

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

November 21, 2025 at 9:30AM, CST

Hybrid Meeting

Nebraska State Office Building

[Lower-Level Goldenrod Conference Room]

301 Centennial Mall South Street

Lincoln, NE

The agenda was mailed to Council members prior to the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Beth Libra and called to order at 9:35AM, CST and the *Pledge of Allegiance* was recited. Quorum was present.

Present (In-Person): Diane Cochran, Quinton Corwin, Tony Green, Brent Hoffman, Shaistha Karipi, Seamus Kelly, Eddie Kraska, Beth Libra, Sasha Reeks, Jennifer Severe-Oforah, Rachel Siffring, Dawn Sybrant, and Joe Valenti.

Present (Virtual): Christopher Chambers, Jason Gieschen, Matt Kaslon, Diana Meadors, DJ Plautz, Mark Shriver, and Judy Trent.

Absent: Caiti Donaldson, Shauna Graham, George Griffith, Ashley Hansen, and Cheryl Montgomery.

Guests (In-Person): Nick Clark, Larry Cochran, Robin Hoffman, Candi Kraska, Stacy Pfeifer, and Josh Whitfield.

Guests (Virtual): Lisa Bickford, Tania Diaz, Sue Gieschen, Jacob McIver, Abbey Siebler, and Sadie Worthing.

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

Welcome and Introductions

Kristen Larsen explained that the Council received notice on Wednesday (November 19, 2025) that the Governor has made new appointments and reappointments to the Council. However, because of the late notice, it was determined that the “old” Council members would vote in today’s meeting and an invitation was extended to the “new” Council members to attend today’s meeting as guests if their schedules allowed.

The reappointed Council members are:

- Eddie Kraska – Self-Advocate
- Beth Libra – Family
- Sasha Reeks – Self-Advocate
- Mark Shriver – University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) – Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)

The new Council members are:

- Amanda Anderson – Family
- Dr. Jamar Dorsey – Non-Governmental
- Jacob McIver – Self-Advocate
- Hannah Mercer – Self-Advocate
- Angie Ohlrich - Family
- Joshua Whitfield – Self-Advocate
- Sadie Worthing - Family

Nebraska Open Meetings Act

Beth 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 October 27, 2025).

Public Comment Period #1

Beth 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 – Previous Director of the Nebraska Enable Savings Plan

Stacy explained that she was let go from the Nebraska Enable Savings Plan. She said that it has been an honor and pleasure working together and she thanked the Council for its hard work with the developmentally disabled community.

Approval of Minutes

Eddie Kraska asked the Council members if there were any corrections to the *DRAFT* August 15, 2025, 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, 2025 Council meeting. As there were no corrections, Shaistha Karipi made the motion to approve the minutes and Joe Valenti seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 16, No – 0, Abstain – 2.*** 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.

Christopher Chambers	Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education
Diane Cochran	None
Quinton Corwin	None
Caiti Donaldson	Absent
Jason Gieschen	None
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
Shaistha Karipi	Nebraska Department of Education – Educational Service Unit #3
Matt Kaslon	Nebraska Statewide Independent Living Council, 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	Ollie Webb Center, Special Olympics

Beth Libra	The Arc of Norfolk, Northeast Nebraska Diversity Council, Disability Rights Nebraska, Hands of Heartland, Norfolk Area Buddy Baseball
Diana Meadors	Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Behavioral Health
Cheryl Montgomery	Absent
DJ Plautz	Nebraska Department of Education – Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation
Sasha Reeks	Nebraska Department of Correctional Services
Jennifer Severe-Oforah	Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health – Maternal and Child Health
Mark Shriver	University of Nebraska Medical Center, Munroe-Meyer Institute, University Center of Excellence for Developmental Disabilities, People First of Nebraska, University of Nebraska at Omaha
Rachel Siffring	The Arc of Platte County
Dawn Sybrant	Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care
Judy Trent	None
Joe Valenti	Governor's Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee, Munroe-Meyer Institute Community Advisory Board, Olmstead Advisory Committee

Financial Report

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

Kristen reviewed the Financial Report for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025, a handout at the meeting. For FFY2025 (October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025). The Year-to-Date Expenditures were \$361,394 – 81.45% of the FFY2025 budget.

NOTE: The MMI Needs Assessment Contract of \$43,161 has not been paid yet. This was moved to FFY2025 Obligation.

Additionally, Kristen presented the FFY2026 Financial Report, a handout at the meeting. At the August 15, 2025 Council meeting, the Council approved the budget of \$372,718 for FFY2026 (October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026). The Year-to-Date Expenditures for the first month of FFY2026 (October 1, 2025 to October 31, 2025) were \$45,368 – 12% of the FFY2026 budget.

NOTE: Operating Expenses was high since the Council paid \$8,009 for FFY2026 dues (National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities [NACDD], DD Suite, and Nebraska Association of Service Providers [NASP]) and for the Lincoln Journal Star e-subscription.

The report reflects the balance of funds from FFY2024 and FFY2025 as of October 31, 2025. Available Current Funds totaled \$204,606.46. Expenditures (obligations) totaled \$231,157.95. Balance of Current Funds Available was negative \$26,551.49.

Kristen explained that with the government shutdown, Councils have not received any appropriations. Councils were included in the Continuing Resolution and should expect a partial award at the end of January 2026. Currently, the Council is operating on FFY2025 funds. However, the Council may need to

put a stop on the subawards that have a No Cost Extension. Additionally, the Council cannot renew any of the continuation subawards until we have received the partial Notice of Award (NoA) for FFY2026.

To cut costs, freezes were approved for FFY2026 at the August 15, 2025 Council meeting. Those included: Out-of-State Travel for Council members and staff, the Leadership Development Funds, and the Collaboration Funds. Additionally, Council meetings are to be held at the Nebraska State Office Building (NSOB) in Lincoln for FFY2026. This will save on facility rental fees and food costs. Per the Nebraska Open Meetings Act, no more than half of the meetings can be held virtually. Therefore, it was decided that the November 2025 and February 2026 meetings will be hybrid (in-person and virtual). Council members who receive hotel accommodation and/or mileage are strongly encouraged to participate virtually to save on hotel accommodation and mileage costs.

Council Member Conference Report Summary

Eddie Kraska attended the 2025 Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution (SOAR) Conference October 3-5, 2025 in Omaha, Nebraska. He learned about advocacy and had a fun time learning and being with others. His favorite part was on the importance of communicating.

Council members were reminded that due to the tight fiscal budget, it was voted to freeze all out of state travel to national conferences. Council members still qualify to attend up to two in-state disability-related conferences each federal fiscal year. Members must notify Nikki Krause if they are interested in attending an in-state conference at least 2 weeks in advance. Upon their return from the conference, they will need to submit the Council Member Conference Report Summary and report on the conference at the Council meeting following the conference.

Five Year State Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2027-2031 Needs Assessment Report Update

Abbey Siebler, MMI, presented the results of the surveys conducted for the Needs Assessment. [A copy of the presentation is attached to the end of the minutes.] The purpose of the report was to identify state-wide priorities. There were 236 respondents and 102 were self-advocates. The areas surveyed were:

- Employment
- Recreation and Community Activities
- Housing
- Childcare and Respite Services
- Education and Early Intervention
- Health and Healthcare
- Informal and Formal Supports
- Transportation
- Criteria for Eligibility of Services
- Quality Assurance
- Reaching Underserved Communities
- Assistive Technology
- Waiting Lists
- Adequacy of Waiver Services

The top five priority areas were:

1. Health and Healthcare
2. Housing
3. Informal and Formal Supports

4. Employment
5. Transportation

Report of the Planning Committee: Draft Goals and Objectives for Five Year State Plan for Federal Fiscal Years 2027-2031

The Planning Committee met October 23, 2025 and November 3, 2025 to review the results of the surveys conducted for the Needs Assessment to prioritize the Draft goals and objectives for the new State Plan. Council staff researched and drafted goals and objectives that they felt addressed the priorities that Kerry Miller presented on. The draft goals and objectives were reviewed and tweaked by the Planning Committee. Judy Trent, the Planning Committee Chair, presented the Committee's recommendations of Draft language for the goals and objectives.

NOTE: Kristen stated that the Targeted Disparity Goal and the Collaboration Goal were not required.

Goal 1

By September 30, 2031, Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families and guardians will experience measurable increases in opportunities for self-determination, independence, productivity, safety, and inclusion in community life, as a result of systemic changes at the state, regional, and/or local level.

Objective A: Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will advocate for and monitor the progress of Nebraska's 2026-2031 Olmstead Plan goal to expand access to safe, affordable, and accessible housing in the communities where Nebraskans with disabilities choose to live.

Objective B: By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will advocate for systemic changes that expand access to Home and Community Based Services, such as person-centered community connection assistance and intermittent service alternatives, that increase the independence of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their communities.

Objective C: Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will, in collaboration with related state agencies and organizations, advocate for systemic changes that increase the number of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities who engage in competitive integrated employment and for the collection and sharing of data to measure the desired increase.

