

# Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

November 22, 2024 at 9:30AM, CDT

In-Person Meeting

Country Inn & Suites – Nebraska Ballroom

[North Hotel & Conference Center]

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

Lincoln, NE

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

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

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

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

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

## Welcome and Introductions

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

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

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

## Nebraska Open Meetings Act

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

The Governor's Public Meeting Calendar referred members of the public and media to the Council's Meetings webpage for additional information (posted November 7, 2024).

## Public Comment Period #1

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

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

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

**Approval of Minutes**

Rachel S. asked the Council members if there were any corrections to the *DRAFT* August 16, 2024 Council meeting minutes. There were no corrections. Council members were reminded to abstain from voting if they were not in attendance for the August 16, 2024 Council meeting. As there were no corrections, Matt Kaslon made the motion to approve the minutes and Jason Gieschen seconded. A roll call vote was taken: **Yes – 11, No – 0, Abstain – 3.\*** Motion carried.

**Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

As required by Council policy, at the first meeting of each federal fiscal year, members of the Council shall verbally declare any potential conflicts of interest of which they are aware. Council members were asked to verbally declare any potential conflicts of interest. They are noted below.

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

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

**Financial Reports**

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

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

Additionally, Kristen presented the FFY2025 Financial Report, a handout at the meeting. At the August 16, 2024 Council meeting, the Council approved the budget of \$443,664 for FFY2025 (October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025). The Year-to-Date Expenditures for the first month of FFY2025 (October 1, 2024 to October 31, 2024) were \$41,260 – 9.2% of the FFY2025 budget.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **FFY2025 Committee Assignments and Election of Standing Committee Chairpersons**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **109<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 1<sup>st</sup> Session**

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

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



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

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

### **CY2024 NE DD Council Executive Director Annual Performance Evaluation**

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

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

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

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

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

The closed session was closed.

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

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

### **Council Member Conference Report Summaries**

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

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

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

**NOTE:** Agency representatives were asked to briefly touch on any pressing issues or important updates the Council needed to be informed of. The written reports in their entirety are attached at the end of the

minutes for review. Amy Rhone was absent and not able to present her report. [Tony Green, Division of Developmental Disabilities; Dr. Tom Janousek, Division of Behavioral Health; Jennifer Severe-Oforah, Maternal and Child Health – Division of Public Health; Amy Rhone, Department of Education – Office of Special Education; DJ Plautz, Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation; Dawn Sybrant represented Medicaid and Long-Term Care and Aging]

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

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

#### Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

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

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

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

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

#### Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

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

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

- InterRAI Pilot.

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

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

### Division of Behavioral Health (DBH)

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

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

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

### **Updates from the DD Network Representatives**

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

### Disability Rights Nebraska

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

The MMI/UCEDD and People First Nebraska will be hosting the Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution (SOAR) conference in October 2025 in Omaha. The SOAR conference will bring together self-advocates from Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota to share ideas on how to advocate.

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

### **Council Chair and Staff Updates**

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

Kristen had a few updates to share.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Council Member Updates**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Public Comment Period #2**

Rachel S. mentioned that all public meetings must allow time on their agenda for people who are not on the Council to comment. Members of the public, who wanted to address the Council, were instructed to identify himself or herself, including an address and the name of any organization represented. No public comments were made.

#### **Adjourn**

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

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

### **Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities**

#### **Mission**

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

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

**November 22, 2024**

Representative: Colin Large, Policy Administrator, for Tony Green, Director

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

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

**Family Support Waiver**

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

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

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

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

**interRAI Functional Needs Assessment:**

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

**Future/Upcoming Agency Activities:**

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



Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative: Thomas Janousek

Agency: Division of Behavioral Health

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

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

## Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

### State Agency Representative Report to Council Members

Representative: DJ Plautz

Agency: Nebraska VR

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

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

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

- In recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, VR hosted the SRC Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards on October 1<sup>st</sup>. VR staff also recognized employers across the state who have provided employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities.
- VR and DHHS are currently working on updating our joint MOU.
- VR has been collaborating with partners as a result of the Dr. Mills study, action plan, and the recent Tri-Board meeting.
- CPAP 2.0 continues to provide outreach to the ID/DD population in an effort to help prior clients advance.
  - Read more about CPAP @ <http://www.vr.nebraska.gov/pathways>
- VR and ATP are actively engaged in the Olmstead Advisory Committee. VR and ATP have been asked by the Advisory committee to lead/facilitate two work groups: Housing (Tobias/ATP) and Employment (Lindy/VR)
- VR leadership has been closely monitoring discussions happening in Washington DC related to Fiscal Year 2025 Labor HHS-Education appropriation legislation.

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

- VR and VRTAC-QE will be offering additional training opportunities that will complement the recent trainings offered through NEON.

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative:     Amy Rhone    

Agency: Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Future/upcoming Agency activities:

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

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

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members

Representative: Jennifer Severe-Oforah

Agency: NDHHS, Division of Public Health

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

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

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

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

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

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

[https://nesiis-dhhs-prod.ne.gov/prd\\_ir/public/clientSearch.do?language=en](https://nesiis-dhhs-prod.ne.gov/prd_ir/public/clientSearch.do?language=en)

Future/upcoming Agency activities:





## Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

State Agency Representative  
Report to Council Members  
November 2024

Representative: Seamus Kelly/ Tania Diaz

Agency: Disability Rights Nebraska

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

Emergency/Disaster Planning:

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

Public Policy Internship Program:

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

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

Outreach Plan:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Lay Advocacy Program:

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

### Beatrice State Developmental Center:

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

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

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

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

Guarding the Guardians:

Report on the status of guardianships in Nebraska

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

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

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

Subminimum Wage:

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



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

#### Supported Decision Making Summit:

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

Brad also worked to prepare the Ambassadors to present at the summit.

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

## Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities

### State Agency Representative Report to Council Members

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For more information:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

History of DD in Nebraska

Abuse & Neglect

Individual Choice, Civil Rights, Dignity/Respect

Confidentiality and Consent

Individual Support Plans

DHHS Structure/Organization and Service Impact

Emergency Procedures/First Aid/Medical Support Plans

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

### **Future/upcoming Agency activities:**

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

The MMI UCEDD and People First Nebraska will be hosting the SOAR conference in October 2025 in Omaha, NE at the Embassy Suites Downtown. The SOAR conference will bring together self-advocates from Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Wyoming, and South Dakota to share ideas on how to advocate. Program committee, Marketing/Registration committee, Accessibility committee, and others are meeting regularly to plan the conference. Many thanks to the NE Council on Developmental Disabilities for the support of SOAR conference with the People First contract!

