

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES
AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

**Videoconference
February 1 – 2, 2021**

Council Members:

Corey Gilmore – Chair
Heidi Lieb-Williams – Vice Chair
Anna Attla
Meghan Clark
Jena Crafton
Art Delaune
Lyle Downing
Don Enoch
Margaret Evans
Dave Fleurant
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus
Joshua Gill
Alex Gimarc

Elizabeth Joseph
David Kohler
Sydney Krebsbach
John Lee
Duane Mayes
Madison Gorn for Sen. Micciche
Molly McManamin, excused day 2
Mack McAnally – not present
Travis Noah, excused day 2
Nona Safra
Charlene Tautfest
Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich
Jennifer Zucati-Pirtle

Guests:

February 1st

Colleen Shivers
Supanika Ackerman
Julie Connor
Kelly Sheffer
Linzey White
Sarah Lansing
Patricia Huber
Dee Ellen Grubbs
Wendy Cloyd
Teisha Simmons
Alison Neilson-Bryant
Patrick Regan
Sara Holland
Ric Nelson
Malan Pacquette

February 2nd

Commissioner Michael Johnson
Commissioner Adam Crum
Heather Carpenter
Laura Russell
Mike Abbott
Jimael Johnson
Lizette Stiehr
Kate Foster
Julie Connor
CL Smith
Linzey White
Supanika Ackerman
Anita Halterman

Council Staff:

Kristin Vandagriff, Executive Director
Anne Applegate, Planner III
Elena Markova, Program Coordinator II
Jamie Kokoszka, Program Coordinator I
Jessie Doherty, Program Coordinator II
Lanny Mommsen, Research Analyst III

Minutes Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo, Peninsula Reporting

Monday, February 1, 2021

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – 9:30 a.m.

Chair Gilmore welcomed Council members to the meeting. Roll call was taken, and **Kristin Vandagriff** reviewed meeting and Zoom etiquette.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Anne Applegate recognized that today the Council is all present on land in the state of Alaska. This land is also the historical home of 11 distinct Native Alaskan cultures, including Haida, Tlingit, Eyak, and Tsimshian people's in the Southeast; the Inupiaq and St. Lawrence Island Yupik in the North and Northwest; Yup'ik and Cup'ik peoples in Southwest Alaska; many unique Athabascan peoples in the Interior; and the Sugpiaq and Unangax peoples in Southcentral Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. These diverse First Nation peoples are carriers of over 10,000 years of knowledge of this land, and they are actively shaping its present and guiding its future.

DD SHARED VISION

Heidi Lieb-Williams read the DD Shared Vision as follows: Alaskans share a vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job, and their community. Our vision includes supported families, professional staff, and services available throughout the state now and into the future. **Corey Gilmore** added the phrase, "I like the life I choose with the supports I direct," which has shaped the work that the Council has been doing over the past year.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jena Crafton shared that tomorrow she and Maggie Winston will be on Alaska Public Media to talk about disabilities and COVID. She encouraged people to listen in tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. at radio station 91.1.

Heidi Lieb-Williams announced that in December she was asked by Autism Speaks to become a state of Alaska Autism Speaks ambassador for 2021. She noted that there are 380 ambassadors in the United States, and she will be participating in legislative visits with Congress in March.

Sydney Krebsbach stated that she has been participating in TASH since December 18th. On Fridays from 11:00 to 12:00 they do a weekly Self-Advocate Coffee Break with other self-advocates around the country.

APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 2020 MEETING MINUTES

Jena Crafton MOVED to approve the minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by **Don Enoch**. Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Kristin Vandagriff noted some amendments to the agenda. **David Kohler MOVED** to approve the agenda as amended, **SECONDED** by **Travis Noah**. Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS

No conflicts of interest were declared.

CHAIR/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Kristin Vandagriff began her report by reminding Council members of the Council's mission and vision and reported to the Council as follows:

DD Council Role:

- Advocacy
- Capacity Building
- Systems Change.

- Staff – Welcome to Jessie Doherty; farewell to Ric Nelson.

Council Member Leadership:

- Chair – **Corey Williams**
- Vice Chair – **Heidi Lieb-Williams**
- DD Chair – **Jena Crafton**
- Education Chair – **David Kohler**
- Early Intervention Chair – **Molly McManamin**
- Employment/Transportation Chair – **Anna Attla**
- Legislative Chair – **Art Delaune**
- FASD Workgroup Chair – **Meghan Clark**
- Medicaid Ad Hoc Chair – **Art Delaune**
- Autism Ad Hoc Chair – **Heidi Lieb-Williams**

Council Staff

- **Kristin Vandagriff** – Executive Director

- **Anne Applegate** – Planner III
- **Ian Miner** - Administrative Assistant II
- **Jessie Doherty** - Program Coordinator II
- **Lanny Mommsen** – Research Analyst III
- **Elena Markova** – Program Coordinator II
- **Jamie Kokoszka** – Program Coordinator I - Welcome Jamie!

Executive Director Highlights:

- Met regularly with DHSS Commissioner’s Office staff, DVR Director, Trust Program Officer, and with DSDS Director
- Panelist for the Trust’s *Growing Plants, Community and Inclusion* virtual event (Disability Employment Awareness)
- Presented twice to the Trustees of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (November and January)
- Participated in several NACDD national calls, including as a member of the Public Policy Committee
- NACDD Executive Director Leadership Summit (virtual)
- Participated in Office on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) federal call with DD Councils.
- Monitored SFY21 budget and processed FY21 contracts
- SFY22 budget review
- ACL Living Well grant (semiannual reporting submitted; renewal contracts completed)
- Coordinated joint advocacy efforts with the Trust and Advisory Boards (every other week calls)
- Overseeing Trust reporting (submitted October 2020)
- Supporting State 5-Year Plan development efforts - Held assurances meeting with Designated State Agency.
- Leading virtual meetings with Governor’s office and Department of Health and Social Services
- Overseeing DD Council Program Performance Reporting
- Home and Community-Based Services National Conference Presentation (Living Well federal grant efforts)
- Disability and Aging legislative panelist
- Serve as the Alaska Project SEARCH statewide coordinator
- Emergency declaration and vaccine distribution letter
- Employment Policy panelist regarding pay disparities (Institute on Educational Leadership)
- Staff to the Legislative and Executive Committees
- Western Governor’s Association Presentation –National Disability Employment Awareness Month

COVID-19 Resources

The following are some resources the Governor’s Council has developed with partners to support Alaskans with disabilities and their families amidst the current pandemic:

- Alaska COVID-19 website: www.covid19.alaska.gov
- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services COVID-19 Website: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/COVID-19/default.aspx>
- You may call the Alaska COVID-19 Care Line Phone Number at **(844) 985-8275**. They may offer resources and mental health support during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- More resources for well-being: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Pages/Well-Being-Alaska.aspx>
- **Compensatory Education and Extended School Year Services FAQs:** <https://dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/pdf/Extended-School-Year%20FAQs--Accessible.pdf>. Collaborative effort with Stone Soup Group and Disability Law Center.
- **Your Child's Rights to Special Education During COVID-19:** <http://dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/pdf/Rights-to-special-ed-COVID19--Fact%20sheet.pdf>. Collaborative effort with Stone Soup Group and DLC.
- **FAQs – COVID-19 Stimulus Payments and ABLE Accounts:** <http://dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/news/2020-Stimulus-FAQs--Accesible.pdf>. Collaboration with Department of Revenue and the Disability Law Center.
- **Alaska Specific Plain Language COVID-19 Toolkit:** <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dsds/Documents/covid-19/Alaska-COVID-19-Toolkit.pdf>. This was a collaborative effort with the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services.
- **Empowerment Through Employment Guide:** <http://dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/EmpowermentThroughEmployment.pdf>

Other activities of the Council include:

Disability Pride Celebration:

- Save the date: March 5th and 6th, Saturday and Sunday from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.
- Disability Pride means accepting and honoring each person's uniqueness and seeing disability as a natural and beautiful part of human diversity.
- Disability Pride awareness events promote visibility and mainstream awareness of the positive pride felt by people with disabilities.

Chair Gilmore shared messages as the chair regarding the following:

- Committee participation – ensuring quorum at committee meetings.
- Important reminder going into the next session:
 - Council positions and vetting process – ensure the message shared has been vetted by the entire Council.
- What's next for the DD Shared Vision – integrated into the State Plan.
- Possible Council committee structure changes to coincide with the contents of the new State Plan. More to come at the May meeting.
- A Council of big ideas!

Kristin Vandagriff shared upcoming activities for the Council to include:

The Known Horizon for 2021:

- Monitoring local, state, and federal mandates/guidance regarding the COVID-19 pandemic (ongoing)
- Monitoring legislative/budget developments on a local, state, and federal level
- Virtual legislative visits (February 8 - 19, 2021)
- Key Campaign – winter 2021 - virtual
- ACL Living Well semiannual reporting (April 2021)
- Spring Council Meeting – one or two days (mid-May 2021)
- Some Council member terms expire June 30, 2021
- Completion of next State 5-Year Plan (Due August 2021)
- Fall Council meeting, usually two-day meeting (late September 2021)
- Program Performance Reporting as DD Council and State Plan Update (December 2021)
- New Annual Report for FY'20 will be finished soon. Will be either a part of the virtual legislative packets going out to legislators or will be included in the follow up to legislators.

COUNCIL BUDGET UPDATE

Kristin Vandagriff provided the following budget update:

- When the Governor proposed his 2021 budget, everything the Council put in for their budget was included.
- Additional funding was added in the Mental Health Trust Authority Authorized Receipts (MHTAAR). This funding goes towards funding to put out for FY22 for an Empowerment Through Employment Conference. It also includes funding for other contracts such as Disability Benefits 101 technical assistance and Project SEARCH as well as designated time for the Planner to be involved in the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program Plan (Comp Plan).
- Travel line item remained what it was in the past. If the pandemic ends and the Council resumes travel, they have the authority to revisit that and request more travel authority and move money from one part of the budget into travel.
- The Disability Policy Seminar usually held in Washington D.C. every April has announced that their conference will be virtual April 19th through the 22nd. Staff and the chair will send out a request to Council members to determine interest in Council member attendance for that conference. Some of the unused travel money can be reallocated to a different line to pay for people to attend this virtual conference.
- They are going to work on getting the Executive Committee an update on the current budget for FY21 to see where they are at, but things appear inline for the current budget.

Based on a question from **Heidi Lieb-Williams**, **Kristin Vandagriff** stated that these larger conferences take a tremendous amount of planning, and due to the pandemic, it may be quite some time before large events can be held in person again. It will also need to be determined if locations for these conferences allow in-person gatherings.