Objective D: By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will advocate for systemic improvements in Medicaid navigation—defined as the ability of individuals with IDD and their families and guardians to understand, access, and effectively use Medicaid services. This includes increasing access to qualified providers, behavioral health services, and specialist care. These efforts aim to measurably enhance the health, wellbeing, and safety of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Objective E: Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will support high-quality, person-centered training opportunities for **all** professionals who provide support to individuals with IDD. These trainings will focus on enhancing skills that promote the self-determination, independence, productivity, safety, and inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in community life.

Objective F: Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will, in collaboration with related stakeholders and organizations, monitor and respond to the needs of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families and guardians that result from manmade, natural, or environmental events.

Objective G: Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will serve as a trusted policy advisor to the Nebraska Legislature, the Governor, and other policymakers; track key legislative activity; collaborate with state and local stakeholders; and equip allies, self-advocates, families and guardians with tools to engage in advocacy. These efforts will ensure that policies across all areas of community life reflect the rights, needs, and voices of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, promoting full inclusion and meaningful participation in decision-making.

Goal 1 and its objectives were discussed and reviewed. It was determined to remove the word “all” from Objective E. (No other changes.) Joe Valenti made the motion to approve the Draft language for Goal 1 and its objectives with the edit to Objective E (removal of the word “all”) and Rachel Siffiring seconded. A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 18, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried. [Tony Green joined the meeting, and Diana Meadors left the meeting.]

Goal 2

By September 30, 2031, Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, caregivers, and guardians will have increased access to information, tools, and supports that empower them to make personally meaningful and appropriate choices about their services, education, employment, decision-making needs, healthcare, living situation, and relationships—leading to more self-determined lives.

Objective A: Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will increase the influence of self-advocates and leaders with disabilities by strengthening, supporting, and funding at least one self-advocacy organization led by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will support opportunities for transition-age youth (14–21) with intellectual and developmental disabilities to form self-advocacy groups that build leadership and self-determination skills, promoting their inclusion in age-appropriate community clubs and activities.
- By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will increase opportunities for self-advocate leaders to train others with disabilities to increase their personal, civic, and/or collaborative leadership roles.
- By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will expand self-advocate participation in cross-disability and culturally diverse coalitions.

Objective B: Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and guardians, and Council staff to increase leadership and participation in policymaking through active participation in statewide advisory committees, cross-disability workgroups, public advocacy, and cross-system dialogue.

Objective C: By September 30, 2031, transition-aged youth (ages 14–21) with intellectual and developmental disabilities, along with their families and guardians, will have increased access to person-centered planning—grounded in the Charting the LifeCourse framework—through education and training

that support informed choice and successful transitions to inclusive, meaningful employment and adult services. This will be achieved through collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Network, state agencies, and community partners.

Objective D: By September 30, 2031, as the result of Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities efforts, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, guardians, professionals, related organizations, policymakers, and the public will have greater access to information about disability issues, services, and supports, and will assist individuals, their families, and guardians, to obtain needed supports and advocate effectively for themselves and for systems change.

The Committee's recommendation was to approve Goal 2 and its objectives.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 18, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried.

Shaistha moved to approve the draft goals and objectives going out for public comment. Rachel S. seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 18, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried.

FFY2026 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 Beth reviewed the Committee Preference forms that were turned in and tried to assign members to their top-rated committee preference. The FFY2026 committee assignments were emailed on November 4, 2025, 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 FFY2026 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: Judy Trent had said she would be willing to run for the Planning Committee Chairperson. There were no additional nominations from the floor.

Rachel S. nominated Judy for the position of Planning Committee Chairperson and (Sasha) Reeks seconded. Judy Trent was elected Planning Committee Chairperson for FFY2026 by Unanimous Consent.

Legislative and Advocacy (L&A) Committee Chairperson: Quinton Corwin, and Joe Valenti had said they would be willing to run for the L&A Committee Chairperson. There were no additional nominations from the floor.

Rachel S. nominated Quinton for the position of L&A Committee Chairperson and Reeks seconded. Rachel S. nominated Joe for the position of L&A Committee Chairperson and Shaistha seconded. A vote was taken by secret ballot. Joe Valenti is the L&A Committee Chairperson for FFY2026. (Joe 10 votes, Quinton 6 votes)

Grant Review Committee Chairperson: Nobody had said he/she would be willing to run for the Grant Review Committee Chairperson. When asked if there were any nominations from the floor, Shaistha and

Tony Green were nominated. Shaistha accepted the nomination for the Grant Review Committee Chairperson and Tony declined.

Rachel S. nominated Shaistha for the position of Grant Review Committee Chairperson and Beth seconded. Shaistha Karipi was elected Grant Review Committee Chairperson for FFY2026 by Unanimous Consent.

FFY2026 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.

NOTE: Initially the Council was looking at a January 1, 2026 start date; however, the start date will depend on when the Notice of Award is received.

Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)

MMI submitted a continuation proposal for its *Enhancing Quality of Life for Spanish-Speaking Families in the Hispanic/Latino Community through Comprehensive Support and Evidence-Based Treatments for Developmental Disabilities* project. Rachel S. made the motion to fund MMI in the amount of \$50,000 as it is written and Joe seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 13, No – 0, Abstain – 2.*** Motion carried. [Diane Cochran, Jason Gieschen, and Matt Kaslon left the meeting.]

Goodwill

Goodwill submitted a continuation proposal for its *EmployAbility Campaign* project. Reeks made the motion to fund Goodwill in the amount of \$20,000 as it is written and Quinton Corwin seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 14, No – 0, Abstain – 1.*** Motion carried.

Easterseals

Easterseals submitted a continuation proposal for its *Employment First: Informed Choice Matters* project. Shaistha made the motion to fund Easterseals in the amount of \$20,000 as it is written and Rachel S. seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 14, No – 0, Abstain – 1.*** Motion carried.

Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)

MMI submitted a continuation proposal for its *Increasing Access to Early Diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in Toddlers through an Intervention to Promote Community Knowledge of EarliPoint* project. Quinton made the motion to fund MMI in the amount of \$19,837 with the contingency to have information on the waitlist, and to ask if there is a waitlist with the clinic and has this project helped with the waitlist and Brent Hoffman seconded.

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

109th Legislature, 2nd Session

During the 108th Legislature, 1st (2023) and 2nd (2024) Sessions, and continuing into the 1st Session of the 109th Legislature (2025), Speaker of the Legislature, Senator Arch, sped up the hearing process on introduced legislative bills. As a result, hearings started during the bill introduction period.

In February 2023, the Legislative & Advocacy (L&A) Committee suggested that the Council consider granting staff greater flexibility to respond to introduced legislation. The Committee noted that, given the earlier start to hearings during the 108th Legislature, it is likely that future sessions will follow a similar or even more expedited timeline.

In response, the Council voted in 2022, 2023, and 2024, to allow the Executive Director and Council staff to take positions on proposed legislative bills scheduled for hearings up to and including the day of the February Council meeting. This action is contingent upon consultation with the L&A Chair and mutual agreement on the position to be taken. The Council is now asked to consider a vote to approve the process for the 2026 legislative session and another vote to allow this policy going forward past FFY2026.

Shaistha made the motion to allow the Executive Director and Council staff to take positions on proposed legislative bills with hearings up to and including the day of the February Council meeting; 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 Brent seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 11, No – 0, Abstain – 4.*** Motion carried.

Eddie moved to allow this policy going forward past FFY2026 and Rachel S. seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 10, No – 0, Abstain – 5.*** Motion carried.

CY2025 NE DD Council Executive Director Annual Performance Evaluation

Beth explained that a motion was needed to enter into a closed session to discuss the Executive Committee's recommended calendar year 2025 evaluation of the Executive Director. Joe so moved and Shaistha seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 14, No – 0, Abstain – 0.*** Motion carried. [Jennifer Severe-Oforah stepped away from the meeting.]

At 1:47PM, 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.

The Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities meeting was re-opened to the public at 1:58PM, CST by Unanimous Consent and Council staff and members of the public (non-Council members) returned to the meeting room. Shaistha 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 Brent seconded.

A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 14, No – 0, Abstain – 1.*** Motion carried.

Updates from State Agency Representatives

NOTE: Agency representatives were asked to briefly touch on any pressing issues or important updates the Council needed to be informed of. The written reports are attached at the end of the minutes and Council members are encouraged to read the written reports in their entirety. (Jennifer Severe-Oforah did not provide a written report.) [Christopher Chambers, Department of Education – Office of Special Education; Tony Green, Division of Developmental Disabilities; Diana Meadors, Division of Behavioral

Health; Jennifer Severe-Oforah, Division of Public Health – Maternal and Child Health; DJ Plautz, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation; Dawn Sybrant, Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging]

Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

The new interRAI assessment for DD Waivers launched July 1, 2025. Over 73% of people are either staying the same or had an increase in funding. Nevertheless, appeals have spiked. If you are appealing, you must show that the tool was inaccurate. The Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee is seeking members. If you know of anyone that might be interested, please encourage them to apply.