# An Essential Priority

## Changing the Way Nebraska Does Supported Employment

*To Increase Quality Service  
Provision and Competitive  
Integrated Employment  
Outcomes for Users of  
Supported Employment*

November, 2024

---

Report Prepared for the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities  
(<https://dhhs.ne.gov/pages/DD-Planning-Council.aspx>) by:

Moving To A Different Drum, LLC  
Lisa A. Mills PhD  
2707 Mason Street, Madison, WI 53705

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....2

THE STUDY AND REPORT.....3

    RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION  
    (Feb 2023).....5

POST-REPORT ACTIVITIES.....6

    TRI-BOARD MEETING.....6

    SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUMMIT .....7

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS  
MONTH.....7

DRAFT ACTION PLAN .....8

TRI-BOARD MEETING & RELEASE OF FINAL  
DRAFT ACTION PLAN .....8

POINT PERSON FOR FACILITATING  
PROGRESS ON ACTION PLAN IDENTIFIED...9

CONCLUSION.....9

# AN ESSENTIAL PRIORITY

## *Changing the Way Nebraska Does Supported Employment*

### INTRODUCTION

Just over three years ago, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCDD) contracted with Dr. Lisa Mills (PhD) to conduct a comprehensive Supported Employment services and outcomes study across the state of Nebraska to identify strategies to increase and improve the competitive integrated employment outcomes of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). For people with IDD, access to Supported Employment (SE) services is typically considered essential to obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment.



SE services are typically defined as services for people with the most significant disabilities who, because of their disabilities, need intensive

supports to obtain competitive integrated employment and ongoing supports to sustain this employment.<sup>1</sup> Competitive integrated employment (CIE) is defined by the United States Congress in the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as work that is performed on a part-time or full-time basis for which an individual is:

- Compensated at or above minimum wage and comparable to the wage paid to employees without disabilities performing similar duties and with similar training and experience
- Receiving the same level of benefits provided to other employees without disabilities in similar positions
- At a location typically found in the community (not specifically established for people with disabilities) where the employee interacts with other individuals without disabilities (e.g., co-workers, customers) to the same extent as employees without disabilities in the same or similar positions; and
- Able to access opportunities for advancement, similar to other employees without disabilities in similar positions.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See: Public Law 113–128, §1(a), July 22, 2014, 128 Stat. 1425 Federal Regulation 34 CFR §361.5 (c)(54) and 42 CFR §440.180(c)(3).

<sup>2</sup> Source: Public Law 113–128, §1(a), July 22, 2014, 128 Stat. 1425 Federal Regulation 34 CFR §361.

## THE STUDY AND REPORT

The NCDD commissioned this study in 2021 to, in part, assess and better understand what the employment outcomes for people with IDD in the state of Nebraska looked like at the time. The study also included a focus on gaining a comprehensive understanding of the history of policy, practice and outcomes leading up to the current situation.

NCDD also commissioned this study in 2021 because Nebraska was facing an unprecedented labor shortage, hampering the state's ability to grow its economy. Christopher Decker, an economist with the University of Nebraska at Omaha, predicted the lack of workers would slow economic growth in Nebraska.<sup>3</sup> The shortage wasn't limited to one industry, sector or level of worker.<sup>4</sup> As of June 2024, the challenges for Nebraska remain. An analysis of US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that there were 55 workers for every 100 jobs in Nebraska. The state was short of roughly 22,000 workers while the unemployment rate was just 2.6%.<sup>5</sup> The Nebraska Economic Competitiveness Assessment 2024 examined the current economic reality in Nebraska as compared to peer states and identified key challenges opportunities for the

state's economic prosperity. The findings note the tight labor market as the number one factor demanding strategic attention.<sup>6</sup>

While there is no single solution to this incredible challenge to the state's economic growth goals, there is a clear need to embrace strategies that have not received serious consideration or investment in the past, which includes ***enabling people with IDD to become part of the Nebraska workforce.***

The study resulted in a comprehensive report released by NCDD in February 2023. Information gathered from key informants and through review of available public information led to identification of the primary barriers to significant expansion of Supported Employment services and in turn, competitive integrated employment opportunities for Nebraskans with IDD. The following were identified as key barriers to the significant expansion of Supported Employment services for people with IDD:

- The perception of people with IDD in the broader community and among Nebraskan employers
- Expectations of people with IDD within publicly funded service systems that serve people with IDD
- Lack of effective strategies in person-centered planning for individuals with IDD and their families/guardians to facilitate informed

---

<sup>3</sup> Source: Omaha World Herald Jan 20, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/ja/news/news-articles/number-one-business-problem-labor-woes-continue-in-nebraska/> retrieved December 3, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> See: [What the Ongoing Worker Shortage Looks Like in Nebraska | JobTest.org](#) retrieved 12/4/24.

<sup>6</sup> See: [Nebraska's Economic Landscape: Challenges, Opportunities and Strategic Recommendations - Silicon Prairie News](#) retrieved 12/4/2024.



choice about competitive integrated employment

- No clear incentives but clear disincentives for Nebraskans with IDD to choose competitive integrated employment
- Historically restrictive policies governing the availability and provision of Supported Employment services with some key restrictions still remaining
- The blurry intersection of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Medicaid waivers in the provision of Supported Employment services to people with IDD
- Implementation of Supported Employment services does not always follow best practices
- Perceptions about the cost of Supported Employment and its lack of cost-effectiveness as a service option for people with IDD

Each of these barriers was discussed in detail in this report. Additionally, the results of data collection for individuals with IDD already working in competitive integrated employment were presented and discussed in the report. These results illustrate the outcomes of Supported Employment services. Analysis of the cost-effectiveness of Supported Employment services was also presented. Common assumptions about the level of job coaching individuals with IDD require to maintain competitive integrated employment were compared to the results of data collected on almost 200 individuals with IDD currently working. These individuals collectively worked over 12,000 hours in the eight-week period for which data was collected during 2022. They received job coaching only 43.7% of the hours they worked. This translates into an average job coaching cost per hour of Supported

Employment (an hour working in competitive integrated employment instead of alternative services) that is less than half of the reimbursement rate typically paid for an hour of job coaching services.

While the history of Supported Employment services in Nebraska is not significantly dissimilar to other states, the study concluded that **Nebraska's history did not yet include a truly comprehensive, intentional and visible effort involving key partner state agencies and other key interested parties acting together on a comprehensive shared plan, using resources of all partners in a coordinated way.** It was noted that where efforts like this are evident in other states, more progress has been made on increasing and sustaining competitive integrated employment outcomes. Nebraska appeared to have a significant opportunity because of the positive relationships between leadership in the key state agencies, an unprecedented need and opportunity for individuals with IDD to join the general workforce, and the availability of Supported Employment services that, with key changes to improve access, effectiveness, and to further improve cost-effectiveness, could deliver the improved outcomes desired.