The meeting was interrupted by hackers going by the names of Tayla Johnson, Lee Timestamp and Chris Chandler.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Lanny Mommsen gave a brief COVID-19 update as follows:

- So far there have been over 95,000 Alaskans to receive their first dose of the vaccine, but that number only reflects the number of people who have been recorded in the system through the State or Indian Health allocation. This does not include military members living on base or veterans, so the number is greater than 95,000.
- The previous phase 1-A tier, which includes healthcare workers and may include family caregivers and nursing home and assisted living residents and staff, have had the vaccine available to them, and many have been vaccinated.
- All Alaskans 65 and older are now eligible for vaccination. There are appointments in Anchorage and around the state that are currently available.
- There is now live help available on the vaccine phonenumber.
- The Aging and Disability Resource Centers are able to help seniors and people with disabilities make vaccine appointments.
- AnchorRIDES is now doing free rides to vaccine appointments in Anchorage. Please see the AnchorRIDES website for more information.
- There are new assisted living home visitor guidelines, which have been posted on the Council's Facebook page, and an SDS e-alert has gone out.
- Continue to practice social distancing, hand washing, and mask wearing even if you and your family and friends have all been vaccinated.
- Alaska Disability Advisory Group (ADAG) on Emergency Preparedness continues to meet every two weeks where they hear from emergency managers, people with disabilities, and supporting agencies.

"LIVING WELL ON THE LAST FRONTIER" UPDATE

Kristin Vandagriff shared a PowerPoint presentation titled *Living Well on the Last Frontier*, and shared the following information:

Administration for Community Living (ACL) Grant:

- Five-year federal grant awarded to the Council:
 - \$392,000 per year
 - Currently in year 3.
- Develop and coordinate model approaches:
 - Community monitoring
 - Community capacity building to enhance the independence, integration, safety, health, and well-being of individuals living in the community.
- Targets three different interrelated groups:
 - Individuals with developmental disabilities and their families/guardians

- Service providers
- Policymakers.

Overarching Goal:

The overarching goal of this project is to increase the community integration, health, safety, independence, and well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities through realization of our DD Vision.

Objectives:

1. Enhance the health and safety of individuals who experience developmental disabilities by increasing their independence, self-determination, community integration, employment, and participation.
2. Strengthen the knowledge and skills of direct support professionals to use evidenced-based and/or promising practices related to culturally and linguistically person-centered thinking and supported decision making, which may improve workforce stability, retention, and advancement.
3. Strengthen and elevate the leadership roles that self-advocacy organizations, Centers for Independent Living, and other peer support networks, working together with families and others, play in improving and assuring the quality of home and community-based services.
4. Enhance the effectiveness and coordination of efforts by the state, the DD Act network, and others to implement the HCBS settings rule and address rights violations in the HCBS service delivery system for people with developmental disabilities.

Grant Partners:

- Alaska Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education (lead)
- Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD)
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (the Trust)
- Disability Law Center of Alaska (DLC)
- Peer Power, Inc.
- Key Coalition of Alaska
- State of Alaska Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS)
- Southeast Alaska Independent Living Center (SAIL)
- Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
- University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development
- Alaska DD Systems Collaborative.

Work To Date:

- Project Management Team meetings held.
- Professional Services Agreements and Reimbursable Service Agreements with renewals for year 3.
- Meetings with ACL, other state grant teams, Lewin Group (external evaluators), and Mission Analytics (technical assistance).
- Advisory presentation to the Council (three times a year).
- Present yearly to the DD Systems Collaborative.

- Small working groups continue to meet:
 - Evaluation
 - Environmental Modification (EMOD)/HomeMAP Assessment
 - Employment First
 - Challenging Behaviors
 - Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Integrated Settings Transition
 - Direct Service Professional/Provider (Person-Centered)
 - Plan of Care
 - Community Relationship Building (building natural supports)
 - Self-Advocacy
 - Supported Decision Making Agreements (SDMA).

Recent Activities:

- Plan of Care webinars
- EMOD survey results
- DD Vision survey year 2 results
- Alaska Work Matters Taskforce efforts
- Self-advocacy webinars
- DD Vision Town Halls and Self-Advocacy Empower Hour
- Supported Decision Making efforts
- Centralized reporting and mandatory reporter efforts
- Disability Pride Mid-Winter Celebration.

Work Products Resulting from the Grant:

- Alaska Advocacy and Leadership Opportunities Guide
- COVID-19 Resource Toolkit – updated version and webinar February 4th.
- 5th Annual Peer Power Self-Advocacy Summit – save the date, September 24 – 26, 2021
- New resource preview – “I Have Rights – Access, Choice, Community, Dignity and Respect, Privacy, Safety, Work.”

Travis Noah noted that Empower Hour is usually the fourth Tuesday of every month from 6:30 to 7:30. The next session is February 25th. **Corey Gilmore** added that Empower Hour is a chance for people to get together and talk about anything that’s bothering them or they need help with. It’s very informal, and if people haven’t participated, he encourages them to attend.

Sydney Krebsbach asked if the Living Well Grant is for people with invisible disabilities as well as people with visible disabilities. **Kristin Vandagriff** stated that the Living Well target audience is anyone with a developmental disability, so that could include people with physical developmental disabilities, intellectual developmental disabilities, or both.

NEW GCDSE LOGO VOTING

Corey Gilmore stated that as they have been thinking about how to refocus the Council’s Five-Year Plan, they felt that the Council’s logo needed to be updated. **Kristin Vandagriff** directed members of the Council to the three options viewable on the screen share that have been

narrowed down by Executive Committee. She noted that since she has been with the Council, they have received feedback that people are unable to identify the Council's mission and vision from what is depicted in their logo. Executive Committee has been working on this topic, and staff has been working with DHSS Public Information Team staff to develop a logo that includes the state Alaska, notes that the Council's work is across the lifespan and shows a diversity in ages, shows both visible and hidden disabilities, and demonstrates meaningful lives.

Corey Gilmore opened the floor to questions or comments from Council members. No questions were asked, and the polling was opened through Zoom. A majority of Council members voted, and Option 3 was selected.

OTHER NEW BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Corey Gilmore opened the floor to Council members to bring forward new business.

Travis Noah noted that he, Jena Crafton, and Kim Champney will be doing a presentation to the school district system on Saturday, February 6th. The audience will be special education teachers and administrators, and they will be discussing how to implement the DD Shared Vision as part of transition. **Travis** leads the Outreach Committee for this project.

2021 VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE VISIT DISCUSSION

Art Delaune and **Kristin Vandagriff** led Council members through a PowerPoint presentation that has been adapted to the virtual legislative meeting format as follows:

Before the Meeting:

- Council staff will e-mail you regarding virtual meetings.
- You will receive a survey regarding which position papers/topics you feel most comfortable discussing, any time/date limitations, etc. From this, Council staff will follow up with Council members regarding which position paper(s) they can cover for specific meetings.
- Council staff running individual virtual legislative visit Zoom meetings will send you an Outlook invite with separate Zoom information for each meeting.
- You will receive a spreadsheet showing all meetings and noting which Council members are in which meetings.
- Check in with staff if you have any questions,
- Reminder that staff will have provided an electronic legislative packet in advance of the virtual meetings.
- Remember that if you're the team lead, this means being able to make the meeting and being able to jump in on any position paper if another member can't log in or something else happens.
- Make sure that you have everything you need.
- Login to your virtual legislative meetings 5 to 10 minutes early.

In the Meeting:

- Introduction.
- Note that Council staff e-mailed the electronic legislative packet prior to the meeting.

- Explain the 2021 Council legislative priorities.
- Thank the legislator for their time.
- When you are done talking, Council staff will ask for a virtual group photo with the legislator.

Introductions:

- Mention if you live in his or her district.
- Make a personal connection, if any. <http://akleg.gov/> for both members of the House and Senate.
- Explain why you are involved with the Council, and you can also mention briefly what the Council does.

Basic Council Introduction:

- Mission: Creating change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities.
- DD Shared Vision.
- The Council uses planning, capacity building, systems change, and advocacy to create change for people with disabilities.
- The Council provides a constructive process that connects the public with policymakers to ensure the thoughtful development of an efficient and seamless service delivery system that meets the needs of individuals with disabilities across the life span.
- The Council is composed of 26 members appointed by the Governor.

Explaining the Issues:

- Note that the electronic packet was e-mailed by Council staff and will also be displayed via Zoom.
- Members take turns briefly describing each position paper.
- Ask if they have questions or if they need more information. If there is a question you cannot answer, you can defer to the Council staff running the Zoom meeting.
- Thank the legislator for meeting virtually to hear about what is important to Alaskans with developmental disabilities.

Meeting Do's and Don'ts:

Do:

- Login early/test your tech
- Stay on topic
- Watch your time
- Pay attention to the legislator/team members
- Take notes
- Show appreciation
- Mute yourself when you're not speaking.

Do Not:

- Bring up unrelated topics
- Speak too long
- Provide answers to questions you don't know
- Interrupt legislator or other group members
- Multi-task during the meeting
- Argue with the legislator
- Discuss a position which the Council has not approved.

After the Meeting:

- Check your spreadsheet to see what dates/times your next meetings will be.
- Let staff know if you had a technology issue to work with them to troubleshoot for next time.
- Council staff may follow up with you to debrief.
- Council staff will e-mail a thank you to each legislator, with electronic packet sent again and any virtual photos, in addition to answering follow-up questions.
- Staff will write up the meeting debrief as two staff will be in each meeting. Staff may reach out to Council members if additional information is needed.

Keys to Successful Meetings:

- Review your virtual meeting schedule and set helpful meeting reminders.
- Staff will send you Outlook invitations for each meeting with Zoom login info.
- You will have a spreadsheet with dates/times.
- You may want to put appointments in your phone calendar or a paper calendar.
- You could also set phone reminders (day of).
- Review position papers.
- Read legislator bios.
- Practice with the position papers out loud and make notes for yourself.

Virtual Legislative Packets:

2021 Council Legislative Priorities:

- SESA Reauthorization Position Paper
- HCBS Importance Position Paper
- HCBS Cost Saving Position Paper
- Workforce Statement with Partners

- The Fiscal Year '20 Council Annual Report will also be provided and can be referenced. The Council member roster will also be included for legislators.

Kristin Vandagriff asked Council members if it would be helpful for her to reach out to Council members the morning of their legislative meetings to remind them of their upcoming meetings for that day. Some members responded that it would be helpful, and **Kristin** asked for any other suggestions that would help keep Council members organized during the two-week time period of legislative visits.