Division of Behavioral Health (DBH)

DBH continues to work on the Pathways Home Waiver with the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS). The seven Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) have been certified and will begin billing Medicaid as of January 2026. The Request for Applications (RFAs) from the Opioid Settlement Dollars were submitted and DBH has chosen the RFAs that would best fit the needs of Nebraska. The Opioid settlement dollars are for infrastructure. DBH continues to work on setting up the provider technical assistance (TA) center to help providers navigate the system. They are also working towards DBH and Medicaid data integration to gain a full view of the state's system.

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

The OSE proudly celebrated 50 years of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Fifty years ago, our nation made a promise that every child, regardless of disability, deserves a free and appropriate public education – that learning, belonging, and opportunity are rights, not privileges. The NDE – OSE sent out a continuity clarification memo on October 15, 2025, as they recognize the uncertainty that recent federal reductions in force (RIFs) within the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs may cause for state and local leaders. They wanted to acknowledge the concern that accompanies such national changes while also providing reassurance and clarity regarding Nebraska's ongoing responsibilities to children and youth with disabilities. IDEA is still law and is still in effect.

The Indicator 8 Parent Survey is currently open for parents to complete who have students with disabilities from age 3 to 21 for Schools in Cohort 3. For the 2026-27 school year, OSE will have all Districts in Nebraska participate in the Survey. The Transition Team finished Indicator 13 data collection and reviewed transition files for all Districts in Nebraska. Letters of Notification of Findings will be going out in January 2026. OSE is about to begin Focused Monitoring of student files for Districts selected based on Risk, NE Counts, and Determinations.

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

VR continues to provide technical assistance to agency providers in an effort of improving the quality-of-service delivery. VR and DHHS-DDD partnered to host a Lunch and Learn webinar on October 23, 2025. There have been 61 successful Supported Employment/Customized Employment (SE/CE) outcomes for Program Year 2025 which began July 1, 2025. They are on track to increase the number of outcomes from last year. VR continues to collaborate with agency partners as a result of the Dr. Mills study and subsequent action plan. VR and Assistive Technology Partners (ATP) continue to be actively engaged in the development and implementation of Nebraska's Olmstead Plan. The VR Director leads the employment workgroup, and the ATP Director is the Chair of the housing workgroup. The agency's involvement in this critical planning helps to ensure employment and accessibility remain a priority for Nebraskans with disabilities. On October 7, 2025, VR hosted the 2025 State Rehabilitation Council

Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards. This event highlights the successful partnership between VR and the businesses and communities they serve.

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

There was an opportunity that came to all the states called the Rural Health Transformation Grant. This is a huge opportunity for rural health in Nebraska. It focuses a lot on public health activities such as investing in workforce, telehealth, community health workers, and Emergency Medical Services. This is five-year grant. That is all she can say at this time until the funding has been determined, and the state knows exactly what it will be doing. She will have more to report on the grant at the next Council meeting.

She also mentioned that the five-year action plan for Title V kicked off on October 1, 2025. In future meetings she will be speaking about screenings for developmental delays, not just for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSCHN), but for all children, and access to care for mental and behavioral health services for CYSCHN. Access to care is a huge problem and it is something they will be focusing on for the next five years.

Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging (MLTC)

Nebraska Medicaid held their first Beneficiary Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting on July 17, 2025. They have 10 new members, some of which are caregivers or family members of people with IDD. The State Plan Amendment (NE 25-0001) would create the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) program, effective January 2026. CCBHCs will focus on providing integrated and comprehensive behavioral health services (such as crisis mental health response, mental health and substance use evaluation and treatment, and psychiatric rehabilitation).

On July 18, 2025, DHHS posted a public notice of its intent to submit an amendment application to CMS under Section 1115 of the Social Security Act. DHHS is seeking approval from CMS for a five-year amendment to the Nebraska 1115 Substance Use Disorder Demonstration Waiver Amendment.

Updates from the DD Network Representatives

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

Disability Rights Nebraska

Tania Diaz provided the Disability Rights Nebraska report. They are 85% federally funded so they have also placed some restrictions (travel, staff increases, new initiatives) to make sure they have enough carryover funds until they receive some grant awards. They continue to monitor the Beatrice State Development Center (BSDC). There has been an uptick in youth at the center. The incoming youth are not just out-of-state juvenile placements. The elimination of the wait list has changed how some system-involved youth in juvenile court jurisdiction will receive funding and services, and the expanded program at BSDC is intended to address the young people who will have a state DD case worker now rather than a probation officer who may lack the special knowledge of the young person's needs. State officials continue to assert that there is no expectation that BSDC will have additional permanent residents. The youth program will be solely for short term placements when someone's behavior requires stabilization.

They continue with their Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy program. It teaches people in the community how to be advocates and to help families navigate the special education process. They are very close to having a total of 50 advocates available to families across the state. They have been working with the Nebraska Supported Employment Action Plan group. This group was made up of state organizations responsible for encouraging competitive, integrated employment for Nebraskans with significant support needs. The work with this group expanded the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training to include an emphasis on transition planning that focuses on post-secondary training and employment.

They have been pushing out the Olmstead Advisory Committee's Transportation survey via email and through our collaborative connections.

Seamus Kelly added that they are seeking new Board of Directors members. If anyone is interested in being on the Board, please contact Seamus.

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

In collaboration with People First of Nebraska and generous support from the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities, they hosted the 2025 Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution (SOAR) Conference October 3-5, 2025 in Omaha, Nebraska. There were 255 participants from seven states, two excellent keynote speakers, an Art Panel featuring local artists with disabilities, a community art activity, 17 breakout presentations, 26 exhibitors, and some social activities including karaoke, bingo, live band and dance. Over 180 participants completed surveys with positive ratings.

They are finalizing the Year 1 performance report for the Nebraska EmployABILITY project directed by Rachel Ray. This is a collaborative project with Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation to develop and implement employment skills assessment and training for multiple types of jobs utilizing technology such as virtual reality.

The new driving simulator is installed. The Occupational Therapy department most recently established the Foundational Driving Program, which gives participants the opportunity to build skills needed for safe driving before getting behind the wheel. For those not deemed safe to drive, the program includes a community mobility track focused on rideshare, public transportation, and way finding.

Future/upcoming activities include building Primary Care capacity at MMI so they can function as an integrated, interdisciplinary medical home for families and individuals across the lifespan with developmental disabilities. The first pediatrician was hired, Brittni Herrera, MD, and they hope to have clinical services offered at the beginning of the new calendar year. They are currently recruiting for additional physicians and do plan to provide care across the lifespan. They are also currently recruiting for one to two psychiatrists with expertise in developmental disabilities.

Council Chair and Staff Updates

Beth mentioned that Ellie went to the 2025 SOAR Conference. She is continuing with Person-Centered Planning and Supported Decision Making. In Norfolk, they are adding five new sports to Special Olympics – bocce ball, cornhole, track, softball, and basketball. The Arc of Norfolk Thanksgiving Dinner is on Sunday.

Kristen had a few updates to share.

- The 2025 Program Performance Report is due December 30, 2025.
- Federal Policy Concerns

- Government shutdown
- Snap benefits – Trying to get information out.
- RIFs at the federal level – especially at the Department of Education – Office of Special Education
- Supported Employment Action Plan – Contract with Becki Koehler ended September 30, 2025, but work will continue on.
- Olmstead Plan – Staff getting more involved on workgroups.
- New Council Member Orientation – Date to be determined.

Rachel Ward shared that this year we had another contract with the University of Missouri at Kansas City for Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) Ambassadors. Nebraska has 67 Ambassadors. There are still people who do not know what CtLC is. Rachel has been getting the word out about CtLC at events like Disability Pride, various conferences/workshops, and the Special Education Advisory Committee. Sean, from TransCen, has had a very positive impact in Nebraska with the *Building Capacity to Engage Families around Employment* project. TransCen has finished up the provider sessions and now are working on a few transition conferences. There are some things that need to be finalized with People First of Nebraska and their second year.

Edith Titamoh mentioned the Employer Survey contract with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln is progressing well and is on track with its timelines. There have been planning committee meetings, the survey was sent out, focus groups are being created with five questions to be addressed.

Council Member Updates

Rachel S. shared that she finished the iTACC Workgroup Chair training. It was very good training and nice to learn from other states. They are almost halfway through Braxton's senior year. Braxton's Blooms has expanded with more plants. In addition to the spider plants, he has Swedish ivy, aloe vera, Christmas cactus, and there are plants she does not know the names for. Braxton is the student manager for the football team and is involved with Youth Activation Committee with the Special Olympics. He took 1st place in unified bowling. They went to the national FAA Convention. Rachel S. mentioned it is neat to see Braxton's progress from the start to now. Braxton turns 18 in January, and they think they are going to go the special needs power of attorney route. Then after he graduates, they are taking him on a Disney cruise. Aubrey got a summer internship for the Nebraska Corn Growers Association in St. Louis.

Joe wanted to express his appreciation for what some of our state agencies go through. He'd also like to recognize first responders. He wanted to reiterate his and Dee's pleasure and how fortunate they are to have their son at BSDC, and the growth that he has experienced there. From their perspective, BSDC needs to be a backup position to have available.

Brent has been working at the Hyatt for two years. His nephew is going to play the saxophone at the Christmas concert.

