

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

**QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES**

**Zoom Videoconference  
September 29 – 30, 2021**

**Council Members:**

Heidi Lieb-Williams – Chair  
Jena Crafton – Vice Chair  
Anna Attla  
Art Delaune  
Lyle Downing  
Don Enoch  
Margaret Evans  
Dave Fleurant  
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus  
Corey Gilmore  
Margaret Gore

Ken Hamrick  
Elizabeth Joseph  
Director Duane Mayes (day 2 only)  
Director John Lee  
Travis Noah  
Ric Nelson  
Dean Paul  
Nona Safra  
Charlene Tautfest  
Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich  
Fred Villa

**Guests:**

Anne Applegate  
Lesley Thompson  
Commissioner Adam Crum (DHSS)  
Tom Crafton  
Kelly Sheffer  
Teisha Simmons  
Charles Clark

Michele Girault  
Heidi Teshner  
Lizette Stiehr  
Karen Heath  
Patrick Pillai  
Mike Abbott  
Jimael Johnson

**Council Staff:**

Kristin Vandagriff, Executive Director  
Lanny Mommsen, Research Analyst III  
Jamie Kokoszka, Program Coordinator I  
Jessie Doherty, Program Coordinator II  
Myranda Walso, Planner III  
Michele Binkley, Program Coordinator II

Minutes Prepared by: Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

**Wednesday, September 29, 2021**  
**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – 8:30 a.m.**

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

### **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**Heidi Lieb-Williams** recognized that the meeting was taking place on land in the state of Alaska. The land is also the historical home of 11 distinct Native Alaskan cultures. These diverse First Nations peoples are carriers of over 10,000 years of knowledge of this land, and they are actively shaping its present and guiding its future.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SHARED VISION**

**Chair Lieb-Williams** stated the 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.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Chair Lieb-Williams** introduced new Council members **Fred Villa, Dean Paul, Ric Nelson, Margaret Gore,** and **Ken Hamrick.**

**Myranda Walso** remarked that the Anchorage Assembly passed a resolution recognizing October as Disability Employment Awareness Month specifically noting the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). They recognized that disability could happen to anyone, and people with disabilities can contribute to the workforce with accommodations and modifications. They talked about the lower Social Security Disability approval rate in Alaska, and recognized that variable employment creates a vibrant, diverse, economically sound, welcoming, robust, and competitive Alaskan workforce.

**Lanny Mommsen** shared that the virtual Disability and Aging Summit is scheduled for next week. There is no cost to attend the three-day session, and pre-registration is required.

**Chair Lieb-Williams** shared that **Nona Safra** took on a unique role and made Alaskan history by competing for the Alaska State Fair Royalty Pageant. **Nona** was chosen as the first 2022 Alaska State Fair Countess representing people with disabilities, the senior population, and veterans throughout the state of Alaska. **Nona** shared that she

was also chosen to receive the Alaska First Lady's Volunteerism Award.

### **APPROVAL OF MAY 2021 MEETING MINUTES**

**Jena Crafton MOVED** to approve the May 2021 Council meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by **Charlene Tautfest**. Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**.

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Fred Villa MOVED** to approve the fall Council meeting agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by **Margaret Gore**. Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

**Fred Villa** declared his wife is in the process of establishing a Wasilla office with Shangri-La of North Pole to be a respite care service provider. **Kristin Vandagriff** noted that the Council doesn't contract with that service provider and doesn't see that as a conflict of interest.

### **CHAIR/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**Kristin Vandagriff** began her report by reminding Council members of the Council's mission, vision, and roles as follows:

- DD Council Role:
  - Advocacy – to change what is to what should be
  - Capacity Building – making something stronger
  - Systems Change – making a system better so people can fit.
- Council Member Leadership:
  - Chair – **Heidi Lieb-Williams**
  - Vice-Chair – **Jena Crafton**
  - Developmental Disabilities Chair – **Corey Gilmore**
  - Education Chair – Vacant
  - Early Intervention Chair – **Jennifer Zucati**
  - Employment/Transportation Chair – **Anna Attla**
  - Legislative Chair – **Art Delaune**
  - FASD Workgroup Chair – Vacant
  - Medicaid Ad Hoc Chair – **Art Delaune**
  - Autism Ad Hoc Chair – Vacant
- Council Staff
  - **Kristin Vandagriff** – Executive Director
  - **Myranda Walso** – Planner III
  - **Ian Miner** - Administrative Assistant II
  - **Jessie Doherty** - Program Coordinator II
  - **Lanny Mommsen** – Research Analyst III
  - **Jamie Kokoszka** – Program Coordinator I