Legislative Visit Spreadsheet

Kristin Vandagriff screen shared the legislative visit spreadsheet staff are developing as meetings are being scheduled with legislators. Council members are being matched to the legislators in their districts, and other Council members are being plugged into visits for legislators that don't have Council members in their districts. She encouraged people who want to participate in additional visits to contact her directly to be on a stand-by list. She noted that the spreadsheet remains fluid as the House continues to organize, but staff will stay in touch with Council members as things change.

Jess Doherty stated that she is working hard to ensure Council members are paired up with their survey responses. She thanked Council members for completing the survey noting that they have been very helpful for getting the legislative visits scheduled.

Position Paper Review

Kristin Vandagriff reviewed the position papers as follows:

Special Education Service Agency (SESA) Reauthorization

ASK: Support the reauthorization of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) as recommended by the legislative audit report.

SESA provides special education support and services to staff of all 54 Alaskan school districts educating students with low incidence disabilities (LID). Alaskan children in rural schools and families need vital and cost-effective services provided by SESA.

The position paper further describes savings to the state, what SESA is, and why they are needed. The Legislative Budget and Audit Committee report recommends the reauthorization of SESA due to the value schools see in SESA services and SESA's effectiveness. SESA is scheduled to sunset June 30, 2021 unless reauthorized. The Council supports the reauthorization of SESA to June 30, 2029 to meet critical needs for education services in Alaska. If SESA's services were not available, families would be impacted throughout the rural Alaska communities.

Senator Gary Stevens introduced a prefile bill relating to SESA, SB 19: Extending the Special Education Service Agency; and providing for an effective date. A House companion prefile bill was also introduced by Representative Story, HB 43: Extending the termination date of the Special Education Service Agency; and providing for an effective date.

Anne Applegate noted that the Executive Committee was extremely thorough in developing this position paper. **Kristin Vandagriff** added that all of the position papers have been thoroughly vetted through the Legislative and Executive Committees, and in some cases, they have been discussed in other committees as well.

Based on a question from **Travis Noah**, **Anne Applegate** further added that SESA satisfies an important role that the Department of Education has, which is ensuring that children with low incidence disabilities have appropriate services, even if they are in rural and remote Alaska. She stated that SESA guarantees that youth with intensive and sometimes immediate needs have well-trained staff, have teachers and families that understand the nature of the impact on education, and can timely and consistently ensure that those students have appropriate modified curriculum and supports and intervention, should there need to be an intervention.

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus added that in rural districts in particular, even if they have a teacher in one village that has the expertise, that teacher is not reaching all the students in the other villages

that may have similar disabilities. What SESA can do is go to each individual village and work with the teachers, families, and the student to develop the expertise in that home community. She further noted that often the student is the only person in a community with a particular disability, and the families facing isolation also benefit from the services of SESA to have a sounding board for the particular issues they face in trying to support their child to the best of their ability.

Heidi Lieb-Williams added that the Autism Resource Center under SESA is a very valuable resource for individuals with autism and community members that work with people with autism. She provided examples of herself and others that continue to use the Autism Resource Center to help them become the people they are today, which coincides with the DD Vision to live a meaningful life.

Josh Gill stated that SESA services allow school districts to be able to do other things for those students that they wouldn't be able to do if they didn't have the cost effectiveness of the SESA program. Otherwise, the schools would be contracting with many specialists to come out and provide the training and the services for these students.

Sydney Krebsbach stated that as a person with autism, she received the services she needed while she was in school, and she was glad she was able to get those services.

HCBS Importance Position Paper

Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) are not optional for Alaskans with developmental disabilities. Federally, Medicaid allows people with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) to live in their own home or with a small group receiving Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). These services and supports are often referred to as "waivers." HCBS are long-term services which Alaskans with developmental disabilities need across the lifespan. In addition to HCBS, people with I/DD also rely heavily on early intervention services, special education services, regular Medicaid for healthcare, as well as services at the cross-section of disability and aging.

2,009 Alaskans are currently being served through Alaska's HCBS system for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The State of Alaska, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) contracts with HCBS provider agencies statewide to help people with daily activities like eating, bathing, dressing, finding and keeping employment, and connecting with friends and neighbors.

The position paper continues on to describe the HCBS system history, the development of the wait list for services, and today's DD Shared Vision, which was passed into law in 2018.

- HCBS are central to living meaningful lives and overall quality of life.
- HCBS decrease chances of contracting COVID-19 and dying.
- HCBS are cost saving for Alaska and the federal government when compared with institutional care.

Consequences of rate reductions, capping service hours, and narrowing eligibility will likely result in out-of-state placement, placement in more expensive facilities, and a higher cost of care. The Council appreciates that the Governor's FY22 proposed budget maintains current funding levels for HCBS.

Corey Gilmore remarked that he requires help with all daily activities that most people do without thinking about. He noted that he recently had to leave his home and his partner and move to Anchorage because there wasn't staffing available in Juneau. It's hard being displaced. He stated that Council members in legislative visits that think HCBS doesn't apply to them need to think of him and other people in his situation, and hopefully that will be helpful to them.

Nona Safra stated that she recently learned that in Alaska, about 39 percent of seniors experience disabilities. If there is a senior population of 87,304, that means over 34,000 seniors over the age of 65 in Alaska have disabilities. She remarked that this needs to be reflected somewhere in this literature to demonstrate that across the lifespan of services, this is a growing part of Alaska's population, and it's very much a part of who the voters are. The Commission on Aging is also pointing out this year that seniors are a population in Alaska that has a stable income through Social Security and pensions that have been supporting the economy during COVID. Many seniors are also still contributing through employment. **Kristin Vandagriff** suggested that this information can be shared verbally with legislators when discussing the position paper at the section that talks about through the lifespan.

Nona Safra further noted that as a senior with failing eyesight, the Council needs to be aware of the small font size in areas of the documents. She has heard this complaint from legislators of her same age range. She suggested creating documents that have no smaller than a 10-point font so the message is easier to read for the elder legislators. **Kristin Vandagriff** commented that because the visits and packets are virtual and electronic, legislators are able to amplify the size of the document for ease of reading.

Heidi Lieb-Williams stated that she didn't understand HCBS as well as she does now, and she wants to help other people on the Council grasp and understand the consequences to people who need but don't receive those services. Not one person in the state of Alaska should have to be ripped out of their home or taken away from their loved ones because they cannot get the help that is needed. If any Council members don't understand the concept, they should reach out to other Council members to learn more about the importance of HCBS.

Travis Noah clarified that the position paper is not asking for more money, and he proposed discussing the benefits of assistive technology if asked about it. Without the technology that he and **Corey Gilmore** have in their lives, they wouldn't be able to be as independent as they are, even with the supports they receive.

Sydney Krebsbach shared her experiences during the start of the pandemic and the difficulty of having to work remotely. She stated that at Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL), they had to continue to work with their consumers remotely, particularly seniors who are at higher risk for COVID.

David Kohler asked about the current waitlist of 800 individuals and how to respond when asked what is happening to those people right now. Are they getting services? What kind of services? How are those services being provided? **Corey Gilmore** stated that most of the services are provided by parents and family members, which can be difficult for aging parents caring for adult children. Individuals on the wait list are literally waiting for help. **Kristin Vandergriff** added that the Developmental Disabilities Registration and Review (DDRR) has an annual report that talks a little bit about what services people on the wait list are waiting for and what regions they come from. She noted that there might be some people that are only receiving natural supports, and there could be some receiving Individualized Services Waiver (ISW) supports, which offers a limited amount of support. There is a spectrum as far as what supports people are receiving on the wait list. Council members will be provided the link to the SDS website that contains the information. Council members can also let legislators know that staff will follow up with them to provide more information on questions Council members are unsure how to answer.

Margaret Evans commented that what she has found happens when she visits with legislators is she talks to them and tells them what the talking points are very succinctly and briefly. Then the legislators start to tell her their stories because they relate to one of the talking points. At that point she just listens because that shows her that they understand what the Council is trying to say to them, and they understand what the talking points mean and what the Council is all about. She doesn't interrupt them, and she just listens to their stories to build that relationship with them.

HCBS Cost Saving Position Paper

The Council is mindful of budget growth and Alaska's current fiscal constraints. Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) are the most cost-efficient way to deliver critically required services to Alaskans with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). HCBS allow Alaskans with disabilities to avoid institutional care, remaining in their home community pursuing as much independence as possible at the lowest cost to the State.

Currently, 2,009 individuals receive HCBS I/DD waiver services at an average cost of \$89,043 per waiver, at a total cost of just under \$179 million. Graphics in the document depict some data points relating to the cost of HCBS versus institutional placement. If these 2,009 individuals were in an institution (ICF/IID) at an average cost of \$216,710 per person annually, the total cost for serving these individuals could be around \$435 million. Institutional costs to the state are mandatory for those meeting an institutional level of care. All HCBS I/DD waiver recipients meet institutional level of care.

Additional Cost Saving Efficiency Options:

- Expand telework option for State of Alaska workforce and internet access for Alaskans with disabilities.
- Use telehealth, teleassessments, and other new technology within the system to better serve Alaskans receiving HCBS.
- Analyze waiver flexibilities allowed for HCBS through federal Appendix K (approved flexibilities due to pandemic emergency) to isolate possible cost savings to pursue as a

long-term strategy.

- Continue to pursue policy/procedural barrier removal for Alaskans with disabilities to become employed.
- Eliminate unnecessary costs and bureaucracy by allowing flexible purchasing for home medical supplies.
- Reduce unnecessary government control over services, increase savings and self-determination through new options for people with I/DD to direct their services more closely.
- Initiate Adult Companion Services.

The Council stands ready to support initiation of these stakeholder efficiency ideas which will help Alaska to fully realize the Developmental Disability Shared Vision of person-directed meaningful lives for Alaskans with developmental disabilities.

Since the budget is fixed this year, the Council recommends any savings achieved by these HCBS efficiencies be dedicated to fulfilling policy objectives with regard to providing appropriate services to people with developmental disabilities who are eligible (i.e. to support improvement of existing services, add needed services, or to take people off of the waitlist) instead of being used elsewhere in the state budget.

Workforce Statement with Partners

To Members of the 32nd Alaska Legislature:

Our direct support workforce is on the brink.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) work directly with individuals with disabilities, helping with eating, bathing, and transporting. They provide job coaching, mental health support, help with navigating systems, participating in social activities, and more.