Eddie went to the SOAR Conference. He performed in the *Looking Glass* at Ollie Webb. He had the opportunity to go with a group from the theater to Scottsbluff to the Great Plains Museum and the new Japanese museum. He presented and participated in a couple of workshops. The last couple of months he has been learning about Japanese public communities. The reason why he is learning about Japanese culture is he has a performance this weekend, a Japanese folk story. He continues to bowl and will start swimming next week for the Special Olympics.

Joshua Whitfield mentioned that he has two new clients.

Reeks mentioned that she is back at the Department of Corrections and within six weeks, was involved in a use of force which resulted in a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Public Comment Period #2

Beth 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

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

The next Council meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2026 and will be hybrid (in-person and virtual).

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

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

Mission

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

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

Five-Year Needs Assessment Report 2025

Kerry Miller, PhD
Abbey Siebler, M.A.



1

Purpose

- NCDD advances advocacy, systems change, and capacity building
- Promotes independence, inclusion, and access to community supports
- Five-year needs assessment identifies statewide priorities
- 2025 results will guide NCDD's future focus and activities

2

Needs Assessment Method

- Conducted by MMI & NCDD using surveys, interviews, and focus groups
- Respondents: self-advocates, families/guardians, and providers
- Data collected Spring–Summer 2025
- Guided by DD Act areas + Nebraska-specific priorities
- Accessible surveys (English/Spanish, audio option)
- Broad statewide outreach with targeted recruitment of minority populations

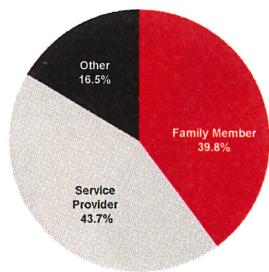
3

Needs Assessment Method

- 236 respondents completed the survey (2.5% in Spanish)
- Race/Ethnicity: Majority Caucasian; 7.1% Hispanic; small percentages of Black, multiracial, and other groups
- Geography: 61.4% urban, 19.6% rural, 19.0% urban cluster
- Gender: 88% female; 12% male

4

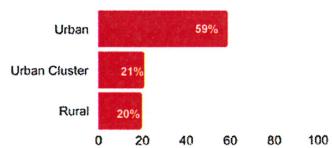
Needs Assessment Method



5

Self-Advocate Survey

102 individuals completed, majority live in urban settings
2.9% were Spanish Speaking



6

Gathering Experiences

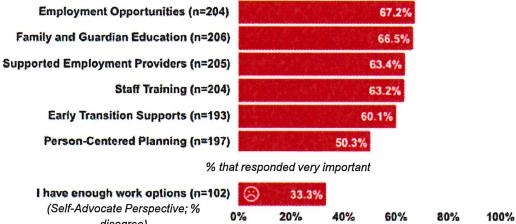
Focus Groups & Interviews

- 4 focus groups with 16 total participants
 - 2 self-advocate groups (8 participants)
 - 1 Spanish-speaking family group
 - 1 mixed group of families, self-advocates, and professionals (4 participants; rural & urban)
- 24 interviews conducted with parents, professionals, and community members
- Participants represented both urban and rural areas across the state



7

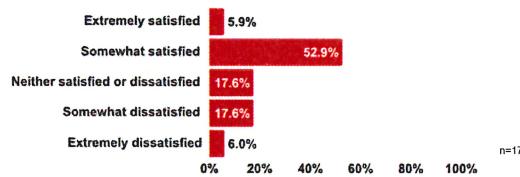
Employment



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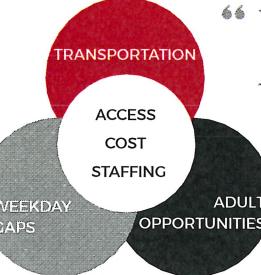
Employment

Supported Employment Services



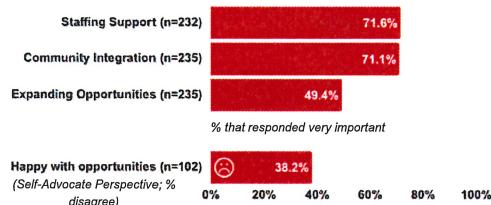
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Employment



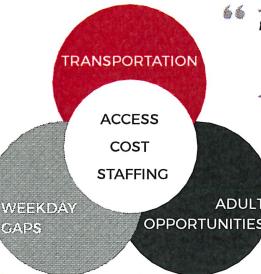
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Recreation and Community Activities



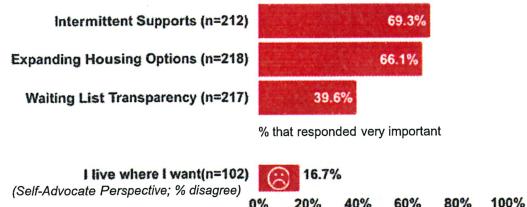
11

Recreation and Community Activities



12

Housing

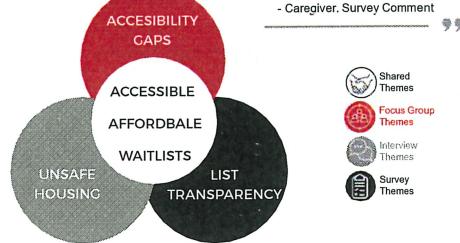


13

Housing

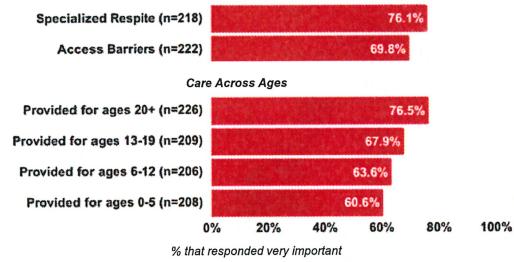
“
There is a very long waiting list to find housing.
- Parent, Interview

“
Nebraska lacks affordable, accessible housing... voucher classes are not geared for people with disabilities.
- Caregiver, Survey Comment



14

Child Care and Respite Services



15

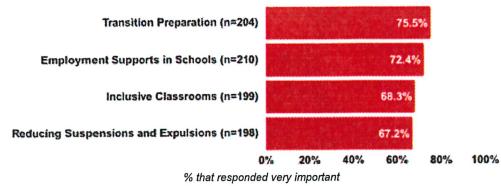
Child Care and Respite Services

“
We are exhausted... we have not had respite in years due to medical needs.
- Parent, Survey Comment



16

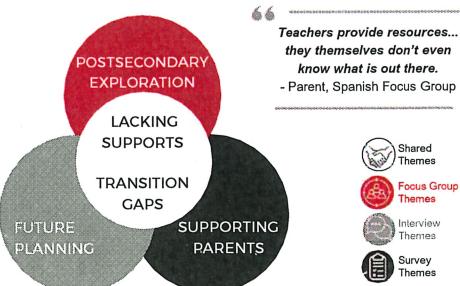
Education and Early Intervention



17

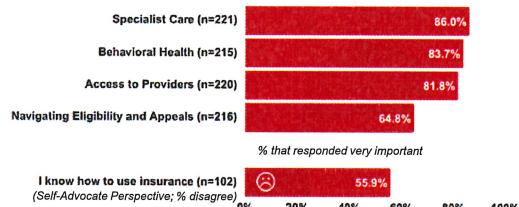
Education and Early Intervention

“
Teachers provide resources... they themselves don't even know what is out there.
- Parent, Spanish Focus Group



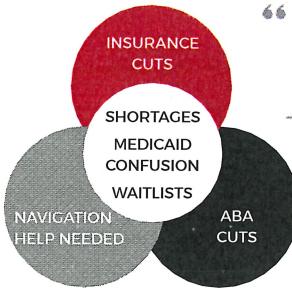
18

Health and Healthcare



19

Health and Healthcare

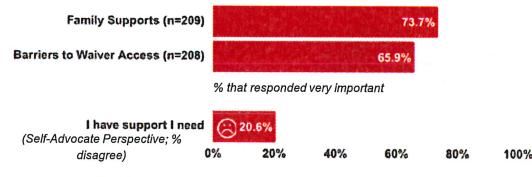


“The process for Medicaid and social security is incredibly hard...it's very stressing for me as a parent.”
- Parent, Spanish Focus Group



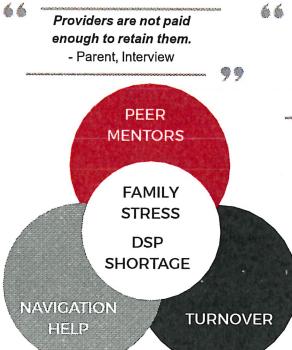
20

Informal and Formal Supports



21

Informal and Formal Supports



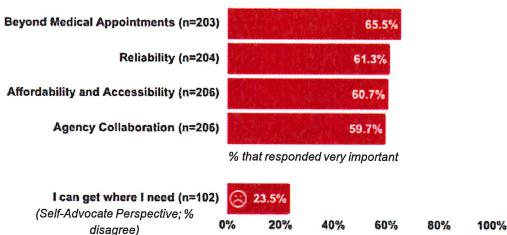
“Providers are not paid enough to retain them.”
- Parent, Interview