- **Michele Binkley** – Program Coordinator II

With regard to the executive director transition, **Kristin Vandagriff** expressed her appreciation for the distinct honor and privilege of serving as the executive director for the past two years and being part of the Council staff for the past eight years. She expressly thanked **Corey Gilmore, Heidi Lieb-Williams, and Jena Crafton** for the guidance they've given her in the day-to-day work of the Council. **Kristin** thanked the staff for always bringing passion and innovation to the important work of the Council. She thanked the Executive Committee for their tireless work to create change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities, and gave a hearty thank you to the entire Council for championing meaningful person-directed lives.

**Kristin Vandagriff** shared the executive director highlights as follows:

- Met regularly with DVR director, Trust program officer, and DSDS director and deputy director
- Participated weekly in several NACDD national calls, including as a member of the Public Policy Committee
- Hired two new staff; training and onboarding, transition of the executive director role
- Provided weekly individual staff touch-base meetings and leading staff meetings
- Participated in NACDD Conference and staff technical assistance institute
- Was part of the Trustee interview panel
- Monitored SFY 21 budget close-out, starting SFY 22 and processing SFY 22 contracts
- SFY 23 Trust budget review and monitoring process
- ACL Living Well Grant semiannual reporting and carryover amendment process
- Attended coordinated calls and joint advocacy meetings with Trust and advisory boards
- Oversaw Trust reporting (due October 1, 2021)
- Supporting State Five-Year Plan development efforts
- Continue to serve as the Alaska Project SEARCH Statewide coordinator
- Staff Legislative, Medicaid Ad Hoc, and Executive Committees
- Facilitated DDRR recommendation effort
- Facilitated Council ARPA letters on HCBS, early intervention, and special education
- Co-facilitated (with DVR) the second and third meetings of the Alaska Work Matters Task Force
- Presented before Trustees at their Program and Planning meeting in July
- Presented before the National Governor's Association on Alaska Work Matters Task Force efforts.

**Kristin Vandagriff** announced that **Jena Crafton** was awarded the April Dunn Start Your Journey Award 2021, Lifelong Advocate. **Kristin** also shared that **Anna Attla** was inducted into the National DD Council Organization's Self-Advocate Leadership Circle.

**Kristin Vandagriff** shared the following resources the Governor's Council developed with partners to support Alaskans with disabilities and their families amidst the current pandemic:

- Alaska COVID-19 website: <https://www.covid19.alaska.gov>
- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services COVID-19 Website: <https://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: <https://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Pages/Well-Being-Alaska.aspx>
- Alaska Specific Plain Language COVID-19 Toolkit. This was a collaborative effort with the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services. <https://dhss.alaska.gov/dsds/Documents/covid-19/Alaska-COVID-19-Toolkit.pdf>  
FAQs – COVID-19 Stimulus Payments and ABLE Accounts. This was in collaboration with the Department of Revenue and the Disability Law Center.
- <https://dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/news/2020-Stimulus-FAQs--Accesible.pdf>.
- Compensatory Education and Extended School Year Services FAQs. This was a collaborative effort with Stone Soup Group and Disability Law Center. <http://www.dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/pdf/Extended-School-Year%20FAQs-- Accessible.pdf>
- Your Child's Rights to Special Education During COVID-19. This was a collaborative effort with Stone Soup Group and Disability Law Center. <https://dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/pdf/Rights-to-special-ed-COVID19--Fact%20sheet.pdf>
- Empowerment Through Employment Guide. This was a collaborative effort with the Trust and other partners. <http://dhss.alaska.gov/gcdse/Documents/EmpowermentThroughEmployment.pdf>

**Lanny Mommsen** shared that the Disability Pride Celebration this year was held virtually statewide July 26 - 30, 2021. There were five days of national disability advocates and Alaskan advocates doing Q&A and sharing stories.