The systems of support for Alaskans with disabilities are stretched precariously thin. While the current pandemic demonstrates the essential nature of home and community-based services for people with disabilities, these services can only be provided if there is a workforce to provide them. As advocates for services to children, adults, and elders with disabilities, we urge you to protect the direct support workforce that delivers essential care to over 40,000 Alaskans every day. This includes people who need daily support related to disabilities due to aging, mental illness, injury, or developmental disabilities.

These daily critical services are primarily funded through Medicaid, with a combination of federal and state funding. Reduced reimbursement rates will worsen an incredibly fragile system. Reductions will result in increased costs to the State because people will be forced into nursing homes and hospitals where the cost of care is at least doubled.

Medicaid allows people with disabilities and elders with age-related disabilities to live in their own homes or with a small group instead of in a much more expensive nursing home or long-term care facility. It may enable parents of medically fragile children to work while continuing to parent their children, instead of resorting to an out-of-home placement.

Currently Direct Support Professionals are working in high-risk settings for inadequate compensation, often without healthcare coverage for themselves. Only 36% of the Alaskan employers provide health insurance, compared to 70% nationally. Almost 99% of the funding for these services comes from state and federal Medicaid dollars, which providers cannot negotiate. Unlike some other federal programs, the rates are fixed.

During the 2018 legislative session, SB174, Alaska’s Shared Vision, was passed. The Vision, which is now embedded in Alaska Statute 47.80.130(a)(7), describes how services should be provided to Alaskans with disabilities: allowing “each person to participate effectively, with assistance, based on the person’s strengths and abilities, in managing the person’s support services so that the person can achieve a meaningful life in their job, in their home, and in the community.”

This cannot be achieved without a workforce.

Signed by:

- Key Coalition of Alaska
- Alaska Alliance of Direct Support Professionals
- Alaska Association on Development Disabilities
- Peer Power of Alaska
- Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education
- Statewide Independent Living Council
- Alaska Association of Personal Care Supports
- AgeNet (Alaska Geriatric Exchange Network)
- Alaska Commission on Aging
- Alaska Independent Living Network

Kristin Vandagriff then referred members of the Council to the DSP Workforce Legislative Talking Points and Background HCBS Cost Saving Efficiency Items contained in Council member packets and reviewed the talking points.

Mock Virtual Legislative Visit

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus, Corey Gilmore, and Kristin Vandagriff did a mock legislative visit as a demonstration for members of the Council.

STATE FIVE-YEAR PLAN DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

Anne Applegate directed Council members to the timeline of the development of the State Five-Year Plan and reviewed the State Plan development process. She noted that she recently participated in an NACDD ITAC training and had a peer-to-peer discussion about the Five-Year Plan, and it was noted that Alaska was far along in the process and had a lot of stakeholder feedback as compared to other states.

Step 1: October 1 – December 31, 2020: Progress Review

Staff reviews vision and progress of the last Five-Year Plan

Step 2: January – March 2020: Comprehensive Review and Analysis

Staff does comprehensive data research in categories from the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Act.

Step 3: March 1 – May 2020: Public Input and Analysis (Phase 1)

Staff gathers public input on issues of importance, analyzes and develops summaries for Council.

Step 4: May 2020: Priorities Selected

Council meets to hear public input and staff summaries; determine priorities for Council focus.

Step 5: June – September 30, 2020: Draft Plan

Staff uses public input on priority areas, develops goal recommendations for Council.

Fall Council Meeting: Council selects goals and approves a public review draft of goals, objectives, strategies.

Step 6: October – December 5, 2020: Open Public Comment

Council announces an open 45-day public comment period.

Step 7: February 1 – 2, 2021: Public Comment Review (Phase 1)

Council reviews public comments and either approves or modifies the draft plan. If the draft plan is modified, a second comment period is set.

Step 8: April 2, 2021: Public Comment Review (Phase II)

(If needed due to amendment after first public comment period)

Council reviews public comments. If the draft plan is modified, another comment period is set.

Step 9: May 27, 2021: Plan Approval

Council approves final State Plan for submission.

Step 10: August 5, 2021: Plan Submission

Staff submits the Plan to AIDD in ACL reporting system

Lanny Mommsen reviewed the public comment survey data with Council members as follows:

- 24 people answered the survey (compared to the over 200 people that responded to a previous survey on what should be included in the Five-Year Plan, including the community forums).
- 25% were individuals with disabilities
- A little over half were family members of individuals with disabilities.
- About half were members of advocacy groups.
- 25% were direct support professionals.
- Approximately 90% were female; 10% were male.

Demographics of survey respondents:

- Almost half from Anchorage/Mat-Su
- 20% from Southeast
- 18% from the Interior
- Less than 10% from the Gulf Coast region
- 5% from the Northern region
- Less than 5% from the Southwest region
- Almost 90% were white
- 25% were American Indian or Native Alaskan

Comments on Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services

- 50% had no comments.
- 50% had comments.

Objective 1.1:

- Over 60% had no comments.
- Less than 40% of people had comments.

Objective 1.2:

- Almost 70% had no comments.
- A little over 30% of people had comments.

Objective 1.3:

- Almost 80% had no comments.
- A little over 20% of people had comments.

Objective 1.4:

- 50% had no comments.
- 50% of people had comments.

Objective 1.5:

- Over 70% had no comments.
- Almost 30% of people had comments.

Goal 2: Self-Advocacy Leadership

- Over 80% had no comments.
- Almost 20% of people had comments.

Objective 2.1:

- Over 70% had no comments.
- Almost 30% of people had comments.

Objective 2.2:

- Almost 60% had no comments.
- Over 40% of people had comments.

Goal 3: Employment

- Almost 60% had no comments.
- Over 40% of people had comments.

Objective 3.1

- Over 60% had no comments.
- Almost 40% of people had comments.

Objective 3.2

- Over 70% had no comments.
- Almost 30% of people had comments.

Lanny Mommsen briefly reviewed some of the general comments provided on the draft plan overall. She noted that the Executive Committee has done an extensive review of the comments, and some of the comments and feedback received can be added to the work plans as activities.

GCDSE Five-Year State Plan 2022 – 2026 Goals and Objectives APPROVED

Anne Applegate directed members of the Council to the goals and objectives that were approved at the fall Council meeting. She asked Council members to consider these goals and objectives again after hearing the additional comments provided from the survey as reported above. **Anne** reviewed the goals and objectives as follows:

Goal 1 – Community Inclusion, Supports & Services. People with developmental disabilities will have increased access to a flexible system of meaningful supports and services in their homes and communities to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities living the lives they choose.

Objective 1 - Choice & Independence in Long-Term Supports and Services: People will have information, training, tools, and programs for systems change, supported decision-making, strategies and technology for independence, community-building, and more to increase the number of adults with developmental disabilities who choose and direct their long-term supports and services.

Objective 2 - Housing: People with developmental disabilities and their families will have information, training, tools, and programs for housing accessibility, housing availability, housing rights, landlord-tenant relations, cohabitation strategies, and more to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities who live where and with whom they choose.

Objective 3 - Health and Healthcare: People will have information, training, tools, and programs about Medicaid services, home-and community-based services, health and wellbeing, community events and activities, and more to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities across the lifespan who are living full and meaningful lives.

Objective 4 - Education & Early Development: People with developmental disabilities across

the lifespan and their families will have information, training, tools, and programs to increase the number of people with disabilities included with nondisabled age peers in infant daycare, preschools, K-12, and post-secondary education.

Objective 5 - Emerging Needs: People with developmental disabilities and their families will have information, training, and tools to prepare for them for personal emergencies, natural disasters, and/or other emergent circumstances to increase personal safety and the security of services, supports, and self-determined choices.

Goal 2 -Self-Advocacy and Leadership (required). People with developmental disabilities will have increased access to education, tools, and opportunities for self-advocacy across the lifespan to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities expressing their vision for their lives in local, state, and national forums.

Objective 1 - DD Shared Vision Implementation: People with developmental disabilities will have information on the Shared Vision and will have opportunities to actively participate in planning and implementation of the Shared Vision to increase the number of people who understand the Shared Vision and the number who live the life they choose with the supports they direct.

Kristin Vandagriff noted that there is also a requirement through the DD Act for the Council to collaborate with its DD Act partners, the Disability Law Center of Alaska and the UAA Center for Human Development, and that fits under this goal and objective.

Objective 2 - Support Self-Advocacy Organization: A self-advocacy organization will have direct funding support; and information, training, and tools for success to increase its membership, sustainability, and organizational outreach.

Goal 3 -Employment. People with developmental disabilities will have access to supports, services, programs, and training necessary for successful transitions to adulthood, meaningful work experiences, integrated and competitive employment, as well as career development, across the lifespan.

Objective 1 - Employment First Implementation: People will have information, training, tools, and programs on telework, the State as a Model Employer, employment rights, and universally designed work environments to increase the percentage of people with disabilities with meaningful, integrated, competitive employment in typical work settings.

Objective 2 - Traditional Transition: Transition-aged youth (14-22) with developmental disabilities will have increased information, education services, training, and tools that are regionally, culturally, and linguistically relevant to them to increase the number of young adults in rural communities with skills for meaningful, place-based adulthood.

Parking Lot for State Plan Development: Possible Work Plan Activities

1. Educate on why there is a need for “choice” in housing.
2. Watch for over-saturating audience via e-mails, posts, gov.delivery notices.

3. Medicaid system (at state level and/or CMS??) should be improved for individuals (more room for choice and self-direction, like an overhaul or a system-wide review).
4. Flexibility of service delivery.
5. Monitoring assistance of self-advocates through Council DD Act and Living Well.
6. Education on mandatory reporters (DLC comment).
7. Provider agencies need help organizing and creating quality learning events for users of day habilitation and supported living.
8. Transportation is a big problem for employment.
9. Transmission speeds and accessibility to technology; waiver?

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Public testimony was heard and a full transcript was prepared.

RECESS

Margaret Evans MOVED to recess the meeting, **SECONDED** by **Josh Gill**. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting recessed at approximately 5:15 p.m.

Tuesday, February 2, 2021

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – 9:30 a.m.

Corey Gilmore welcomed Council members to the meeting. Roll call was taken.

INTRODUCTIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND GOOD NEWS

Colleen Shivers shared that she got a new kitten.

Kristin Vandagriff asked Council members to be aware that legislative visits are approximately 15 minutes, so Council members should practice their position paper speeches to get them down to two to three minutes.

Heidi Lieb-Williams commented that she is excited about the Autism Speaks advocacy ambassador meeting this afternoon prepping for Capitol Hill day on March 3rd to meet with White House legislators.