“If you can make more money at McDonald's than supporting someone...this is the problem.”
- Survey Comment



22

Transportation



23

Transportation

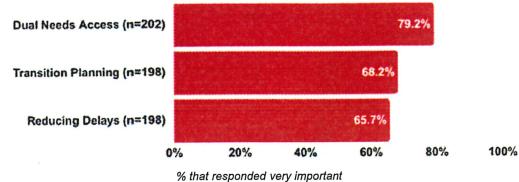


“We have thousands of adults who need transportation... we have 8 HandyVans.”
- Professional, Survey Comment



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Criteria for Eligibility of Services

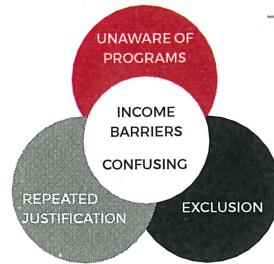


25

Criteria for Eligibility of Services

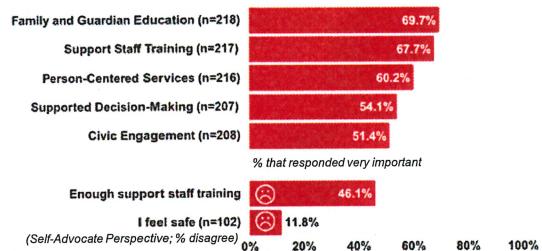
“We shouldn't have to work less to qualify for Medicaid.”
- Parent, Spanish Focus Group

“Income cutoffs left us without help, even though we still had needs.”
- Family Member, Survey Comment



26

Quality Assurance



27

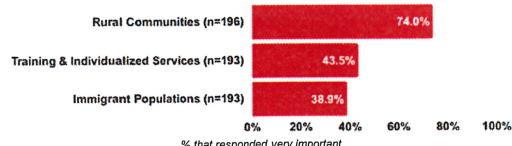
Quality Assurance

“Sometimes the guardians like to take over... and it's not really the individual's input.”
- Service Coordinator, Interview



28

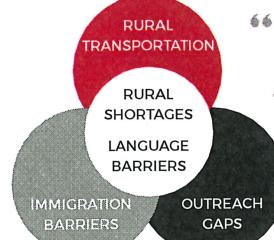
Reaching Underserved Communities



29

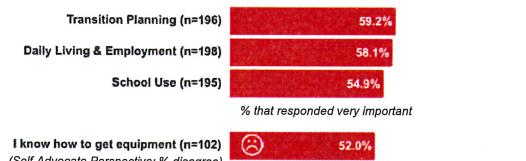
Reaching Underserved Communities

“Transportation gaps in rural communities are especially isolating.”
- Self-Advocate, Focus Group



30

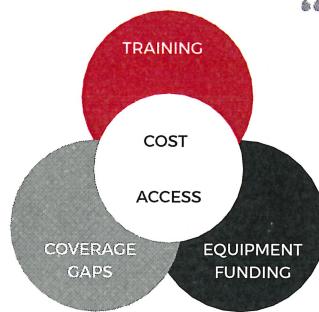
Assistive Technology



31

Assistive Technology

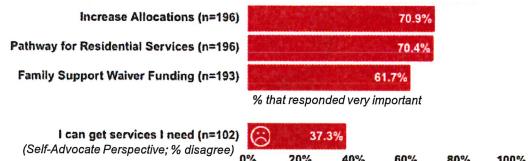
“The state does not provide enough options for adaptive equipment... this is a critical need.
 - Parent, Interview



- Shared Themes
- Focus Group Themes
- Interview Themes
- Survey Themes

32

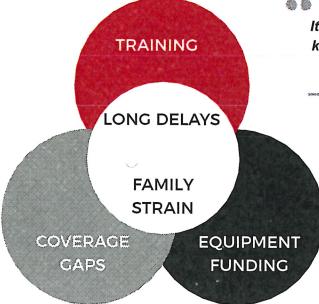
Waiting Lists



33

Waiting Lists

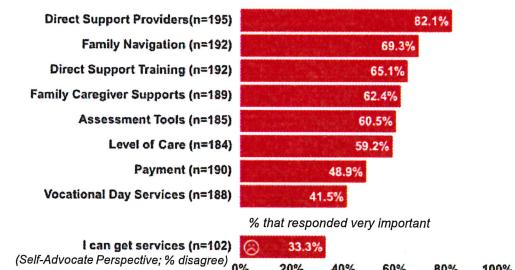
“It's hard to even begin when you know you'll be waiting for years.
 - Parent, Spanish Focus Group



- Shared Themes
- Focus Group Themes
- Interview Themes
- Survey Themes

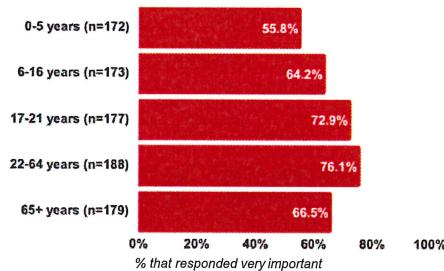
34

Adequacy of Waiver Services



35

Adequacy of Waiver Services by Age



36

Adequacy of Waiver Services



37

Audio Narration Use and Satisfaction

Needs Assessment Survey

236 individuals completed the survey

8 (4.3%) of participants used the narration option. 75% of those participants used it often, and the other 25% sometimes used it.

100% of respondents reported being happy with the narration.

Self-Advocate Survey

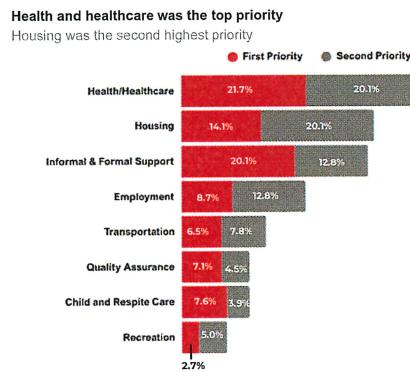
102 self-advocates completed the survey

13 (12.7%) of the 102 self-advocates used the audio narration feature.

100% of respondents reported that the voice narration was helpful.

38

Priority Areas



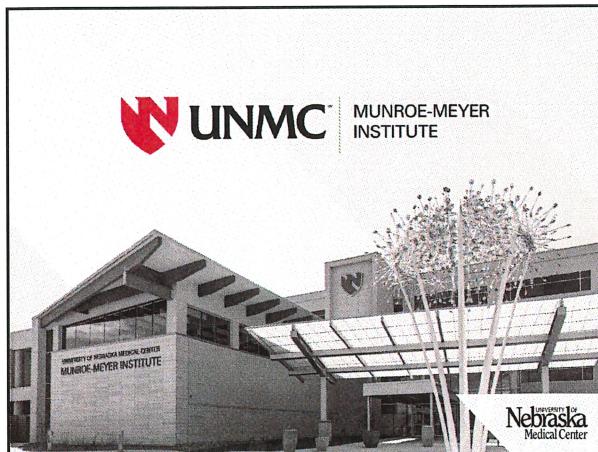
39

Key Findings



- **Health and healthcare access** emerged as the top priority, including better Medicaid navigation, more providers, improved behavioral health access, and specialist coverage.
- **Housing** is a major concern, with strong needs for affordable, accessible options and flexible supports such as intermittent waiver services.
- **Supports** for families and individuals—including **respite, waiver navigation, and peer connections**—are essential to independence and caregiver sustainability.

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Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative Report to Council Members

Representative: Christopher Chambers

Agency: Office of Special Education at Nebraska Department of Education

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

The Office of Special Education proudly celebrates 50 years of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Fifty years ago, our nation made a promise: that every child, regardless of disability, deserves a free and appropriate public education — that learning, belonging, and opportunity are rights, not privileges. Before IDEA, millions of children were excluded from school or denied needed supports. The 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which became IDEA, transformed public education and countless lives. As we honor this milestone, let's reflect on our progress and renew our commitment to inclusion, access, and excellence for all students. Happy 50th Anniversary, IDEA — and thank you, Nebraska, for keeping this promise alive for five decades and beyond.

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Office of Special Education sent out a memo that went out October 15 as we recognize the uncertainty that recent federal reductions in force (RIFs) within the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) may cause for state and local leaders. We want to acknowledge the concern that accompanies such national changes while also providing reassurance and clarity regarding Nebraska's ongoing responsibilities to children and youth with disabilities. Here is the link: [2025 Federal Continuity Clarification\[4\].pdf](#).