The complete set of recommendations that resulted from the study can be found on the next page.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION (Feb 2023)

1. Develop a collaborative plan among all key partners to more strongly and intentionally promote, to employers and the general public, the value of individuals with IDD as members of Nebraska's workforce.
2. Interested, affected or otherwise relevant parties, with leadership from key state agencies and other organizations, should collectively seek the Governor's involvement in promoting the value of individuals with IDD as members of Nebraska's workforce with Nebraska's business and industry groups and employers.
3. Advance the State of Nebraska as a model employer, by intentionally developing competitive integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities including people with IDD.
4. Nebraska VR and DDD should update and expand their current memorandum of understanding (MOU).
5. Ensure uninhibited access to publicly funded Medicaid HCBS Waiver Supported Employment services for eligible individuals with IDD, when the needed service(s) are not timely available through Nebraska VR (or if a student is still in high school, through special education services funded under IDEA).
6. Promote uninhibited, equitable access to publicly funded Vocational Rehabilitation Supported Employment Services for People with ID/DD<sup>7</sup>
7. Public funders of Supported Employment services should collaborate to ensure effective Supported Employment practices by implementing competency-based qualification and/or training expectations for staff delivering Supported Employment services.
8. Reach youth with IDD early, focus on increasing post-secondary competitive integrated employment outcomes in Individualized Educational Plans, and promote the use of peer mentors to seed the expectation of a working life in adulthood
9. Identify available short-term funding that can be invested in the provider network and workforce which can support increased opportunities for competitive integrated employment for people with IDD
10. Engage key informants for this study in a one-day summit to discuss this study's findings and recommendations, and determine what consensus can be reached about how a collaborative initiative could move forward to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for Nebraskans with IDD
11. Maintain commitment to evolving the comprehensive strategy over time.

---

<sup>7</sup> Public Consulting Group. *Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation Services Provider Town Hall Supported Employment Service Rates* (June 17, 2022).

## POST-REPORT ACTIVITIES

Because access to high quality, cost-effective SE services is so critical to achieving the goal of increased competitive integrated employment participation by people with IDD, after the release of the report, the focus for the efforts of state agencies and interested, affected or otherwise relevant parties turned to SE services as a starting point for achieving better workforce participation rates among people with IDD. Further, because people who use behavioral health services have also experienced significant positive benefit from SE services<sup>8</sup>, the state agencies and interested, affected or otherwise relevant parties were intentionally broadened to address the same goals for individuals who use behavioral health services.

### TRI-BOARD MEETING

In June 2023, the annual meeting of the federal Developmental Disabilities Act-funded organizations in Nebraska was held at the Munroe Meyer Institute in Omaha. The sponsoring organizations included the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights Nebraska and the Munroe Meyer Institute as the state's University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). Key state agencies including the Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation, Developmental Disabilities,

Behavioral Health were in attendance. This event focused on the goal of improving Supported Employment services and competitive integrated employment opportunities and outcomes. Dr. Mills presented the findings and recommendations of the study. Meeting attendees then heard from a panel of representatives from other Midwest states working on the same goals. The panel included representatives from the state of Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation Services agency and the Medicaid Waivers Division of the Department of Human Services who shared details of their Employment First partnership.<sup>9</sup> Meeting attendees also heard from the Director of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (the equivalent of NCDD) who shared the many ways that advocates, including Disability Rights Wisconsin, The ARC Wisconsin and People First Wisconsin, partner with the state and other interested, affected or otherwise relevant parties to assist with efforts to improve SE and CIE opportunities and outcomes.<sup>10</sup> Meeting attendees also heard from a lead on employment efforts at the University of Indiana's Institute on Disability and Community who shared how this UCEDD is helping lead efforts focused on increasing competitive integrated employment opportunities and outcomes, including their role in tracking data

---

<sup>8</sup> See research featured on [The IPS Employment Center – Research, Dissemination, Training, and Consultation](#) retrieved 12/4/24.

<sup>9</sup> See: [Minnesota Employment First Policy / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#) and [Employment First / Minnesota Department of Human Services](#) retrieved 12/5/24.

<sup>10</sup> See: [Employment First - Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities](#) retrieved 12/5/24.

recommendations from the report presented by Dr. Mills. There was agreement to pursue the recommendation to plan a one-day summit to engage state agency leadership and personnel with other interested, affected or otherwise relevant parties to discuss the study's findings and recommendations, and determine what consensus can be reached about how a collaborative initiative could move forward to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for Nebraskans with IDD.

### SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUMMIT

In September 2023, an unprecedented partnership focused on the competitive integrated employment of individuals with IDD and individuals who use behavioral health services occurred in Nebraska. The Supported Employment Summit was jointly sponsored by:

- Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation
- Nebraska Department of Education - Office of Special Education
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services - Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Behavioral Health
- Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Nebraska Association of Service Providers
- Disability Rights Nebraska
- Munroe Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center

Lieutenant Governor Joe Kelly opened the Summit, bringing a message of support from himself and Governor Pillen. The senior leader from each of the sponsoring organizations each took turns contributing additional opening remarks to approximately 100 Summit

participants from around the state. Keynote speaker, Dr. Tracy Rackensperger, faculty member within the Institute on Human Development and Disability at the University of Georgia, shared her personal and professional experience to focus attendees on the critical importance of tackling the creation of the Action Plan with high expectations for all involved – most importantly, high expectations of individuals with IDD and people who use behavioral health services. She received a standing ovation. Subsequently, the Summit supported small-group dialogue between participants on key topics to inform the creation of a forward-thinking, solutions-oriented Action Plan. Facilitators of each small group and notetakers captured the recommendations and commitments of participants to incorporate into the Action Plan. The lunch break featured videos of success stories from Nebraska and beyond. The closing session shared information with attendees on how their input would be used to create the Action Plan and next steps once a draft of the Plan is available. Participants were also asked to fill out an evaluation on the Summit to inform planning for future events. The Director of Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation provided closing remarks.

### DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

One month following the Summit, in October 2023, Governor Pillen issued a Proclamation in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness month and attended an event to

promote Nebraskans with disabilities as capable workers and to encourage businesses to hire fellow Nebraskans with disabilities.<sup>11</sup> His proclamation noted that “by hiring individuals with disabilities, a business can expand its talent pool and strengthen its workforce.” The proclamation further noted that according to a National Core Indicators survey conducted with individuals with IDD in Nebraska, 54% of individuals with IDD in Nebraska who do not have a community job, but would like one.