**Chair Lieb-Williams** shared her gratitude to **Kristin Vandagriff** for her leadership and friendship. She also announced that former Council member **Sydney Krebsbach**, who moved to Washington state, was appointed by Governor Inslee to the Washington DD Council.

**Chair Lieb-Williams** stated that she was the 2021 Autism Speaks Advocacy Ambassador, a White House honor position. Through that opportunity, they had been advocating for home and community-based services on a national scale. She noted that as a result of that advocacy, which included a virtual Capitol Hill Day, they promoted the fact that people with disabilities from age 16 and older did not have access to the original government stimulus funds. A bill was passed that everybody

from age 16 and older would receive funds. Heidi extended her congratulations to **Jena Crafton** and **Anna Attla** for their awards.

**Chair Lieb-Williams** shared that she continues to try and break barriers and do things that are difficult for her. She stated that at the Alaska State Fair, she represented people with autism through her vendor booth. She shared that the fair hosted the first Shining Abilities Disability Craft Fair that was promoted in the State Fair program, on the daily fair schedule, and marketed on the internet. There were six vendors with various abilities who came out and represented people with disabilities and sold their wares. Ultimately, there was such a good turnout day that all six vendors broke individual barriers and made more money. She stated that it was such a success that it will continue to happen at the State Fair every year.

**Myranda Walso** shared highlights of the activities on the horizon for 2021:

- Monitoring local, state, and federal mandates/guidance regarding COVID-19 pandemic (ongoing)
- Monitoring legislative/budget developments on a local, state, and federal level
- Completion of the next State Five-Year Plan (due end of September 2021)  
Note: Completed and submitted to ACL for review. ACL will begin a review on October 1, the Council has a blanket conditional authorization to implement the plan, and the Council will proceed under that conditional authority. The deadline for review, revisions, and final approval will be in late November.
- Trust reporting (October 2021)
- ACL Living Well Grant carryover (December 2021)
- Program Performance Reporting (PPR) as DD Council and State Plan update (January 21, 2022)
- Next full Council meeting and legislative advocacy meetings (February 2022).

**Myranda Walso** reported that the Trust began a CEO recruitment process. The Council has been advised that as a beneficiary advisory board, they can participate in the recruitment process.

**Myranda Walso** stated that the Council staff will be doing their best to adjust to the loss of **Kristin Vandagriff** as executive director to ensure that the Vision will carry forward. The Council will continue to engage in discussions with the Department and staff regarding the ongoing cyberattack response. They have begun bringing back some of the systems, and staff is in the process of revamping the losses and outreach efforts.

### **COUNCIL BUDGET REVIEW**

**Kristin Vandagriff** referred members of the Council to the image they received from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that represented the Council's budget. She explained that the funding sources generally remain the same. The expenditures reflected in the document cover July 1, 2021 through the latter part of August. **Kristin**

noted that SDS will continue to provide the Council's Executive Committee with budget expenditure updates.

**Myranda Walso** reported that there was an additional federal award, and the Council is working with the SDS administration on spending authority. Additionally, she noted that some of the expenditures and budget sources on the OMB document were projections from previous Reimbursable Service Agreements (RSAs). The Council is finalizing the RSAs they have with the departments of Education and Health and Social Services.

**Myranda** shared that the only other issue to note is that the Council has excess federal funding, and they will be working with SDS administrative staff to evaluate the best ways to ensure that the Council operations are supported.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE**

**Lanny Mommsen** reported that the Alaska Disability Advisory Group on Emergency Preparedness continues to meet. They thought they would be going past COVID-19 and going into other emergency preparedness issues, but with the high rates of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the state, the focus remains on COVID-19. There are significant concerns with care rationing or Crisis Standards of Care.

**Lanny Mommsen** presented the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services data hub and dashboard and provided a link to Council members. She also shared the hospitalization dashboard.