Below are other memos sent from the Office of Special Education at NDE

- [2025 Clarification Memo – Unenrollment Policy Memo](#)
- [2025 Clarification Memo – Residential Placement \(ISD\)](#)
- [2025 – 2026 School Year Letter – 1st Quarter Activities](#)

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

- The Indicator 8 Parent Survey is currently open for parents to complete who have students with disabilities from age 3 to 21 for School Districts in Cohort 3; FYI: for the 2026-27 school year the Office of Special Education will have all Districts in Nebraska participate in the survey
- The Transition Team finished Indicator 13 data collection and reviewed transition files for all Districts in Nebraska. Letters of Notification of Findings will be going out in January 2025. Link for Transition Planning: [Transition Planning in Nebraska](#)

- The Office of Special Education is about to begin Focused Monitoring of student files for Districts selected based on Risk; NE Counts, and Determinations.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

Western Region Transition Summit: December 5, 2025

Link to register: [ESU 13: Workshops: Workshop Section Details](#)

2026 ASD Autism Conference, Kearney Nebraska

April 9, 10, 2026

Link: <https://cehsvl02.unl.edu/ccp/secd/asdnetwork/>

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative Report to Council Members

Representative: Tony Green, Director

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

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

The InterRAI Assessments for DD Waivers

- Beginning July 2025, Nebraska began using two interRAI assessments for the DD Waiver:
 - interRAI Intellectual Disability called the interRAI ID – For ages 22 years and older
 - The interRAI Children and Youth Mental Health and Developmental Disability Called the ChYMH-DD - For ages 4 through 21 years.
- As of November 1, a total of 2049 interRAI's assessment interviews have been completed.
 - Of those interviews completed, 66% assessments have been approved:
 - 1065 Renewal interRAI's approved
 - 267 Initial interRAI's approved
- Of the renewals 73% have experienced no change or an increase in funding.

Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee – Seeking Members:

- The DD Advisory Committee is currently seeking new members. This committee advised DHHS on funding and delivery of DD Services, including:
 - Providing oversight to make sure people placed in the custody of the department under the Developmental Disabilities Court-Ordered Custody Act receive the least restrictive treatment and services necessary;
 - Overseeing the design and implementation of the quality management and improvement plan; and
 - Assisting, providing feedback, and guiding the implementation of the family support program under.
- If you know of anyone that might be interested, please encourage them to apply.
- To apply complete the application on the Governor's Boards and Commission page: <https://governor.nebraska.gov/boards-commissions-open-positions>

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

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

- Monthly DHHS Stakeholder Meeting – Monday, December 1, 2025
- DD Advisory Committee Meeting – Wednesday, January 14, 2026
- Olmstead Advisory Committee Meeting – Wednesday, January 28, 2026

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative
Report to Council Members

Representative: Diana Meadors, Deputy DBH

Agency: HHS DBH

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

DBH continues to work on the Pathways Home Waiver with CMS. The 7 CCBHC's have been certified and will begin billing Medicaid as of January 2026. The RFA from the opioid settlement dollars were submitted and DBH has chosen the RFA's that would best fit the needs of Nebraska. We are currently working with the agency's on gathering more details for sustainability of such programs. We hope to get the contracts to procurement by December 2025.

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

DBH continues to work on setting up our provider TA center to help providers navigate our system. We are also working towards DBH and Medicaid data integration to gain a full view of our state's system.

Future/upcoming Agency activities: N/A

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative Report to Council Members

Representative: DJ Plautz

Agency: Nebraska VR

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

- Nebraska VR continues to provide technical assistance to agency providers in an effort of improving the quality of service delivery.
- Nebraska VR and DHHS-DD partnered to host a Lunch/Learn webinar on October 23rd.
- Successful SE/CE outcomes for PY 2025 = 61
- Nebraska VR continues to collaborate with agency partners as a result of the Dr. Mills study and subsequent action plan.
- Nebraska VR and ATP continue to be actively engaged in the development and implementation of Nebraska's Olmstead Plan. The VR Director leads the employment workgroup and the ATP Director is the chair of the housing workgroup. The agency's involvement in this critical planning helps to ensure employment and accessibility remain a priority for Nebraskans with disabilities.
- On October 7th, Nebraska VR hosted the 2025 SRC Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards. This event highlights the successful partnership between Nebraska VR and the businesses and communities they serve. Five Nebraska VR partners received awards for their role in creating inclusive workplaces and advocacy for disability employment. For more information on this event, please visit <https://vr.nebraska.gov/src/index.html>

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative
Report to Council Members

Representative: Dawn Sybrant

Agency: MLTC

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

- **Beneficiary Advisory Committee (BAC)**

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

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

- **State Plan Amendment (SPA) NE 25-0001: Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC)**

This SPA would create the CCBHC program, effective January 2026. CCBHCs will focus on providing integrated and comprehensive behavioral health services (such as crisis mental health response, mental health and substance use evaluation and treatment, and psychiatric rehabilitation).

- **1115 Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Waiver Amendment**

On July 18, 2025, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) posted a public notice of its intent to submit an amendment application to CMS under Section 1115 of the Social Security Act. DHHS is seeking approval from CMS for a five-year amendment to the Nebraska 1115 SUD demonstration.

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

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

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

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

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

Use ATTN: Crystal Georgiana

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

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

Disability Rights Nebraska
Report to Council Members
November 2025

Representative: Seamus Kelly/ Tania Diaz

Agency: Disability Rights Nebraska

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

Disability Rights Nebraska is currently holding off on beginning any new initiatives or cross-state travel due to funding uncertainties. We do have carryover funds that are currently allowing us to remain open.

We have met with Senator Ricketts' aide in Lincoln to better acquaint him with our services; we have also re-sent the letters featured in the last update detailing how many people were reached through legal advice, monitoring, training, information, outreach and policy changes using our most threatened funding sources.

We continue to provide advocacy services to individuals who contact us and to collaborate on existing projects.

Monitoring:

Beatrice State Developmental Center

We continue to work with the Department of Health and Human Services on the restrictions in document access from Beatrice State Developmental Center (BSDC), the hiring of people with a former felony conviction, and the expansion of youth services at BSDC.

In regard to the expansion, we had specific concerns about youth-focused staff training and how educational services were to be provided to youth.

BSDC has begun renovation on unused space to have an in-person classroom with a teacher, decorations, activities, books, etc. Since up until

now, BSDC has been relying upon passive, non-interactive electronic education for young people who can't be admitted to Beatrice Public Schools, we feel this is a significant development in the right direction.

We also learned that the incoming youth aren't just out-of-state juvenile placements. The elimination of the wait list has changed how some system-involved youth in juvenile court jurisdiction will receive funding and services, and the expanded program at BSDC is intended to address the young people who will have a state DD caseworker now rather than a probation officer who may lack the special knowledge of the young person's needs.

State officials continue to assert that there is no expectation that BSDC will have additional permanent residents: the youth program will be solely for short term placements when someone's behavior requires stabilization.

Day Services for People with Disabilities

Assault Follow-up: Last quarter, we began our investigation into a day-service provider based on a report of a staff member with a former felony conviction who sexually assaulted a program participant at a day program for adults with intellectual disabilities. We completed in-person monitoring visits to a number of day-program sites run by that provider, conducted interviews with the victim and her parents, and combed through the final record production showing the Department of Health and Human Services' investigation into the assault. We assisted the family in locating a private lawyer so they could pursue a lawsuit for monetary damages. We then drafted a fifteen-page letter of findings that itemized failings in practice and policy by both DHHS and by the provider and also proposed remedial steps. We were gratified that the provider immediately responded with serious and thoughtful reactions to our recommendations. The Department of Health and Human Services is rewriting the felon hiring eligibility guidelines.

Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Program

- Ten (10) families were referred to the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Program during this period. Seven of these families were assigned an advocate to assist them. Information was provided on additional resources for the families. Issues that families reported included informal removal from school, failure to provide needed medical supports, as well as evaluations for identification of special education needs.

- The Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Coordinator, Pat Cottingham, agreed to assist a family whose primary language is Spanish with the assistance of a Disability Rights Nebraska staff member who is a fluent Spanish speaker. The 10-year-old child with autism was removed from school for inappropriate touch. The coordinator provided information on resources within the family's home community to assist and attended two IEP meetings to advocate for appropriate behavioral supports for the child to return to the school environment. The school agreed to bring in the child's behavior therapist to assist the school in developing a behavior intervention plan and the child is currently attending the school for increasingly longer periods of time.
- Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training was completed on October 16 with four new advocates. We are getting very close to having a total of 50 advocates available to families across the state.
- The Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Coordinator attended and spoke to the Nebraska Special Education Advisory Council meeting. She addressed the importance of an inclusive education environment and early employment focussed transition support for students with significant support needs to foster employment beyond the high school years.
- The Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Coordinator participated along with Tania Diaz in the Nebraska Supported Employment Action Plan group. This group was made up of state organizations responsible for encouraging competitive, integrated employment for Nebraskans with significant support needs. The work with this group expanded the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy training to include an emphasis on transition planning that focuses on post-secondary training and employment.

Transportation Survey

We've been pushing out the Olmstead Advisory Committee's Transportation survey via email and through our collaborative connections.

We all know that transportation is a major barrier in Nebraska. The goal with the survey is to learn about the transportation needs and challenges of people with disabilities across Nebraska and to create better, more inclusive services that help everyone get where they need to go. The survey will help

guide the work of the committee, state lawmakers, and other decision-makers.

You can fill out the survey here: <https://tinyurl.com/bddbb9eu>

The survey is open until **November 30, 2025**.