Governor Pillen & Desi, employee at UNL Stewart Seed Lab

### DRAFT ACTION PLAN

Between December 2023 and May 2024, work was completed to review and analyze all of the notes from the Supported Employment Summit

and the recommendations from Dr. Mills’ report. Additional clarifications were sought from Summit co-sponsor and some attendees. A draft Action Plan was created. Meetings were held with each co-sponsor to review the action steps they were tentatively assigned. The draft Action Plan was updated based on feedback from the co-sponsor meetings. The updated draft Action Plan was then sent to each co-sponsor for final review and feedback. The last round of changes were then made to the draft Action Plan.

### TRI-BOARD MEETING & RELEASE OF FINAL DRAFT ACTION PLAN

In June 2024, the annual Tri-Board meeting again put the spotlight on Nebraska’s journey to improve and expand Supported Employment and competitive integrated employment for Individuals with I/DD. Dr. Mills presented the final Draft Action Plan to attendees which included representatives of all of the Summit co-sponsors. Additionally, the NCDD extended an invitation to everyone who attended the Summit. Following Dr. Mills’ presentation, senior leaders from each of the Summit co-sponsors participated on a panel to share with attendees their thoughts on the Draft Action Plan and the efforts they had undertaken since the Summit that relate to the goal of increasing CIE participation rates. After a lunch break, meeting attendees heard from a panel of individuals with IDD working in competitive integrated employment. They shared their

---

<sup>11</sup> See [Gov. Pillen Encourages Businesses to Hire Individuals with Disabilities | Office of Governor Jim Pillen](#) retrieved 12/6/25.

experiences and most importantly, how work has positively impacted their lives. The Munroe Meyer Institute presented on its transition and employment programs, including its leadership role on administering the National Core Indicators survey to Nebraskans with IDD. Meeting attendees representing the Tri-Board agencies then met to establish priorities for the coming year focused on advancing competitive integrated employment and maintaining/strengthening the momentum developed as a result of Dr. Mills' study, the Supported Employment Summit, the Final Draft Action Plan and the Governor's support of the goals being pursued.

#### POINT PERSON FOR FACILITATING PROGRESS ON ACTION PLAN IDENTIFIED

After the June 2024 Tri-Board meeting, it became clear to the partners involved that a point person needed to be identified to coordinate and ensure ongoing efforts focused on implementation of the Final Draft Action Plan, including the need to bring partners together for collaborative work and ensure all critical Action Plan elements are being addressed in some way. Dr. Mills recommended the point person be someone based in Nebraska who had been a part of the efforts that have occurred since 2021. She pointed to the final recommendation in her report: *Maintain commitment to evolving the comprehensive strategy over time*. She stressed this is essential for success of the initiative. With the approval of NCDD, and a contribution of funding from Disability Rights Nebraska, Dr. Mills identified a

suitable individual and engaged that person in the role. Dr. Mills transitioned to providing mentorship to this person and technical assistance as needed. A template for reporting progress on the Action Plan was created and monthly progress reports are now being generated. (See Appendix for progress reports from August, September and October of 2024.) The monthly reports illustrate the specific partnerships that are resulting from this three-year effort and keeping progress moving on implementation of the evolving Action Plan.

#### CONCLUSION

It's essential that progress continue in order to avoid this effort going the way of past efforts and losing momentum to the point that focus on the effort all but disappears. The Final Draft Action Plan can continue to serve as a guiding plan, with partners and involved interested, affected or otherwise relevant parties reaching agreement on any adjustments that are necessary to ensure the outcomes are achieved. It is also essential that a key point-person continue to be in place and charged with coordinating and ensuring ongoing efforts focused on implementation of the Final Draft Action Plan. This includes filling the role of convener to bring partners together for collaborative work and ensure all critical Action Plan elements are being addressed in some way.

The seeds of success have been planted, but as Nebraskan farmers know, tending the fields where those seeds have been planted is critical

for success. To improve competitive integrated employment outcomes among people with IDD and people who use behavioral health services, the most important ingredient in the recipe is staying power: never letting this essential priority become anything less. If those involved ensure this outcome, improved competitive integrated employment outcomes will follow.



Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Legislative and Advocacy Committee  
FFY2025

**Council Members**

Quinton Corwin, Chairperson

Caitlin Donaldson

Shauna Graham

Ashley Hansen

Brent Hoffman

Matt Kaslon

Seamus Kelly

Eddie Kraska

Beth Libra

Sasha Reeks

Joe Valenti

\*Rachel Siffring

**Non-Council Members**

Angela Gleason  
Parent Advocate (The Arc of NE & SEAC)

Robin Hoffman  
Family Member

Edison McDonald  
The Arc of Nebraska

Brad Meurrens  
Disability Rights Nebraska

Mary Phillips  
The Arc of Nebraska and parent

Alana Schriver  
Nebraska Association of Service Providers  
(NASP)

**TBD**  
People First of Nebraska  
Disability Policy Specialist  
To Be determined

# Nebraska Council On Developmental Disabilities

dashboard » periodic reporting

## Summary Report

Accepted (2024-12-17 17:37:12 ET)

2024.CFGR.03 Supported Decision Making - Continuation - Disability Rights Nebraska

Period Start: 2023-10-01, End: 2024-09-30.

Add Notes

Report Year: 2024

### Funding Organization Comments

**Goal 4: 2022-2026 Goal 4: Advocacy and Self-Advocacy, Objective 2:** Annually collaborate among the Nebraska DD Network Partners (Disability Rights Nebraska, the University of Nebraska Medical Center Munroe-Meyer Institute – University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Services [UCEDD], and the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities) to advocate for positive systems change impacting the lives and health of individuals with I/DD by: 1. Conducting monthly planning meetings to discuss trends, concerns, and challenges with a goal of system changes and improvements for Nebraskans with I/DD. 2. Hosting training on a mutually selected emerging issue at the annual Nebraska DD Network Partners' Tri-Board Meeting. 3. Continue leveraging joint advocacy efforts to strengthen and improve the newly developed Nebraska Olmstead Plan. 4. Leveraging joint advocacy efforts to strengthen the Supported Decision Making Initiative.

Work Plan Objective(s): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

[view measures](#)

#### 1. - Provide a summary of the overall goal for your project.

The overall goal of the project was to raise awareness of Supported Decision Making (SDM) and educate individuals, families, the public, and other stakeholders about SDM. We addressed SDM as both an instrument to enhance self-determination and to replace/prevent overbroad or undue guardianships. We wanted to provide education from multiple perspectives: academic, policy, and lived experience. In particular, the project design elevated the lived-experience perspective; we believed that the education activities would be more effective coming from individuals with lived experience: "Our family has done this. We had similar concerns at first. Here's how we did it and how we make it work for us". Adopting a purely academic or policy focus to the educational activities and materials, while those perspectives each have merit and were included in our messaging and presentations, that information might not resolve concerns or skepticism of individuals, families, legal professionals, and the public. Additionally, in discussions with our Steering Committee and our two consultants, Jonathan Martinis and Mary Phillips, we recognized that SDM would involve a variety of professionals from a wide range of fields such as legal (lawyers, judges), educational (Special Education teachers and school Transition Coordinators), and human services (social workers, Vocational Rehabilitation staff). We provided education/awareness to all of these groups, including families and individuals with disabilities. We also used our educational activities to give families and others the tools that have been used to help assess areas of need/support and examples of general SDM agreements.