Jena Crafton reminded Council members that she will be on the radio today at 10:30 on NPR, channel 91.1 to talk about COVID and disabilities. It will repeat at 8:00 p.m.

AGENDA REVIEW

Kristin Vandagriff reviewed the day's agenda with Council members.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES (DHSS) UPDATE

Commissioner Adam Crum stated that today he will be participating in a hearing in Senate

Health and Social Services about the disaster declaration extension bill that would continue to give the Department the tools they need to continue the pandemic response. He noted that Alaska has been rated number 1 in the country on metrics concerning hospitalizations, case fatality rate, total deaths, and vaccinations because of the partnerships they have put together with other groups doing outreach to their members and stakeholders. DHSS is also working in close partnership with the Tribal Health System as a co-lead on the Vaccine Strategy Team. He stated that the Department has been able to work closely and successfully with municipalities and local governments, and all of it without statewide mandates. He wanted to thank everyone who has worked on this, and he thanked the Governor's Council for their efforts as well.

Commissioner Crum stated that right before Christmas, Governor Dunleavy announced a reorganization of DHSS into two departments. The idea behind this is to take the 24/7 divisions such as Juvenile Justice, Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API), Pioneer Homes, and the Office of Children's Services (OCS) and move them into a department called Department of Family and Community Services. This title was decided on because a lot of those services around the country are titled similarly. The Medicaid side of DHSS, Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS), Division of Behavioral Health (DBH), Health Care Services, Public Assistance and Public Health will be in the Department of Health. This will include divisions dealing with Medicaid, chronic health conditions, and looking to make sure the data delivery/payment side is all fine tuned. The idea behind the split of the Department is to make sure they have enough time to invest, from the Commissioner's office on down to the policy staff, to ensure stakeholder engagement and innovation. The Department is looking forward to the benefits this is going to bring. There is no change in division leadership across the board. A lot of the offices will stay exactly the same, and the Governor's Council will be located under the Department of Health. Commissioner Crum noted that he will remain on as the commissioner of the Department of Health. They are making sure they are mindful that operations are not affected, and there will be no changes to services and programs under SDS.

The Department is really looking forward to the change, and they believe it will open up a lot of time for them to do a lot more active engagement and to be involved with stakeholder groups. DHSS will be working on agreements to ensure information exchanges between agencies accustomed to working together continue smoothly and that no service delivery is complicated or delayed. Commissioner Crum stated that in the long term, they are confident that the reorganization will enable SDS to better align with its sister agencies primarily supported through Medicaid resulting in smoother, better services for recipients and allow leadership to devote more energy and time to exploring ideas and needs presented to them by service recipients, SDS staff, and other stakeholders. They are looking forward to having more time to engage and talk through ideas to make sure they can make service delivery as smooth as it possible can be.

Commissioner Crum stated that of interest in the FY22 budget is the General Relief Program. The Governor's budget proposes a modest reduction of \$164,900 to General Relief for the Assisted Living Homes program. The General Relief assistance is a temporary funding source for assisted living home placements to meet the immediate basic needs of Alaskans facing extreme financial crisis. They expect the reduction will increase the length of the wait list for the program, but they believe that with close management, this will be minimal.

The Medicaid budget overall is flat funded for FY22. Due to federal action, Alaska has an enhanced FMAP, which is an increase coming into the state coffers for a Medicaid match of 6.2 percent, which has saved the state general fund dollars. The way the budget is proposed is a little unusual in that it shows a \$35M reduction to FY22, but it has a carry forward of \$35M from general funds that was lapsed from FY21. This funding is allowing them time to have these conversations over the next year about where they can gain, and they are looking at administrative savings as well as removing burdens from providers and clients.

Commissioner Crum stated that due to a letter they received from the Biden administration and the acting Health and Human Services secretary, the federal public health emergency will remain in place through the end of the calendar year of '21. That means that Alaska will anticipate continuing to receive this enhanced FMAP. He noted that Medicaid represents a very significant piece of the SDS budget, so this approach will allow the State to make sure the Medicaid budget is largely in tact this year as they move forward.

Overall, the Governor has proposed no reductions to waiver services or hours, provider rates, grants, or to the Governor's Council. The same levels of funding are anticipated for these in FY22. Commissioner Crum and the Governor recognize that these services are provided for our most vulnerable friends, neighbors, and family members, and it is their intention to protect them. He stated that this is what the Governor put forward, but they don't know what the legislature is going to do.

Commissioner Crum stated that as far as the pandemic response, the current vaccine eligibility is those who meet healthcare worker criteria and those aged 65 and older. The State is defining healthcare workers as individuals who are working and providing services in a healthcare setting, which could be the home. They want to make sure they are continuing to get all eligible healthcare workers and all people aged 65 and older to have their chance to receive a vaccination in the month of February. Looking toward future eligibility criteria, they think they can open up the next eligibility criteria level for the month of March. The Department will communicate what that is going to look like in the next couple of weeks.

Josh Gill asked if with the additional money from the federal government there was any discussion about using some of those funds to alleviate some of the pressure on the DD wait list. Commissioner Crum stated that that is a question for Director John Lee. **John Lee** stated that the waivers are set up in negotiations with CMS, and CMS has a hard cap from those negotiations. Even with that additional FMAP, SDS doesn't have the authority from CMS to exceed their five-year budgetary plan for their waivers, so unfortunately, they are not able to use that to increase the draw off the wait list.

Sydney Krebsbach asked if people with developmental disabilities are affected by the services they are receiving throughout the pandemic. Commissioner Crum stated that people shouldn't be affected. The Department tries to find ways to be flexible in how those are delivered, and there is no change to the service line. **John Lee** added that through the Appendix K flexibilities, SDS has been able to work with the provider agencies and recipients to allow for some flexibility of the services being delivered through the pandemic.

Lyle Downing asked if vaccines are being provided to those that might be vulnerable but are not in the healthcare worker or over age 65 categories. Commissioner Crum stated that from the State side, they do give allocations, and there is also a separate allocation that comes through to Indian Health Service (IHS). The IHS can administer as much as they want. The State asked IHS to try to follow the recommendations and guidelines, but individual communities will share those out. They are also hearing anecdotally about providers in small communities that may distribute doses outside of the eligibility criteria because of the logistics of storing the vaccine so the shots aren't wasted. The State is encouraging everyone to follow the recommendations as much as possible, but also don't waste the vaccine. He noted that they just received a report that Alaska is doing an exceptional job as a state making sure that the vaccine is not going to waste. They have also seen a decrease in hospitalizations because of the vaccine.

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus asked about the split of DHSS into the Department of Family and Community Services being for 24/7 services, but SDS falling under the Department of Health. Group homes through SDS are 24/7 facilities and will now be under the Department of Health, and she asked for clarification on that. Commissioner Crum stated that when he is talking about the 24/7 facilities, those are facilities managed directly by DHSS, not just licensed, and include API, six Juvenile Justice facilities, and Pioneer Homes. The other programs as they exist will continue to be managed under the SDS umbrella.

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus further commented that there are a number of people who, because of their disabilities and life impacts, are at very high risk for COVID.

Jena Crafton stated that she's been looking for work and was wondering if the Commissioner had any suggestions for meaningful work. Commissioner Crum stated that they have been working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Duane Mayes to make sure as a state they are trying to make sure there are opportunities. He stated that he will have someone from **John Lee's** team reach out to her to talk about that.

In the interest of time, **Kristin Vandagriff** stated that any further questions for the Commissioner will be collected by staff and passed through to Heather Carpenter for the Commissioner.

Commissioner Crum thanked the Council members for the time and concluded his presentation.

STATE FIVE-YEAR PLAN DRAFT – PUBLIC COMMENT REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Anne Applegate referred Council members back to the approved Five-Year State Plan goals and objectives. She asked if anyone had questions about where they are in this process. She reviewed that the goals and objectives were developed last fall and further vetted by the Council at the September meeting. The amended goals and objectives were put out for the 45-day public comment period. The Council reviewed the public comment data and feedback yesterday, and she asked if any of that changes what Council members think they should consider with regard to the goals and objectives.

Corey Gilmore shared that he doesn't believe any of the comments or data impact the goals and objectives as they are written.

Anne Applegate reviewed each of the goals and objectives again, and she asked for comments on each. Results were as follows:

Goal 1, Objective 1: **Anne Applegate** commented that there was concern that none of the goals and the objectives were focused on the condition or circumstances that families find themselves in, particularly when people are in transition in their lives or when people are in places of increased vulnerability. She noted that they talked about whether the goals should state whether the committees should be generating work plan activities with tools that were focused on all people or people with developmental disabilities or people with developmental disabilities and their families. The outcome of the goal itself was focused on increasing the number of people with developmental disabilities living the lives they choose. In the objective is where the larger population was addressed. She noted that they could consider changing it, and if it's a large enough change to an objective that changes the meaning of the goal, they have to open it up for another 45-day public comment period. No further comments were offered by Council members.

Goal 1, Objective 2: **Meghan Clark** asked if these objectives are also encompassing of guardians. She wondered if the assumption is that it's all encompassing of how ever they have to receive that access. **Anne Applegate** stated caregivers and legal guardians are included. The definitions under the DD Act include a broad definition of family.

Goal 1, Objective 3: No questions or comments were offered.

Goal 1, Objective 4: No questions or comments were offered.

Goal 1, Objective 5: No questions or comments were offered.

Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus MOVED to accept Goal 1 as presented, **SECONDED** by **Meghan Clark**. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

Goal 2: **Anne Applegate** stated that under the DD Act, the self-advocacy goal has to be focused solely on people with developmental disabilities and specifically not their families. Staff and the Executive Committee discussed that the nature of the objectives could include others outside of the focus in the goal itself, and that is allowable. No questions or comments were offered.

Goal 2, Objective 1: **Anne Applegate** noted that in the last portion of the objective, they can add the words "people with developmental disabilities' who live the life they choose." No questions or comments were offered.

Goal 2, Objective 2: **Anne Applegate** stated that this is also required under the DD Act. No questions or comments were offered.

David Kohler MOVED to accept Goal 2 as written, **SECONDED** by **Sydney Krebsbach**.

Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**.

Goal 3: No questions or comments were offered.

Goal 3, Objective 1: **Art Delaune** asked why in this objective they are using the language “increase the percentage of people” rather than the “number of people.” **Anne Applegate** wasn’t entirely sure, but she believes it’s related to Employment First reporting, or it might be related to the inclusion of choice. **Kristin Vandagriff** stated that typically when they look at employment rates, they typically see them based on a percentage. It’s a common way they look for changes within that. No other questions or comments were offered.