Email newsletters

Seven email newsletters were disseminated during the fourth quarter:

- 7.2.25 Give them a call – shared information provided by the Nebraska Association of Service Providers regarding a House budget proposal. Contact information for Nebraska's Representatives and a template letter were provided. 859 emails were sent, 702 delivered, 44% opened, 39 people clicked a link.
- 7.11.25 Trainings, Surveys, and Bacon – Shared MMI's Family Care Enhancement Project webinar to help families navigate the DD system; EnABLE training by TectonicChange; SRV training; Employment survey from the Public Policy Center / DD Council; Disability Rights' public comment opportunity; and Rep Bacon virtual town hall. 969 emails were sent, 794 delivered, 43% opened, 38 people clicked on a link.
- 7.25.25 Public comment reminder – Final opportunity to participate in Disability Rights' public comment process. 967 emails were sent, 789 delivered, 45% opened, 51 people clicked a link.
- 7.29.25 Flood Town Hall, Executive Order, Waiver Training – shared details for live town hall event for Rep Mike Flood in Lincoln, NE; statement from the National Disability Rights Network regarding the Executive Order directed at "ending crime and disorder on America's streets" authorizing increased involuntary commitment of people experiencing homelessness, including individuals with psychiatric disabilities; Munroe-Meyer webinar to help people understand the ins and outs of Nebraska's updated Medicaid waiver programs. 968 emails were sent, 791 delivered, 45% opened, 42 people clicked a link.
- 8.13.25 Olmstead, Housing, MMI Training – sharing information from the Olmstead Advisory Committee's Housing workgroup to encourage people to provide input on LR 85, an interim study to identify and examine the state of affordable, safe and accessible housing in Nebraska; Munroe-Meyer webinar to help people understand the ins and outs of Nebraska's updated Medicaid waiver programs;

transportation town halls regarding passenger rail systems in Nebraska. 969 emails sent, 792 delivered, 46% opened, 34 people clicked a link, 5 people unsubscribed.

- 9.15.25 A Few Quick Announcements – announcing a MMI webinar designed to help individuals and families learn about the Nebraska Family Support Waiver, a Medicaid program that offers home and community-based services for children with disabilities; EnABLE training in Omaha Sept 23; remaining transportation town halls to gauge interest in passenger rail system. 974 emails sent, 794 delivered, 46% opened, 43 people clicked a link, 5 people unsubscribed.
- 9.25.25 Week Without Driving, Employment, Apiary – challenging people to participate in the national Week Without Driving exercise to highlight issues with affordable, accessible transportation options in Nebraska; opportunity to attend a workshop on employment for young adults with disabilities “Imagine the Possibilities – A Path to Employment Success” sessions to be held in Columbus and Norfolk through a collaboration between Easterseals, Nebraska Council on Developmental Disability and TransCen; Civic Nebraska’s Apiary leadership development program open for nominations. 974 emails sent, 793 delivered, 42% opened, 42 people clicked a link, 3 people unsubscribed.

Blog Posts

- 7.28.25: [More Than a Law: 35 years of the ADA through lived experience](#): written by Molly Klocksin, this interview with two local women with disabilities highlights positive changes the ADA has made in their lives, and how far we have yet to go for true inclusion and accessibility.
- 9.17.25: [It's About People Having Options and Choices: Olmstead in Nebraska](#).
An updated version of Nebraska's Olmstead Plan was submitted to the Legislature in July. What is the plan and what does it do for Nebraskans with disabilities? Legal Services Director Dianne DeLair walks us through its significance in this new blog post.

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative
Report to Council Members

Representative: Mark Shriver

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

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

In collaboration with People First of Nebraska and generous support from the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities, we hosted SOAR conference October 3-5, 2025 at Embassy Suites Downtown in Omaha, NE. We had 255 participants from 7 states, 2 excellent keynote speakers, an Art Panel featuring local artists with disabilities, a community art activity, 17 breakout presentations, 26 exhibitors, and social activities including karaoke, bingo, live band and dance. Over 180 participants completed surveys with positive ratings across all activities.

Maryjan Fiala, our consumer and family program specialist, was invited to participate as a family/patient representative on a National Roundtable titled "Advancing Health and Learning Outcomes by Transforming Interprofessional Collaboration: A Roundtable Dialogue Reimagining the Clinical Learning Environment Together." This Roundtable was an interdisciplinary, systems-level, action-oriented dialogue to develop meaningful improvement in health and learning outcomes in the interprofessional clinical learning environment and was sponsored by the Cleveland Clinic and the National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education.

We are finalizing our Year 1 (October 1, 2024-September 30, 2025) performance report for the Nebraska EmployABILITY project directed by Rachel Ray. This is a collaborative project with Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation to develop and implement employment skills assessment and training for multiple types of jobs utilizing technology such as virtual reality. To date we have:

- 166 participants served statewide (98% of all referrals)
- 31 participants advanced to postsecondary education
- 44 individuals achieved CIE earning $\geq \$13/\text{hour}$
- 4 participants earned industry-recognized WISE Level I certifications
- 450+ virtual simulations and 8,000+ hours of hands-on training completed
- 269 individualized clinical assessments conducted

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

New Driving Simulator Installed: The Occupational Therapy department most recently established the Foundational Driving Program, which gives participants the opportunity to build skills needed for safe driving before getting behind the wheel. For those not deemed safe to drive, the program includes a community mobility track focused on rideshare, public transportation and way finding.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

Building Primary Care capacity at MMI so that we can function as an integrated, interdisciplinary medical home for families and individuals across the lifespan with developmental disabilities. First pediatrician was hired, Brittni Herrera, MD, and we hope to have clinical services offered beginning of the new calendar year. Currently recruiting for additional physicians and do plan to provide care across lifespan. Also currently recruiting for 1-2 psychiatrists with expertise in developmental disabilities.

**Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities
Legislative and Advocacy Committee
FFY2026**

Council Members

Joe Valenti, Chairperson

Quinton Corwin

Shauna Graham

Brent Hoffman

Seamus Kelly

Eddie Kraska

Diana Meadors

Sasha Reeks

Joe Valenti

*Beth Libra

Non-Council Members

Amy Bonn
Special Education Law; The Arc of NE, Parent

Tammy Coffey
Hands of Heartland, Quality Supports & Compliance

Phil Gray
The Arc of NE, Legislative Committee Chair

Sue Hamilton
Owner of Christopher's Promise, Parent, and A&D waiver provider

Brad Meurrens
Disability Rights Nebraska

Alana Schriver
Nebraska Association of Service Providers (NASP) and MMI CAB member

People First of Nebraska
Disability Policy Specialist [To Be Determined]

01/02/2026

Public Comment on behalf of the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCDD)

Submitted by Kristen Larsen, Council Executive Director

Re: DHHS Renewal Application of the Home & Community Based Services (HCBS) Aged and Adult and Children with Disabilities (A&D) Waiver and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) waiver amendment

On behalf of the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCDD), I am submitting public comments on Nebraska DHHS's application to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) for the A&D waiver. Although NCDD is appointed by the Governor and administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), we operate independently, and our comments do not necessarily reflect the views of the Governor's administration or DHHS. NCDD is a federally mandated, independent Council comprised of individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, community providers, and agency representatives who advocate for systems change and quality services.

NCDD works to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in designing and accessing community services, individualized supports, and other assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and full inclusion in community life. When needed, NCDD serves as a nonpartisan source of information and advice for state policymakers and appreciates the opportunity to provide input through this DHHS public comment process.

NCDD is deeply concerned that DHHS-DDD released notice and requested public comments on the A&D and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury) Waivers during two federally and state-recognized holidays. These changes will significantly impact individuals with varied disabilities, including those with developmental disabilities and brain injuries. Stakeholders deserve a full 30-day comment period that allows adequate time to review extensive application materials without the disruption of holiday schedules. We strongly urge DHHS to engage stakeholders earlier in discussions about major service changes.

It is also troubling that these proposals were not shared with the Governor's Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee or Nebraska's Olmstead Advisory Committee before public comment. Families and advocates were caught off guard by the scope of these changes, introduced without sufficient notice or prior dialogue. This approach raises serious concerns about transparency with stakeholders, families, and recipients of the A&D and TBI waivers.

NCDD highlights the following concerns regarding the proposed A&D waiver renewal application.

Within Appendix B: Participant Access and Eligibility

NCDD is very concerned about how these changes will impact the quality of lives or the ability to have the choice to live in the community based on the cap limits. These changes include the following:

Appendix B-2: Individual Cost Limit

- Added individual cost limit in excess of institutional costs.
- Added how the state is implementing the individual cost limit.
- Added other safeguards for when services exceed cost limit.
- Added High Utilization Review at 150% by DDD Central Office-Clinical Support
- Added individual cost limit in excess of institutional costs of no more than 175%. Added how the state is implementing an individual cost limit.
- Added safeguards for when services exceed the cost limit.
- Institutional costs are based on the total State Fiscal Year (SFY) expenditures divided by the average number of recipients. In SFY2025, Nursing Facility costs were **\$92,438** per person.