#### 2. - Looking at the Project Summary along with the Goals and Activities of the project Work Plan, provide a detailed narrative of the activities that were undertaken to achieve the overall goal and objectives. This includes: -Describing the activities that were implemented toward achieving the objective -Identify how the strategy was used -Identify how the activity was implemented

Education and awareness raising was the primary intent of this project. Educational activities fit into one of three categories: Presentations, Media, or the SDM Summit.

Presentations: Jonathan Martinis, Mary Phillips, and Brad Meurrens were the primary presenters for the project. We focused our efforts on raising awareness among both families of people with disabilities and special education teachers and administrators (especially those teaching "transition students").

\* Jonathan, Mary, and Brad presented on SDM at the 2024 Transition Nebraska - Partnerships for Progress Conference in Lincoln; a conference for special educators, administrators, families, and advocates.

\* Jonathan and Brad met with Sarah Hanify, a social worker at CHI Hospital in Omaha, to discuss social work implications of SDM (and perhaps how to promote among CHI social work staff).

\* We received several invitations to participate in various resource fairs and other events. Mary's contacts the ESU's and other groups were invaluable. Brad staffed a resource table at the open house event at the Arc of Lincoln (Mary is a member of their Board of Directors) where he met with many families of individuals with I/DD. Brad shared all of the project's brochures and other materials. Brad and Mary also had a resource table at the Young Adult Resource Fair for Millard Public Schools. Brad and Mary presented to families as part of the online Parent Series, a monthly series of Zoom meetings where families can learn about resources and ideas for transition-aged youth. Mary presented at the "Holy Cow What Now" conference, to the Lincoln Public Schools Parent Network, meetings of regional transition coordinators, and to the Nebraska Center for the Education of the Blind and Visually Impaired.

\*The project's "educational ambassadors" gave a panel presentation on how their families implemented SDM and worked around concerns. A common theme among the project's educational activities was learning from lived experience. The presentations discussed the theory around the SDM concept and shared empirical examples of SDM implementation from lived-experience of families.

Media: the project produced two brochures-- one addressed SDM and financial decisions; the other addressed SDM and healthcare decisions. UNMC staff designed the brochures to match those made in FY 23 grant project and printed 200 of each. UNMC also printed 200 each of the 3 brochures made in FY 23. At the end of this project, we had run out of the new brochures and had approximately a third of the new batch of FY 23 brochures. We had several handouts at every presentation and resource table, including the 5 brochures and other resources such as the "Stoplight" and "When Do I Need Help" assessment tools.

The project also created and maintained an information "Clearinghouse" where relevant articles and resources including brochures, presentation slides, assessment tools, etc. were uploaded to a page on Disability Rights Nebraska's website dedicated to Supported Decision Making: <https://www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org/what-we-do/supported-decision-making/>. The page is still active and we continue to upload materials periodically.

Another strategy to increase awareness of SDM to a wider audience was to hold a day-long, immersive summit meeting on Supported Decision Making. The event would provide participants an immersive and interactive educational activity to learn about SDM. The theme of the summit was "From Theory to Practice"; discussing the concepts and principles behind SDM and how to put them into practice. Jonathan Martinis was the keynote speaker and primary presenter. Two breakout sessions included extended information: Mary Phillips presented about how their family has implemented SDM and Amy Miller, an attorney with Disability Rights Nebraska presented new research on guardianships in Nebraska. Over the lunch hour, Jonathan lead a panel discussion with the project's "Ambassadors" who spoke about their families have implemented SDM, what tools did they use, what issues or concerns did they have initially and how they worked around those issues. The panel also took questions from the audience. Sixty-four people registered for the event, which had both an in-person and virtual option to maximize the summit's reach. Fifty-three people attended the event: 35 in-person and 18 virtually. We offered sponsorship and resource table opportunities for interested organizations.

Each in-person participant received a bag of materials and resources, including the 5 brochures developed by the project, assessment tools, and copies of the presentation slides. All participants were given access to a Google Drive folder which contained all these resources.

### **3. - What were the barriers or problems that arose and how did you managed them? This includes: -Outcomes that were unexpected or unplanned that show the value of the project.**

The major barrier/problem we faced was insufficient staffing to balance the needs and work of this project with the planned work of Disability Rights Nebraska staff. Adequate planning would have assigned more staff to work on the project. It was an oversight and a lesson learned. We managed to give presentations as best we could-- we did not turn down an invitation-- and used the resource table events as a tool for disseminating information. We utilized the connections from Mary Phillips and the Steering Committee for presentation opportunities, links from their websites to the "Clearinghouse", and advertising for the SDM Summit event. We ended up scaling back some of the original planned activities.

### **4. - Describe your own overall satisfaction with the project and activities. What would you change if you were to continue the project or have a do-over?**

We are satisfied with the project and activities. The project significantly expanded the number of people who were introduced or had a better understanding of SDM. Hundreds of people were educated about SDM (theory) and gained a better appreciation of its application and implementation (practice); we ran out of brochures and re-ordered copies before the Summit. We will have to re-order another batch of brochures soon. We reached many people through a small number of presentations and resource tables-- but people were abuzz after our presentations and often took extra copies of our resources. We reached even more through the online Clearinghouse. Many people expressed strong interest in learning more about SDM before, during, and after this project. The content of both the materials developed by this project and the educational activities was excellent. Jonathan's participation was absolutely critical and provided excellent direction and perspective. Mary's role was instrumental. She had the lived-experience evidence and connections to interested organizations. The dual approach, "from theory" and "to practice", was effective; providing the academic research was a great entry into the topic, but still leaves open questions about how to put the theory into practice. Furthermore, it does little to address the specific and strong concerns families have about safety, security, exploitation, etc. that are actual barriers to implementation. Sharing the lived experiences of Mary and the Ambassadors were effective in translating concepts of SDM into relatable, real-world experiences and answering family's concerns that a recitation of the academic literature does not. This project produced 2 new brochures and provided a wealth of other information and tools that families could use immediately. This project filled a need-- many families, advocates, and other professionals expressed that they were intrigued by SDM, but did not know much about it or how to put SDM into practice, let alone have tools for assessment or implementation. This project addressed these deficits. We would not change much with the project's goals, approach, content, or deliverables. The most significant change would be in project management and administration: more dedicated staff from Disability Rights Nebraska involved to share the administrative burdens, arrange activities, manage outcomes, and facilitate operational details (e.g., handling invoices in a

more timely manner). We would not change the number or nature of the project's activities.