Goal 3, Objective 2: **Anne Applegate** noted that this objective is likely to be the Council’s targeted disparity because it meets all the criteria. **Elizabeth Joseph** was in favor of this objective. No other questions or comments were offered.

John Lee MOVED to accept Goal 3 as written, **SECONDED** by **Josh Gill**. Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**.

Anne Applegate stated that she will make some minor edits to correct some typos and add the word “developmental” in front of the word “disabilities.” It will not change any of the meaning of the document and will not require any review on the part of the Council. She congratulated the Council on the completion of the State Plan goals and objectives. Nationally, the Alaska Council and staff have been recognized for not only having great articulations of goals and objectives, but also the timeline has been noted as being really well developed, and Alaska is further along than about 85 percent of their counterparts. **Anne** recognized the great work of the staff, particularly **Lanny Mommsen**, for all their hard work. **Kristin Vandagriff** recognized **Anne** for all her tireless work with staff as well as nationally to ensure the State Plan submittal will be successful in the fall. **Jimael Johnson** also congratulated the Council and recognized the great work of the staff.

MAY CALENDAR

Kristin Vandagriff reminded Council members that last May the feedback was that a one-day meeting was not enough time and it was kind of tight. She asked Council members to respond to the poll through Zoom to determine either a one-day or two-day meeting as well as best dates. After the polling was closed, it was determined that a two-day meeting was preferred.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE STRUCTURE CHANGE

Corey Gilmore stated that the Executive Committee has been looking at the Council’s committee structure and the fact that it’s been hard to reach quorum with committees. If they don’t reach quorum the way things stand right now, the Council can’t do their work and vote. He stated that the Executive Committee has been thinking about how to restructure so they don’t have to worry about quorum, and it will also allow Council members to work on their passions.

Anne Applegate referred members of the Council to the graphic she created that demonstrates

the new proposed committee structure. The graphic starts at the top describing the GCDSE Developmental Disabilities Council, and below that are the Executive Committee and Legislative Committee, which will both continue to meet as they historically have.

The next layer of structure creates committees based on the goals and the objectives the Council approved for the State Plan:

Anne Applegate explained that the structure would become quarterly meeting for the committees where quorum of Council members would need to be reached; and the workgroups would meet more frequently but would not need to meet quorum because no official action would be taken. The workgroups would be working on activities listed within the workplan for the objectives. The work undertaken within the workgroups would then be brought back to the quarterly committee meetings for feedback and review.

Anne Applegate stated that the Council will be discussing this structure more going forward.

Meghan Clark stated that she is very excited about this new structure. She wondered if there has been any planning around transitioning workgroups out of the current structure and revealing what this looks like to them. **Anne Applegate** stated that it will be a big transition for everybody, and once they have a final plan, she will start looking at the bylaws because the bylaws will need to be amended. The first review of the bylaws amendments will take place in May, and a second reading will take place in the fall. The next step will be to educate the people in their respective committees now about how to channel their advocacy for the constituents they represent, and also for committee participants to determine their areas of interest by being educated about the specific work the workgroups will undertake. The Five-Year Plan will guide this transition.

Art Delaune stated that he likes the idea of all the workgroups and committees focusing on the Council goals. As far as the structure of the organizational chart, right now the Executive Committee is comprised of the chairs of each of the Council's committees now. He wonders

how this will impact the makeup of the Executive Committee. He assumes that each of the committees will have a chair, but will the workgroups all have chairs, and how does that filter up to who is on the Executive Committee? **Anne Applegate** responded that workgroups don't have that type of leadership under the Council's current bylaws, which she recommends they retain. Workgroups gather information, make recommendations, and implement plans. Her recommendation is that they don't have chairs, but that is up to the Council to decide. The number of members on the Executive Committee is part of the bylaws and can be altered, but her recommendation would be to continue the same structure, which creates an odd number of voting members for the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee would include the chairs of each of the three new committees plus the chair of the Legislative Committee, the vice chair and a member at-large. It would also include the Council chairperson as a non-voting member.

Corey Gilmore stated that he understands people are looking at this new structure and asking themselves where the old committees would be contained, like where is Autism Ad Hoc Committee? He stated that it exists, but it's time to take it out of that small group that just thinks about recommendations. Now they need to think a little bigger and they need to think about, "What are work opportunities or education for people with autism?" If people start thinking that way, they can maybe see where things might fit and where they might take the information they learned in the current committee that was just focused on that one issue and bring it to everybody else.

Anne Applegate further commented that part of the transition is when they look at the work plans for this next Five-Year Plan, the Council will need to have recommendations from all of the current committees and ad hocs and workgroups. What they will have to determine is where the work that has previously been completed in the last Five-Year Plan leaves them and how they will transition to the next step of advancing the primary work from those committees and ad hocs. Due to staffing constraints going forward, they will need to focus on the recommendations out of the Autism Ad Hoc and others. They need to know what should go into the work plan under self-advocacy and other areas from the Autism Ad Hoc Committee members. This new committee structure grouping things by area of life rather than being disability specific allows them to create better solutions for everybody. In terms of the FASD Workgroup, their Five-Year Plan is getting ready to sunset, so the accomplishments and recommendations from that workgroup should carry forward to the appropriate new workgroup.

Heidi Lieb-Williams commented that when looking at the graphic, it appears that there is not one disability group or person who appears more valued than any other. No matter what someone's struggle or situation is, each and every person has access to live a meaningful life as this is structured.

John Lee thinks the structure is good, and the change will require some thought and some work, but this has an opportunity to be successful. Thank you for the work.

Josh Gill and **David Kohler** both expressed their approval of the structure.

Art Delaune wanted to have a further discussion on what the workgroups will look like as there

will not be any leadership structure of the workgroups. **Corey Gilmore** stated that the Council has not yet decided whether or not there will be chairs of the workgroups. He recommends chairs of the workgroups, because that is what people are used to. **Anne Applegate** noted that the terminology may be confusing. If they are just talking about a leader, a person is usually called a “lead,” which doesn’t confer any authority, but that person works with staff to make sure that the information gets produced on time or that people get to communicate with other as needed. Workgroups are typically a very informal process that tackle specific topics and produce a memo that gets discussed in the larger committee. **Heidi Lieb-Williams** further noted that the ultimate leadership of the workgroups would fall back to the leadership of the committee. **Art Delaune** remarked that that would then impose quite a bit of extra time on the leaders of those committees because in addition to the quarterly committee meetings, they would also have to attend each of the workgroup meetings and would have a bigger workload.

Sydney Krebsbach felt very confused by all these changes, and she noted that she is not a big fan of change. **Heidi Lieb-Williams** further explained the new structure to her for added clarity. **Anne Applegate** also explained how the committees and workgroups as proposed will apply to everyone and will not be focused on any one specific disability group.

Jennifer Zucati-Pirtle asked for additional clarification on the graphic. **Anne Applegate** stated that the committees are focused on the goals themselves, because the goal articulates what authority the Council has to act. The workgroups do the actual work with work plan items under the objectives. She noted that in one respect, it’s the same thing they have always been doing: looking at employment, education, early intervention, and all people who experience developmental disabilities. Where the question has come up is on those committees or workgroups that are focused on a specific subpopulation or diagnosis and where the next steps are for them as they change structure. It will be about taking the recommendations from those groups and putting them into a solution that includes everyone.

Anne Applegate further commented that this new structure allows for more flexibility for workgroup participants in that they can dedicate the amount of time they are able as situations in their lives fluctuate.

Anne Applegate stated that further discussion on this topic and the introduction of bylaws amendments will be forthcoming at the May meeting, and no official action needs to be taken at this time. **Corey Gilmore** welcomes any feedback from Council members regarding this topic. Council members should feel free to contact him or staff if they have any recommendations.

PARTNER REPORTS

Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS)

John Lee thanked the Council for allowing him to present and to participate in this meeting. He directed Council members to his PowerPoint and presented as follows:

SDS Mission Statement:

To promote health, well being, and safety for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and

vulnerable adults by facilitating access to quality services and supports that foster independence, personal choice, and dignity.

State of Alaska Continuum of Care

John Lee noted that they show this graphic to the legislature every year. The document provides a graphic story of the services that SDS provided for the last fiscal year. From left to right they start with the lowest cost of care to the most expensive care.

Grant Programs:

- SDS's grant programs served over 33,000 individuals at an average cost of \$500 per person. These grants can include anything from Senior In-Home grants to environmental modifications. 57 percent of the funds are state funded, 42 percent comes from federal partners, and one percent comes from the Trust. Lisa Morley who used to oversee the grant services has now become the executive director for the Alaska Commission on Aging.
- The General Relief Program will see a \$170,000 decrement from last year. General Relief is 100 percent state funded. SDS has developed a very good screening process to ensure funds are going to those most in need. Most often these individuals are placed into assisted living facilities for a period of time while they get stabilized and back on their feet. It's a very important program that they are proud to administer.
- The Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program is approximately \$9.2M, with 80 percent coming from the state and 20 percent coming from the federal government.

Medicaid Programs:

- Personal Care Services is \$28M last year, and it's a 50 percent state/50 percent federal match. The average cost is approximately \$12,000 per person.
- Community First Choice is a 56 percent federal match and 44 percent state match. Approximately 1,000 people are served in that program for approximately \$21M.
- Targeted Case Management is a 50 percent state/50 percent federal match, and a little over 3,600 people were served in that program.
- Medicaid programs total almost \$52M spent last year providing those types of services.

Waiver Program:

- ALI, CMCC, I/DD, ISW, APDD
- SDS negotiates with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for how these programs work. CMS requires that the State not exceed their budget over the five-year life cycle of these programs. It is very important that SDS adheres to the caps that have been negotiated by the State and CMS.
- Four of the five waivers are undergoing a renewal process and are out for public comment until February 12th. The renewal is a five-year contract with CMS. There have been discussions about working in some of the flexibilities they have seen during the pandemic. Flexibilities, such as some of those seen with Appendix K during the pandemic, can also be addressed as amendments to the plan over the five-year lifespan.

- Even though the waiver services are considered “optional,” they are essential for how the State can provide funds to allow people to live in their homes and communities.
- Through the increased FMAP and through tribal claiming and other processes, the waiver program saw a 60 percent federal and 40 percent state match.
- If Medicaid waivers went away, the State would be mandated to pay a cost of over \$1B to provide services in an institutional setting.