These proposed changes raise serious concerns about individuals' ability to remain in their own homes. For many people served under this waiver, in-home supports are not simply a preference — they are essential. Nebraska also lacks sufficient facility-based options to accommodate those who could be displaced by reductions in home-based services. Imposing caps or reducing hours without viable alternatives threatens individuals' safety and independence.

The proposed caps on personal care hours conflict with the principles of person-centered planning. Current authorizations reflect documented assessments of need. Replacing individualized determinations with arbitrary limits disregards person-centered practices and creates real risks to health and safety.

Cost caps tied to Medicaid nursing home rates are equally problematic. These rates have contributed to nursing home closures in Nebraska, making them an unreliable benchmark for community-based services. Applying the same standard to individuals living at home is fundamentally flawed. While NCDD understands the need for fiscal responsibility, these caps could destabilize supports for people with the most significant needs. If DHHS moves forward, individuals currently above the proposed limits should be grandfathered to prevent abrupt service disruptions and ensure continuity of care.

NCDD is also concerned about the introduction of individual cost limits and the unclear process for high-utilization reviews. The waiver language lacks transparency and raises questions about due process and fairness. For example:

- The description of combining waiver costs with "Medicaid state plan services" is ambiguous. Stakeholders should not have to seek clarification to understand what services are included.
- The clinical review process is undefined. Who conducts it? What qualifications and criteria apply? Without clear standards, decisions risk being arbitrary and harmful.

The proposed 175% cost limit is particularly troubling. The application acknowledges that some individuals' needs cannot be met within this cap and suggests referrals to other community services or institutional care. This fundamentally changes the waiver's purpose—from serving all individuals who meet nursing facility level of care to excluding those with the highest needs. Institutional placement is not an acceptable substitute for home and community-based services and undermines Nebraska's obligations under the Olmstead decision.

If cost neutrality is the goal, there are better alternatives:

- Implement targeted strategies to manage costs without rigid caps.
- Provide transparent criteria and appeal rights that meet due process standards.

- Engage stakeholders in developing safeguards for individuals at risk of losing services.

NCDD strongly urges DHHS to:

- Clarify language regarding combined costs and included services.
- Define the high-utilization and clinical review processes, including qualifications, criteria, and timelines.
- Reconsider the 175% cap or, at least, establish robust safeguards to prevent unnecessary institutionalization.
- Ensure clear appeal rights and transparent decision-making.

The current proposal lacks clarity and creates significant risk for individuals with high support needs. These changes should not proceed without meaningful stakeholder engagement and a plan that protects the right to live safely in the community.

Appendix C-1/C-3: Participant Services – Revised Service Specifications on Personal Care, LRI Personal Care, and Companion

NCDD appreciates the addition of LRI (Legally Responsible Individual) personal care to the TBI waiver; however, we remain deeply concerned about the proposed cap limiting personal care, LRI personal care, and companion services to a combined maximum of 40 hours per week for caregivers. This change represents a drastic reduction from current A&D waiver allowances, where caregivers can provide up to 112 hours per week for individuals who meet nursing facility level of care.

The Department suggests that individuals with documented needs exceeding 40 hours provided by live in caregivers could receive up to 30 additional hours from an agency provider. While this sounds reasonable in theory, it does not reflect reality. Families report that finding agency staff is already extremely difficult due to workforce shortages. Expecting families to replace lost hours with agency care is unrealistic and places individuals at risk.

The argument that 40 hours aligns with a “typical full-time work week” ignores the fact that these caregivers provide round-the-clock care for people with complex medical needs. Messaging that families should rely on “natural supports” assumes informal help is readily available, which is often not the case. During public comment sessions, families shared that losing these hours could result in losing their homes – and some of these homes have been personally modified to meet the needs of their loved ones.

Further, the proposal assumes individuals can seamlessly transition to non-family providers when family hours are cut. This assumption is flawed. In many areas, staffing simply does not exist to fill these gaps. Reducing hours without viable alternatives directly threatens health and safety.

Pages 127–128 mention exceptions for health and safety, but these appear temporary and discretionary rather than aligned with long-term needs. Individuals requiring continuous supervision cannot have their safety met through short-term exceptions layered on top of rigid caps.

Reducing hours will also undermine existing safety plans. Authorized hours are based on documented assessments of risk and health needs, not arbitrary decisions. Cutting these supports creates dangerous gaps, increasing the likelihood of harm, medical crises, and

emergency interventions. A safety plan cannot function if the supports it relies on are diminished or removed.

The proposal also introduces inequities by basing limits on the type of caregiver rather than assessed need. Two individuals with identical needs could receive different levels of support simply because one relies on a family member. This is not needs-based, but rather, it is provider-based, which penalizes those who require consistent, trusted caregivers due to disability-related needs.

From a fiscal perspective, reducing family caregiving hours is shortsighted. Family caregivers provide care at a fraction of the cost of agency staff and far less than institutional placement. Limiting family involvement and fair compensation without ensuring adequate alternatives will increase nursing facility placements that will drive up costs and undermining fiscal responsibility.

Key Concerns:

- Health and safety are acknowledged, yet strict caps make safety unattainable for some individuals.
- Person-centered planning is referenced, but rigid limits override individualized assessments.
- Reductions in authorized hours will weaken or invalidate existing safety plans.
- The right to remain in one's home is not adequately safeguarded.
- Provider choice is restricted, penalizing those who rely on family-based care.
- Cost containment efforts conflict with the increased risk and expense of institutionalization.

NCDD strongly urges DHHS to:

- Reconsider these provisions and maintain flexibility for individuals with high needs.
- Align waiver policies with staffing realities, uphold person-centered planning, and protect individual rights.
- Ensure any changes do not compromise health, safety, or the ability to remain in the community.

Appendix C-1/C-3: Participant Services - Assistive Technology

- The annual cap for assistive technology was changed from \$2,500 to \$10,000 in a five-year period, with a maximum of \$20,000 with DD Central Office approval.

NCDD is concerned about the proposed funding caps for assistive technology and home or vehicle modifications. These supports are often critical in determining whether an individual can remain safely in their home or must transition to an institutional setting. For many, modifications such as accessible entrances, bathroom adaptations, or vehicle equipment are not optional—they are essential for independence, health, and community participation. Limiting funding for these services risks forcing individuals into unsafe situations or costly facility placements.

The current proposal sets a cap of \$10,000 over five years, with a lifetime maximum of \$20,000 for modifications and assistive technology. These limits do not reflect the reality of rising costs for construction, labor, and specialized equipment. For example, individuals who require both an accessible entrance and bathroom modifications may be forced to choose between the two, even though both are necessary for basic daily living. Similarly, vehicle modifications tailored to individual needs often exceed these caps, leaving people without reliable transportation or access to their communities.

Fixed caps also undermine person-centered planning by restricting flexibility to meet unique needs. While cost containment is important, these limits fail to account for inflation and the long-term savings associated with keeping individuals in their homes. A few months in a nursing facility often costs more than even the most expensive home modification. Investing in accessibility prevents injuries, reduces hospitalizations, and saves taxpayer dollars over time.

NCDD strongly urges DHHS to reconsider these caps or, at minimum, increase them to better align with current costs. We recommend raising the lifetime cap for home and vehicle modifications to at least \$30,000 and allowing flexibility for exceptions when justified by assessed needs. This approach would support independence, uphold person-centered planning, and reduce the risk of unnecessary institutionalization.

Investing in adequate funding for home and vehicle modifications is not only person-centered but fiscally responsible. The upfront cost of accessibility improvements is far less than the expense of institutional care, which can exceed the cost of even the most extensive modifications in just a few months. By enabling individuals to remain safely in their homes, Nebraska can reduce hospitalizations, prevent injuries, and avoid costly facility placements, ultimately saving taxpayer dollars while honoring the principles of independence and community inclusion.

Appendix F: Participant Rights: State Grievance/Complaint System

NCDD appreciates the inclusion of updated grievance language to align with the HCBS Final Rule and the recently published CMS Access Rule. However, there remains a significant need for DDD to educate HCBS participants and their families on the types of grievances and complaints they can file, as well as the steps involved in the process.

Clear and accessible information should be provided on:

- The specific types of grievances and complaints participants can submit.
- The process for filing a grievance or complaint.
- How complaints are handled from submission to resolution.

Ensuring transparency and accessibility in this process will empower participants and families to advocate for their rights and receive the support they need.

Appendix I: Financial Accountability -Concerns with Electronic Visit Verification (EVV)

Although EVV is a federal requirement, NCDD is concerned that Nebraska has adopted an unrealistic and extreme rate of zero manual corrections. Expecting 100% compliance is impractical. This requirement coupled with not allowing exceptions for live-in caregivers are much more rigid than what is required and does not consider the flexibilities that CMS allows. The geofencing requirement for live-in caregivers restricts clients from engaging in activities of their choosing outside of the home if those activities take them past the time their provider must clock out. The requirement hinders community integration and choice.

The Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities appreciates your time in reviewing this letter and addressing the concerns raised. If you have any questions or desire additional information related to these public comments, please contact Kristen Larsen, NCDD Executive Director, at Kristen.larsen@nebraska.gov.