The,

**5. - Describe how the project will be sustained after Council funds are no longer available. This includes: -Who will take on the responsibilities for continuing the work? -What specific areas of the work will continue? -What additional funding would be required to continue the work?**

Disability Rights Nebraska has budgeted staff time and resources to continue education and awareness raising efforts in FY 25. Disability Rights Nebraska will continue to give presentations (we have one already lined up for March 2025), maintain and update the Clearinghouse webpage, and work with other organizations to educate about SDM. We are looking to increase our outreach to legal and policymaking entities in FY 25. We are exploring collaboration with with another organization on potential policy and legislative options to solidify the use of SDM in Nebraska.

**6. - Provide success stories from project participants or your own story from the project that shows the impact the project activities had on participants. If relevant to your Project, include stories of policy or legislative changes that happened as a result of Council individual advocacy work.**

Feedback from Summit participants provides success stories:

\* 83% rated the presentations and information as "Excellent"

"Please talk about a time you told someone what you needed or what was important to you"

\* We talked to the judge about ending guardianship but was unsuccessful but now I know more and will be able to do a better job

"What ideas or information will you take away from the Summit?"

\* Work more on supported decision making with my daughter and encourage other families

\* That supported decision making can be used in a wide variety of situations but also that there are situations in which guardianship is the only appropriate option.

\* Self determination is a right we all have.

\* Keep checking myself re: supported decision making with my daughter

\* Supported Decision Making is just fancy language for what people do naturally every day.

"How will you use what you have learned at this activity?"

\* I currently use it with my supporters and my mother-in-law, who has dementia

\* Work on ending guardianship and go for POA

\* To support others and practice more with my daughter

\* Think about how I make decisions and extend that courtesy/dignity to everyone.



# Nebraska Council On Developmental Disabilities

dashboard » periodic reporting

## Summary Report

Accepted (2025-01-07 10:05:16 ET)

2024.FGR.01 Elevating Family Expectations for Competitive Employment - BKessler Consulting

Period Start: 2023-10-01, End: 2024-12-31.

Add Notes

Report Year: 2024

### Funding Organization Comments

**Goal 1: 2022-2026 Goal 1: Employment, Objective 1:** By 2026, increase awareness, knowledge, and identify necessary system changes to remove barriers to competitive, intergrated employment at a living wage for people with I/DD.

Work Plan Objective(s): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

[view measures](#)

#### 1. - Provide a summary of the overall goal for your project.

To further their ongoing efforts to expand employment opportunities, the NE DDC awarded a grant to BKessler Consulting, in partnership with TransCen, to create a sustainable model for building the capacity of employment professionals to effectively engage families to develop an expectation that their loved one can and will be employed.

This project sought to address the barriers described above by providing training to both families and professionals to:  
è raise expectations of what is possible within community-based integrated employment  
è develop specific skills related to exploration, planning, and problem-solving

A primary activity of the project included providing a tailored family engagement curriculum and train-the-trainer opportunities to equip professionals who support people with IDD in their employment goals to effectively engage families in the employment exploration and planning process. In-person workshops were hosted in three regions in Nebraska and a virtual workshop was also be made available.

As a result of these efforts, it was anticipated that Nebraska would have a cohort of Service Providers and community partners who have the skills, curriculum, and materials to effectively engage families as allies and supporters in their loved one's journey to integrated competitive employment. Nebraska would also have an initial cohort of families across several communities who have been provided information and supported to raise family expectations around community-based, competitive employment as a first option as youth transition into community employment. They have been supported to understand and embrace competitive employment as the preferred option and will know how to play a role in helping youth experience competitive, community-based employment.

#### 2. - Looking at the Project Summary along with the Goals and Activities of the project Work Plan, provide a detailed narrative of the activities that were undertaken to achieve the overall goal and objectives. This includes: -Describing the activities that were implemented toward achieving the objective -Identify how the strategy was used -Identify how the activity was implemented

Throughout the project, the BKessler Consulting and TransCen worked with a local Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from the NE DD Council, Vocational Rehabilitation, Educational Service Units (specifically transition), PTI Nebraska, and the Provider Association. Despite multiple outreaches, the Developmental Disability agency was unable to be reached and did not participate. Efforts to identify and recruit self-advocates to participate were also unsuccessful. As a result, the Advisory Committee was comprised of individuals who identified as:

All Advisory Committee members described their participation "as a professional." Participants were primarily female (55%), with all but two participants identifying as straight (that is, not gay or lesbian). Most participants (85%) identified as white or Caucasian, with one Advisory Committee member identifying as Hispanic/Latino. All but one participant was from an urban area.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee was to:

- è map the potential places and partners who can host the workshops for families
- è connect with families and professionals who support them to invite them to the workshops or to become trainers
- è help the project team to tailor the Imagine the Possibilities: A Path to Employment Success curriculum
- è make recommendations to the Developmental Disabilities Council for how to make sure the workshops can continue after



the project ends

#### Committee Activities

The committee met a total of four times across the project year. During the first two meetings, the committee provided insight and recommendations to identify dates and locations for the workshops. Advisory Committee members were asked - and were provided with tools to - outreach to their networks to promote and encourage participation in the workshops.

A smaller sub-committee was formed to give input to tailoring the Imagine the Possibilities: A Pathway to Employment Success curriculum. (This working group met two additional times to review and provide feedback that was incorporated into the final materials). A brainstorming session was facilitated to support committee members in identifying groups, organizations, or individuals who may be engaged for this opportunity. Advisory Committee members committed to outreaching to these groups.

During the third meeting, results and insights from the initial workshops in Scottsbluff and Kearney were shared, and the group supported the recommendation to shift to a virtual format. Additional brainstorming regarding how to encourage and increase participation was facilitated, and the facilitation team also met individually with several Advisory Committee members and/or their representative groups as needed.

It was determined by the Advisory Committee that offering translation and interpretation to reach Spanish-speaking families was a priority for the final two workshops. As such, the materials for the curriculum were translated (and are now available, along with all English materials). Simultaneous interpretation was offered at the virtual family workshop (though no Spanish speaking families attended) and at the in-person workshop in Omaha.

The final committee meeting included a review and recap of the successes and lessons learned, and discussion of the recommended next steps to scale and sustain the work.