Pandemic:

- During the pandemic, SDS has been receiving a 6.2 percent additional increase from the federal government, so those match figures during the pandemic are actually 6.2 percent higher, but the figures were depicted in the graphic as they have historically been.

Electronic Visit Verification (EVV)

The 21st Century CURES Act required states to have EVV stood up by January 1, 2021, and Alaska was able to meet that deadline. SDS has partnered with Therap, and Therap has done a remarkable job of getting the agencies and the caregivers trained up on the programs. The rollout went very smoothly, and SDS is very pleased. There is still a lot of work left to do for EVV, but SDS looks forward to partnering with that work going forward.

COVID-19

John Lee reminded Council members of Commissioner Crum’s statement that Alaska was recently rated the safest state in the nation for the COVID response. There was a study completed that looked at five different areas: the percentage of the population that has received the vaccine, the positivity rates in the community, hospitalization rates, community spread, and death rates. Alaska was either the best or among the top three in all those categories. Alaska is number one in the nation for the vaccine rate, and a lot of work has been done to protect Alaskans such as:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Flexibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix K • 1135 • Regulation suspensions | <p>Support for Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants - \$5.5M • COVID relief funds • Guidance • Support | <p>Vaccine Distribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warp Speed • Allocation • Distribution • Support and guidance |
|--|---|---|

Reorganization

Department of Health:

- SDS
- DBH
- HCS
- DPA
- DPH

Department of Family and Community Services:

- API
- OCS
- DJJ
- Pioneer Homes

John Lee stated that SDS is in the process of developing memorandums of agreement for continuing to work with API and OCS. He reiterated that Commissioner Crum is looking forward to having more time to dedicate to working with the more focused Department of Health divisions, and it will allow them to be more flexible and have a lot more innovative programs going forward.

Other Updates

GCDSE MOU Update:

In December, Council staff approached SDS and asked for some help regarding the MOU that needs to be renewed every five years between the Council and SDS. The legal team has finished reviewing the draft MOU, and after some small edits are made, the State is ready for that to be put in a final form. They don't anticipate any issues in finalizing it.

Telework:

SDS was one of the first divisions in the state to fully implement teleworking. It's working very well, and they are hoping to be able to continue teleworking. As long as **John Lee** is the division director, he intends to make that a viable option. They are still waiting for some guidelines from the State on how this is going to work, but all the information he is receiving indicates that this is something that the State is eagerly taking a look at because it can save the state money if done correctly. If the Council would like to continue in telework status going forward, SDS is eager to help.

Bragaw Move:

SDS moved to Bragaw last November, but everyone is teleworking, so there is only a handful of people present in the office. The building is owned by UAA and is a very modern, well-kept building with security and ample parking.

John Lee commented that there was a comment made during public testimony that he wanted to respond to about employment services not allowing people to work from home. He stated that that is not the case. There is nothing in the proposed regulations that would disallow or discontinue working from home. He's not sure where that misinformation came from, but the regulations are currently posted and out for public comment.

Heidi Lieb-Williams clarified that issue is that she believes the person was saying people could only work from home if they have a home-based business, but if someone had disabilities and was working for somebody else and needed to use the telework aspect, that the person couldn't have their care help team work with them; therefore, they would lose their job. **John Lee** encouraged people to provide public comment to the regulations. SDS's intent is not to cause any roadblocks for people to work from home. He noted that in order to get CMS's approval on employment services, the working from home requires there be a viable business that can be demonstrated, similarly to working in the community.

Josh Gill asked that the link to provide public comment on the employment services regulations be put up in the chat box. He noted that this is a great opportunity to look at practices and see where they can get better. If being able to work from home makes a person more productive, it shouldn't be a barrier.

Sydney Krebsbach asked if people with disabilities working from home would still be able to receive their services. **John Lee** stated that if someone is at a work site that still requires employees to be in person, that is still allowable; and they have also added the ability to work from home by adding language about how it works if people are in a group home, et cetera. There are a lot of enhancements that they think will make employment services more viable and better. The rewrite of the regulations is not going to limit peoples' ability to work in a traditional setting, and they are not taking away the ability to telework.

Corey Gilmore stated that the Council will be providing comment on the regulations, and he encouraged individual Council members to provide comment as well.

Anne Applegate asked **John Lee** if he was able to hear the public comments related to the eligibility categories for the COVID vaccinations. **John** stated that he had another engagement and was not available for public comment, but as the Commissioner was saying, the State needs to make sure that everyone who has been called has the opportunity to get the vaccines. For right now it's the healthcare workforce and individuals who live in congregate residential settings, and people over the age of 65. Once the demand from these individuals has been met, then the State will open up additional eligibility tiers, hopefully by the end of February. Receipt of additional doses of vaccines from the federal government will also trigger the timeline by which the next tiers can get the vaccines.

Josh Gill recommended that based on last night's public comment, the Council should write a letter in regards to people being allowed to continue to work from home beyond the pandemic. **Kristin Vandagriff** noted that the Council always look at regulation packages that impact Alaskans with developmental disabilities. The Council currently has a draft letter that will be going to Executive Committee on the overall waiver renewals, and then the Medicaid Ad Hoc and Executive Committees will be working on the regulation package for employment services.

Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)

Commissioner Michael Johnson noted that he is missing the opportunity to see the Council members in person for this meeting, but he is thankful for the opportunity update the Council and answer questions. He thanked the Council for their important work, and noted that the Council's advocacy has been important through the pandemic.

Commissioner Johnson stated that he wanted to update the Council with what has been happening with the impact of COVID on schools and students with disabilities. It's been hard for everybody, but the Department has seen some varying levels of success around the state. Last May the Department knew this was going to be a tough year. At that time they had hoped that the virus would be on the decline, but that didn't happen in the fall. The Department put out what was called the Smart Start 2020 framework, and they met with superintendents, principals,

and others every single week. The framework was put out as a way to make sure that people had a resource to work with their community to plan for the next school year, planning for both in-person learning or out-of-school learning if needed, but also to plan very intentionally for students with disabilities and other populations and to make sure they were ready.

The Department put out the Smart Start 2020 framework in May, updated it in June, updated it again in July/early August, and they met weekly with superintendents. DHSS was very gracious and generous to hire a medical doctor that was on call for school districts to help them through that planning process. Throughout the summer webinars were held weekly on all topics associated with the school year and the challenges. AKLearns.org has a section on instruction and a variety of free resources and information.

Commissioner Johnson stated that some districts were able to get school started in person in the fall; others are just now getting back to in-person learning. Reasons for that include various outbreaks and logistics. School districts have been working on it, and the Department continues to meet with education leaders to provide information and resources to them as they work through their processes.

Commissioner Johnson stated that Don Enoch and his team have been absolutely relentless and wonderful. They hold weekly meetings with special education staff to help them through the many, many questions that still arise over the impacts of COVID.

Commissioner Johnson stated that in late December the federal government passed another round of COVID relief funds for districts. School districts in the Alaska are getting \$143M, and the Department is strongly encouraging districts to work with their local communities on how to allocate that money. He encouraged Council members to be a part of that process in their local districts to make sure they are advocating that that money gets spent in a way that most benefits all students. The Biden administration is also talking about another relief package that may send more funds to districts.

Anne Applegate asked the Commissioner to talk a little bit more about Alaska's Education Challenge and the bill looking at a compact with Native corporations about rural education. Commissioner Johnson stated that they don't know how the compact will look completely because they have never done one before, which is why they should. He stated that education has been provided in a very Western model, and obviously the results are not what they want them to be. He noted that throughout the pandemic, the Tribal Health Network has been fantastic in supporting their tribal members and entire communities. He stated that is an admonition and a charge that the State should provide the opportunity and pathway for them to do the same thing with education. They have proven how successful and helpful and effective they are in providing for their rural communities, and he would love to see them find a way to try that in education. He is almost certain that they would see great things for kids, especially in rural Alaska. **Anne Applegate** believes that culturally appropriate special education would be an interesting curriculum and supports and is excited to see it is included.

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Mike Abbott introduced himself and thanked the Council for the time today. He introduced Jimael Johnson, who is also present for today's meeting.

Mike Abbott stated they continue to have a lot of turnover among the Trustees. Ken McCarty was appointed as a Trustee in 2019, but recently won a seat on the legislature and has resigned from the Trust. He was replaced by Brent Fisher, who is an Anchorage resident and administrator of a medical provider in Anchorage. Mike thanked **Corey Gilmore** and **Heidi Lieb-Williams** for participating as part of the panel that interviewed candidates for the Trustee appointment.

Mike Abbott stated that Annette Gwaltney-Jones was appointed as a Trustee in the fall. She has participated in a couple of Trustee meetings, but she has not been able to attend a Council meeting yet. Both she and Brent Fisher are looking forward to that in the future. Mike noted that long-standing Trustees have left the board, so now the average tenure on the board of Trustees is about one year. The most senior Trustee has served less than four years, and there are five Trustees that have served less than two years. Trust staff have been working to help get the Trustees prepared for meetings and decision making. It also means that the Trustees will be relying even more on the advisory boards that support the Trust. He encouraged the Council to take advantage of the opportunity that is presented right now with this receptive group of Trustees that are eager to learn more about beneficiaries and the programs that support them.

Mike Abbott stated that they are beginning their work with the legislature, which is closely coordinated with the Council and the other advisory boards. He highlighted that of particular concern to the Trust is a letter the Trust wrote to the Senate Finance Committee recently regarding a couple of proposals in the Governor's budget. This year the Governor has proposed directly appropriating Trust funds for State budget purposes. The Trust believes that is problematic and likely violates the spirit and the letter of the settlement that formed the Trust Authority 25 years ago. The Trust has reached out to the administration and the legislature to help them understand the concerns, and hopefully that will lead to different funds being used for some of those functions. It is an important threshold that no administration or legislature has thought to cross in the past. The Trust is hopeful that that continues, and that people continue to recognize the importance of the independence and the special authority the Trust has for managing their work with their beneficiaries. He knows that the Council staff will continue to keep the Council apprised of the situation, and he encouraged Council members to reach out to him or Trust staff if they have any questions or need additional information.

Heidi Lieb-Williams thanked Mike Abbott for the honor of being a part of the Trustee interview process, because she was able to learn a lot about the Trust. She is excited to learn today that Brent Fisher was appointed.

Jimael Johnson gave a big shout out and thank you for everybody's work this past year during COVID. She also screenshared a photo that depicts **Corey Gilmore's** painting that has been featured in relationship to the DD Vision. The Trust enjoys collecting art made by Trust beneficiaries, and **Corey's** piece was so beautiful that she asked if he would be interested in having it displayed at the Trust, and he was willing to let the Trust purchase it. It is now hanging right next to her office door.

