery - Current Exhibitions – BFF Omaha](#).

For more info: <https://thinkcollege.net/programs/trailblazer-program>

We have a contract with DHHS DD Division to develop an online asynchronous training program for Direct Service Professionals. This will serve as a required onboarding training for all DSPs in Nebraska at the start of their employment and encompass 7 topics:

History of DD in Nebraska

Abuse & Neglect

Individual Choice, Civil Rights, Dignity/Respect

Confidentiality and Consent

Individual Support Plans

DHHS Structure/Organization and Service Impact

Emergency Procedures/First Aid/Medical Support Plans

We are working closely with DHHS DD Division leadership, Liberty, Nebraska provider agencies, DSPs, service recipients, and others in developing this training. Goal is to implement training in January 2026.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

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 at the Embassy Suites Downtown. 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. Program committee, Marketing/Registration committee, Accessibility committee, and others are meeting regularly to plan the conference. Many thanks to the NE Council on Developmental Disabilities for the support of SOAR conference with the People First contract!