We also hosted four professional train the trainer workshops and family sessions, three in person and one virtually. After four sessions, there were a total of approximately 140 attendees of the Imagine the Possibilities: A Pathway to Employment Success workshops.

### **3. - What were the barriers or problems that arose and how did you managed them? This includes: -Outcomes that were unexpected or unplanned that show the value of the project.**

Over the course of the four sessions, it was clear that attendees found the information valuable and helpful - in their everyday lives and in their work. Results from the survey demonstrate the effectiveness of the workshop and curriculum to:

- provide information and support to raise family expectations around community-based, competitive employment as a first option for people with disabilities
- building the knowledge and skills of family members to help youth experience competitive, community-based employment
- equip professionals who support people with IDD in their employment goals to engage families in the employment exploration and planning process
- train trainers with the skills, curriculum, materials, and strategic plans to effectively sustain the promising practice

In addition to these outcomes, a few observations are notable:

Outreach - especially to diverse communities - is challenging and a necessary area for intentional focus.

As noted above, the primary attendance at the workshops - both for professionals and for families - were people who identified as white and who speak English. Despite translation and interpretation, there was a low representation of Spanish-speaking families. Specific outreach, connection, trust-building and outreach with diverse groups (including, but not limited to Spanish-speaking families) is needed. Creation of materials in native languages in one step to increasing accessibility of events but developing strategies that are truly responsive to the needs and preferences of underrepresented people requires partnership with and leadership from representatives of these communities. Establishing local, connected cultural brokers who facilitate relationship-building and provide expertise, and insight will be important for continuing to engage underrepresented families throughout the state.

Families value - and are looking for - peer support and connection.

In each of the workshop sessions - but most especially in the virtual session and in Omaha - families highlighted their appreciation for the opportunity to talk with other families who have had similar experiences. The personal and vulnerable stories shared and the knowledge and resources exchanged were a unique aspect of the workshop opportunities. In Omaha, families stayed to talk and connect with one another for almost an hour after the end of the evening session.

It was noted by those who attended the professional session that there is not currently an infrastructure for connection and support between and among families in local communities. This not only impacts outreach and engagement of families, it also may lead to feelings of isolation and lack of awareness of possibilities. When families have opportunity to connect, they provide both emotional support and valuable knowledge to one another. "Hubs" of connection and shared experience can

serve as a way of better reaching families and as a source of collective advocacy when needed.

Collaboration and connection among local resources is an opportunity for improvement.

Significant efforts are being made at the state leadership level to increase collaboration among various systems that serve people with disabilities and seek to enhance employment outcomes. In many local communities, however, professionals were unaware of the variety of resources available and/or felt that these supports for people and families were not streamlined to be maximally impactful and effective. In some of the local workshops, professionals highlighted the importance of the opportunity for them to learn about each others' work. And, in all of the workshops families were often aware of one resource (like the school), but not the "next steps" or the "other systems" they may be able to access (such as Vocational Rehabilitation). Facilitating opportunities for like-minded professionals and organizations to collaborate in their day-to-day work and to effectively partner to ensure an integrated and supportive approach at the local level is an important step to enhance employment outcomes.

Implementation support is necessary to "make it stick."

Excitement about the concepts of raising expectations, engaging families, and building capacity was clear throughout the sessions. Professionals, especially, were eager to engage in discussion about how to apply these concepts in specific situations or contexts. The desire to continue to momentum and to ensure that the training expanded to implementation within teams and programs was one of the primary "takeaways" of all of the mapping and action planning discussions. It was noted, however, that making sure these practices became the expected approach would require changes in policy, definitions of quality/outcome measurement, and ongoing training within organizations. These – and other steps – are important aspects of the process for adopting innovation, and require focused action, buy-in at all levels, and coaching and support. While further training and exposure to the Imagine the Possibilities: A Pathway to Employment Success curriculum is important, supporting professionals and organizations to truly integrate the concepts and practices is also critical.

#### **4. - Describe your own overall satisfaction with the project and activities. What would you change if you were to continue the project or have a do-over?**

We are very pleased with the results of this effort.

Comparison of pre-and post-survey results indicate that the workshop was very effective in raising expectations related to employment as an option for people with disabilities:

58% of respondents "strongly agreed" that their expectations were raised (all other respondents agreed)

58% of respondents "strongly agreed" that they were more confident in their/their family member/those they support ability to get a job (all other respondents agreed)

Additionally, respondents indicated that the workshop was effective in providing knowledge and resources to support people to pursue their/their family member/those they support's employment choices and preparation:

52% of respondents "strongly agreed" that they know more strategies for making choices that matter to them regarding employment

53% of respondents "strongly agreed" that they know more ways to help prepare for employment

Comments from the surveys consistently indicated that:

Families feel more equipped to envision the future, develop a positive profile related to employment opportunities and skills, and advocate with those who support their loved ones

Professionals feel more equipped to engage families in a strengths-based, possibilities-focused conversation regarding employment for their loved one

Attendees (people, families, and professionals) appreciated the practical tools and resources that could be immediately – and easily – used in their life and/or work

Overwhelmingly, attendees indicated the primary next step of interest to them is ensuring the concepts and tools/resources are shared broadly—especially across all systems of support. Participants were interested in sharing the information themselves with their own circles of influence but also recognized the need for broad dissemination and access to the information and learning opportunities.

Additionally, attendees were excited and motivated to use and apply their learning in their work. Professionals, especially, noted that they were invigorated by the importance of ensuring family engagement is an expected and critical piece of their work. Many indicated that this had not been a primary focus previously and/or that they felt unsure of how to engage families in a strengths-based way. The workshop provided them with both confidence and strategies to do so more effectively.

#### **Observations**

Over the course of the four sessions, it was clear that attendees found the information valuable and helpful – in their everyday lives and in their work. Results from the survey demonstrate the effectiveness of the workshop and curriculum to: Provide information and support to raise family expectations around community-based, competitive employment as a first option for



people with disabilities;

Building the knowledge and skills of family members to help youth experience competitive, community-based employment equip professionals who support people with IDD in their employment goals to engage families in the employment exploration and planning process;

And train trainers with the skills, curriculum, materials, and strategic plans to effectively sustain the promising practice

Moving forward, we recommend the following:

Utilizing the Curriculum

The Imagine the Possibilities: A Pathway to Employment Success curriculum materials are available in English and Spanish, and include:

- PowerPoints for 3 Modules
- Presenter notes to accompany PowerPoints for 3 modules (English only)
- Session Worksheet
- Positive Personal Profile
- Charting the LifeCourse Trajectory

These materials were shared with participants, are currently available via a shared google file (linked here) and can be used to continue to train others in formal or informal settings.