Jimael Johnson stated that the Trust supports and is honored to partner with everyone on the Governor's Council, particularly on the development and implementation of the Shared Vision, which is something that the Trust also holds dear.

Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD)

Lizette Stiehr introduced herself and referred Council members to her written report shared on the screen. She stated that AADD is the trade association for provider agencies and has 59 members that include providers, care coordinators, assisted living homes, and individuals from Kotzebue to Ketchikan. She further reported to the Council as follows:

Monthly Teleconferences:

- Membership Zoom calls – state and partner updates
- Chief Finance Officer Group
- Compliance Group
- Care Coordinator Group
- Hot Topics calls.

Representation on:

- DD Collaborative
- Alaskans Together for Medicaid
- WINGS Statute Committee
- Aging and Disability Summit
- ANCOR
- Alaska Health Care Work Force
- GCDSE DD Committee and Employment & Transportation Committee.

Grants Support:

- Alaska Community Foundation for DSP ads
- Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to do the Leadership Consortium.
- Technical Capacity Building 2
- ACL Grant for Community Engagement.

Written Communications (monthly or as needed):

- Newsletters
- Monthly Report
- E-mail resources
- Respond to public comments.

Input to SDS on:

- Vaccines
- Companion Services
- Family Habilitation.

Advocate for:

- DD Shared Vision
- Workforce issues
- Sustainable funding.

Lizette Stiehr stated that along with their partnerships, AADD is currently most invested in commenting around the vaccines. They recently had a Hot Topics discussion on the vaccine that was very informative and interesting.

Lizette Stiehr noted that the Alaska Community Foundation grant allowed AADD to hire Northwest Strategies to do ads for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). At the same time SDS funded, through their CARES Act funding, DSP Hire. DSP Hire was actually started with Trust funds that were granted to AADD, and an app was developed that would allow somebody who was interested in work as a DSP to be able to go to one place and see where the openings are in the state throughout multiple organizations. SDS hired Jake Carpenter to work full time on the app, and DSP Hire is now his full-time job. Ads started going out in the middle of December. There are now 27 provider agencies advertising on DSP Hire, and they had 1,000 hits the last week of December. AADD is very excited about this being able to lift up the DSP workforce.

The last thing Lizette wanted to share is AADD is using Trust funds in this calendar year to ask the University of Delaware to bring back their Leadership Consortium training to Alaska. This was last offered in Alaska in 2015 and was face to face for five full days. This is a phenomenal training that helps people look at a challenge they want to take on in their own organization but also teaches people a tremendous number of tools for moving change forward and for looking at their own leadership. Lizette noted that of all the trainings she has attended in her professional lifetime, this training was the most impactful one she has ever attended. As the Governor's Council is a member of AADD, she hopes that someone from the Council is planning to apply for the Leadership Consortium. The cost for registration was \$1200 in 2015, and because of the Trust funds, they are able to offer it for \$500 this year. The applications are due by Friday, February 5th. The training is taking place the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th week of April and the 1st week of May two mornings during the week from 9:00 to noon, so there are eight separate sessions people will attend over the four weeks. **Kristin Vandagriff** asked for a link to more information about the Leadership Consortium be put into the chat box for Council members to access.

Lizette Stiehr stated that she is thrilled to see the draft of the public comment the Council is working on around the waivers and how they are talking about the Shared Vision as the place to come from. She noted that she is also thrilled they were able to get the Shared Vision into statute to allow everyone to refer to it as a statute within public comments and hopefully move the waiver process closer to the Shared Vision in how it would operate.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Duane Mayes thanked the Council for the opportunity to present.

At-Risk Youth Initiative

Duane Mayes stated that the Departments of Labor and Health and Social Services in partnership created the At-Risk Youth Initiative prior to the pandemic, but the pandemic interfered with the efforts to move that initiative forward. The Department of Labor has invested funding to create three positions, a program coordinator and two specialists, to work with all of the relevant divisions within state government such as Office of Children's Services, Behavioral Health, Employment and Training, and Vocational Rehabilitation. The program coordinator, Leslie Vines, has been moved into DVR because it made sense for her to be in close connection with DVD's counselors for whom a percentage of caseloads include at-risk youth with disabilities. DVR believes that most at-risk youth, if not all of them, have some type of disability.

This initiative is a very important priority for Commissioner Ledbetter. She wants to do more to provide employment opportunities and training for at-risk youth.

Senior Employment Initiative

Duane Mayes noted that the pandemic also impacted forward momentum on the Senior Employment Initiative, but it is now moving forward. He reminded Council members that **Nona Safra** shared at the meeting yesterday that there is 37 percent of seniors in Alaska with disabilities. The national percentage is similar at 39 percent. He stated that in terms of the Division, close to half of the people that have disabilities are seniors. From his perspective, having this initiative is really important. There are seniors who want to continue to work for social stimulation, engagement, and a sense of purpose. There are also seniors that have to work because they don't have enough put aside for retirement and need to supplement their income.

Alaska is an aging state, and the numbers are increasing substantially, so they are doing quite a bit around promoting DVR. There will be an article in the Senior Voice that discusses this initiative. They have put material out on the AARP website and Facebook page to promote this program as well. All of the Job Centers in Alaska and DVR are doing as much as they can to promote it. There is a standing committee for this initiative that meets on a monthly basis to compare notes and determine what else needs to be done.

Work Matters Task Force

Duane Mayes stated that it will be a matter of days before they will be able to come forward with formalized support from the Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Social Services supporting the Work Matters Task Force. This is a time-limited, one-year task force whereby they will take a look at everything within the State of Alaska, all programs and all policies, regulations, and the services system that has to do with competitive and integrated employment for Alaskans with disabilities. As the economy recovers, the plan is that this task force will help to make sure that as the plan of recovery is worked on, it will factor in all programs and services for people with disabilities. At the end of the task force, they will come up with very specific recommendations as to how Alaska can maximize what they have to stretch dollars to do more in terms of employment outcomes.

Partnership with TVR

Duane Mayes stated that partnership within the State structure as well as with the community providers is critical to Alaska's success. The 11 Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (TVR) programs in Alaska receive 100 percent federal dollars through a grant. Every five years each TVR must reapply for the grant. Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) will look at what each grantee has accomplished in the last five years, and there is no guarantee that these TVR programs will be refunded. A couple of grantees have lost their efforts to resubmit for the grant and had to wait five years to reapply. The TVRs have a huge role serving rural Alaska and Alaska's Native population in pursuing employment opportunities. DVR must be connected and partner with TVR, so they have been meeting on a regular basis, which has never happened in the past. They met again virtually last Friday to compare notes and to invest their resources into maximizing outcomes for Alaska Natives who have disabilities and are living in rural Alaska.

Art Delaune asked for **Duane Mayes** to define at-risk youth in terms of eligibility for services. **Duane** stated that the youth for this initiative more than likely have a disability, may be youth in the foster care system that have aged out, and youth that may have been incarcerated. At-risk youth lack the skill set, soft skills, and awareness of what it takes to hold down a job. He stated that it includes most all of the youth that are on the caseloads within DVR.

David Kohler asked for further clarification that being a student with a disability would be an automatic qualifier for being considered at-risk. Would that be the case, or would there need to be other criterion met as well? **Duane Mayes** stated that from his perspective, students with disabilities coming out of the educational system don't have all of the necessary skills in order to survive independently in terms of having employment and living on their own.

Sydney Krebsbach asked if there is any age limit for DVR for teenagers or young adults with disabilities that are looking for a permanent job in Alaska. **Duane Mayes** stated that the statute says that DVR can open a case on someone that has a documented disability from age 14 up, but they generally average around the age of 16. DVR counselors around the state are assigned to school districts, and they work with the special education staff.

Duane Mayes stated that throughout Alaska and the nation, DVR numbers have dropped in terms of the number of applications for services. He stated that states are hearing that people with disabilities are afraid of what might happen if they go out into the public given the current pandemic. DVR is using social media to try to get the word out that services are available, and he asked for the Council's help to get the word out that DVR is open for business and wants to help. **Corey Gilmore** added that it would also really help if they can solidify that people can still work from home and remove those fears. **Duane** added that telework is here to stay and will truly make a difference for people with disabilities.

Heidi Lieb-Williams noted that her son with autism has aged out of the system, but he has recently been talking about engineering and plumbing and has been trying to study on his own during COVID. If he or other people came to DVR, would DVR possibly be able to help them? **Duane Mayes** stated that DVR does not take applications prior to the age of 14, but people from 14 to 110 can apply for DVR services.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Kristin Vandagriff announced that DD Awareness Month is in March, and the Council likes to put up Alaska-specific content for the event. She stated that the DD Vision embodies the essence of what they love to put up in the month of March, so she challenged Council members to take a picture of themselves in the masks sent out with their Council packets that features **Corey Gilmore's** painting and highlights the DD Shared Vision. She asked them to also include a short sentence on what the DD Vision means to them. She will work with **Lanny Mommsen** to include those in the Council's social media.

Corey Gilmore is looking forward to sharing the news with the DD Collaborative about the completed Five-Year State Plan that embodies the DD Shared Vision.

Heidi Lieb-Williams expressed her love to everyone on the Council, and she thanked everyone for being a part of her journey. Yesterday in her Facebook memories, she received a notification from three years ago, and it was her experience of being at the Governor's mansion with Governor Walker and the rest of the Council. One of the photos was of her being so proud of being at the front door of the Governor's mansion, and she reflected on how far she's come because of the Council and the support she receives from everyone on the Council. So many doors have opened for her because of this Council, and she is very thankful.

Sydney Krebsbach shared that three years ago yesterday she was introduced to **Heidi** at the Capitol for the Governor's Council meeting. At that time **Sydney** was working as a Senate page, and Patrick Reinhart introduced them to each other. She never thought she would become a member of the Governor's Council and a part of the advocacy for other people with disabilities. She also can't believe she was inducted into the National Leadership Circle.

Corey Gilmore encouraged everyone to dream bigger.

Kristin Vandagriff shared that it's exciting from having come to the Council in 2013 to see the stakeholder input that's occurred over that period of time and where they have come with the DD Vision and seeing it become the structure of what they want to see occur in the way of outcomes for the plan and to see that it's so stakeholder driven.

SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING COUNCIL MEETINGS

- Mid May, 2021 – TBD – Council meeting
- September – TBD – Council meeting

ADJOURN

Sydney Krebsbach **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by **Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus**. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.