Discussion from the Advisory Committee identified collaborative opportunities for:

- The Parent Center and Educational Service Units to integrate the training into:
  - upcoming parent workshop opportunities
  - "Chat and Chow" sessions for transition-age youth
  - Leveraging the Revision Action Grant to host additional activities/training workshops

It is recommended that these materials be hosted and promoted both on the Nebraska Council for Developmental Disabilities website, and the Educational Service Unit Transition resources web-page.

Fostering Implementation and Follow-Up

In addition to continuing to host and facilitate workshops, the Advisory Committee was particularly interested in determining strategies to connect with families and ensure appropriate follow-up and support. This priority, along with the lessons learned regarding the need for increased local collaboration among those who support people on their employment journey and enhanced engagement of families, the facilitation team would like to recommend a two-prong approach for continued elevation of family engagement as both an outcome of and a strategy for enhancing employment outcomes.

Implementation Coaching and Support

Maximizing the impact of the curriculum is more likely to occur with an engaged and motivated group of people, who have the resources and a plan for long-term implementation. In addition to casting a "broad net" within a community, "going deeper" with a few organizations or groups that can then implement, and influence is necessary to create ongoing transformation.

Working directly with invested groups or organizations – with their buy-in and support to both ensure staff attendance, engage families with whom they are connected, and develop in a strategic implementation plan – is a necessary strategy, given the current context of outreach, connection, and collaboration in smaller communities. This approach would allow for modeling the implementation of the concepts within the curriculum, development of aligned policies and procedures that will sustain this implementation, and the ability to demonstrate improved employment outcomes.

Through implementation coaching and support, the capacity of the "system" is further developed to ensure families are meaningfully engaged in the employment process. This engagement has been shown to improve individual outcomes, and is an effective strategy for addressing the other recommendations in Dr. Lisa Mills's report: Necessity or Luxury: Supporting Nebraskans with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities to Join the Workforce and Contribute to Nebraska's Economy.

Local Collaboratives to Connect Families and Strengthen Partnerships

Simultaneous to equipping groups and organizations, focused community development efforts that build connections between and among families, and increase collaboration among invested parties are needed. Establishing "hubs" that understand and are responsive to the context and priorities of local families and the community, and can implement creative strategies to foster family connection, peer support, and information sharing are ways to:

- "reach youth with IDD early, focus on increasing competitive integrated employment (CIE)."
- [raise] "expectations of people with IDD within publicly funded service systems that serve people with IDD"

As families are connected to and supported by one another and equipped with information about what's possible and how to use the existing resources available – the local groundswell for quality employment supports and services grow. So too does the social capital and local collaboration that ensures an integrated array of supports (rather than relying only on eligibility specific services). Establishing local Family Networks are anticipated to result in:

- More connected and empowered families (through peer support and knowledge and resource sharing)
- Enhanced belonging and opportunities for employment in local communities (through focused community development)
- De-siloing the current employment "system" at the local level - where it appears people are "aware of" each other but not "connected to" each other (through strategic communication and collaboration in day-to-day work)
- Collective advocacy and partnership (of all invested parties) in ongoing initiatives - at both the state and local level

The Family Network model is described in more detail in the Appendix. It is recommended that Nebraska consider collaborative opportunities for establishing and funding the development and support of local Family Networks throughout the state.

**5. - Describe how the project will be sustained after Council funds are no longer available. This includes: -Who will take on the responsibilities for continuing the work? -What specific areas of the work will continue? -What additional funding would be required to continue the work?**

The curriculum is now owned by Nebraska, and the Council is working to make it available on its website. Additionally, multiple advisory group members voiced a commitment to leverage the curriculum to expand upon their existing training and family engagement efforts.

**6. - Provide success stories from project participants or your own story from the project that shows the impact the project activities had on participants. If relevant to your Project, include stories of policy or legislative changes that happened as a result of Council individual advocacy work.**

One father who participated in the final family workshop shared, "I wish I had known all of this years ago. My child is about to graduate from high school, and now we have so much work to do." This father was one of many who chose to stay after the event ended to connect with a local VR representative and to talk with other families who attended.

NEBRASKA COUNCIL ON  
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FUND CONFERENCE REPORT SUMMARY

Individuals who receive NCDD Leadership Development funds are required to complete this Conference Report Summary after the training/conference. To meet the deliverable to receive reimbursement,

- the Conference Report Summary,
- conference brochure/flyer,
- event agenda, and
- invoice

must be received by Council staff. Email the completed form and required documentation to [dhhs.dd.council@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.dd.council@nebraska.gov).

Name of Individual Receiving Funding: **The Arc of Lincoln : Jennifer Stuhmer, Executive Director**

Are you a person with a developmental disability (Self-advocate) or a family member/guardian? Parent and Advocate, I work for The Arc of Lincoln which supports individuals with developmental disabilities

Conference Title: The Arc National Conference

Conference Location: Columbus OHIO

Conference Date(s): November 1-3

What topic(s) were covered at this training/conference?

Self Advocacy and support to Self Advocates

Please share your plan to share the knowledge and information from the training/conference with others.

Will you present to an organization?  YES  NO

Name of organization(s) The Arc of Lincoln

Anticipated date(s) of presentation(s) November 22, 2024

Written Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_ Video Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_Verbal  
Presentation \_\_\_\_

From what you learned at this training/conference, are there any actions or steps you can implement for systems improvement or recommend that the Council consider implementing?

I found the presentations of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) very interesting and could see the council looking into this in the future. I also really like the conversation around Accessible Adult Changing Systems for bathrooms across the city and state. It was very informative and something this state really needs to look for inclusion, accessibility and dignity of our community.

#### Other Notes:

This conference helped me see how The Arcs across the nation work. I find that The Arc of Lincoln is unique and extremely special in the way we focus on advocacy, support and social/educational programs, whereas other Arcs operate as Direct Service Organizations offering Shared Living Providers, Group Homes and Day Services. The Arc of Lincoln is the only Arc agency that offers Arc Expeditions, our supported, inclusive vacation opportunities. While we run a much smaller budget, we make monumental support for our members, families and community.

The classes/lectures I attended offered the power of discovering and holding on to the Joy of why we chose this line of work, the importance of being inclusive and empowering our community, assessing the Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) needs in our community, and to appreciate the strength of our members and individuals serving on our Board of Directors and Committees.

The breakout sessions shared about the importance of social media in connecting with our community, The Arc@schools program and education policy, implementing DEI, navigating all aspects of media done right to promote your agency, and encouraging self-determination of individuals with IDD throughout our community. All these topics were truly impactful and were new information for me or refreshers.

A few Goals for myself

1. Research more into DEI and EQ
2. Reach out to local Media outlets to establish partnerships
3. Self Determination and Transition needs in our community.