**Lanny Mommsen** reported that the State of Alaska has contracted healthcare workers to assist with the high numbers of COVID-19 cases the state is currently experiencing. As of Monday, a large number of State workers are telecommuting 100 percent. She noted that the Governor sent out a memo last week instructing supervisors and department heads that if employees can telecommute, do so until October 29<sup>th</sup>. Last week **Lanny** sent out a COVID-19 survey, which will be discussed later in the agenda, regarding people with disabilities, vaccines, and vaccine hesitancy.

**Lanny Mommsen** shared a link to a video series developed by the Disability Law Center related to vaccine hesitancy for people with disabilities.

### **"LIVING WELL ON THE LAST FRONTIER" UPDATE**

**Kristin Vandagriff** highlighted the following update on Living Well on the Last Frontier:

- Administration for Community Living (ACL) grant:
  - Five-year federal grant awarded to the Council
  - \$392,000 per year
  - October will usher in year four of the grant.
- 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:
  - To increase the community integration, health, safety, independence, and well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities through the realization of our DD Vision.
- Objectives:
  - Enhance the health and safety of individuals who experience developmental disabilities by increasing their independence, self-determination, community integration, employment, and participation.
  - Strengthen the knowledge and skills of direct support professionals to use evidence-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.
  - Strengthen and elevate the leadership roles that self-advocacy organizations, such as 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.
  - 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 Include:
  - 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 (CHD)
  - Alaska DD Systems Collaborative.
- Work to Date:
  - Project Management Team meetings are held quarterly
  - Professional Services Agreements and Reimbursable Service Agreements with renewals for year three
  - 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 and at least annually to the DD Systems Collaborative



- Small working groups continue to meet in between quarterly team meetings:
  - 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:
  - EMOD survey results.
  - Alaska Work Matters Taskforce efforts.
  - COVID Toolkit and “I Have Rights, I Have Dreams” webinars
  - Self-Advocacy Empower Hour
  - Centralized reporting and mandatory reporter efforts
  - Disability Pride Summer Celebration
  - NACDD Conference - Anna Attla was inducted into the Leadership Circle; Jena Crafton received the April Dunn Start Your Journey Award and was inducted into the Leadership Circle
  - Created a webinar on the Alaska’s Advocacy and Leadership Opportunities Guide
  - Living Well on the Last Frontier COVID-19 resource toolkit update - not able to publish to the public due to website interruption.

**Jamie Kokoszka** stated that the Peer Power Self-Advocacy Summit was postponed until April 29<sup>th</sup> due to the rising COVID-19 numbers. She provided a link for more information.

**Jess Doherty** shared that the I Have Dreams webinar was presented on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A group of panelists from the Council’s self-advocacy group and approximately 30 attendees came together to speak on their dreams related to hobbies and activities, employment, relationships, housing, health and wellness, education, and self-advocacy.

### **OTHER NEW BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Heidi Lieb-Williams** opened the floor to Council members to bring forward new business.

**Corey Gilmore** commented that with regards to Empower Hour, they are always looking for Council members to help take the lead. If any Council members are interested, contact **Corey, Travis Noah, or Jamie Kokoszka** to sign up. The next

Empower Hour is scheduled for October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

**Ric Nelson** suggested that the Council discuss the DSP crisis and the background check crisis. He commented that many people are not getting services because people can't be hired due to the process, which makes people not want to work as DSPs.

**Kristin Vandagriff** noted that those are issues the Council hears from stakeholders.

**Fred Villa** commented that he has worked with the ACT organization, which worked directly with the Council on modifying their procedures and policies related to exemptions for testing. He continued to get information from them and wanted to share with the Council that ACT continues to address those issues. He noted that if there are concerns with ACT testing for people with disabilities, he would be glad to be a conduit on behalf of the Council to ACT or can put them in touch with someone directly.

**Dean Paul** commented that with regard to the DSP crisis, he is hoping the Council will see fit to approve having an ad hoc committee for the DSP crisis to discuss what can be done to improve the conditions to recruit and retain DSPs. He believes it falls under the DD role of Council, and he offered to sit on the ad hoc if formed.

**Dean Paul** questioned if a selection committee was formed to hire a new executive director, and he also offered his services in that capacity. He noted that he has vast experience in the selection of qualified people. **Kristin Vandagriff** shared that **Chair Heidi Lieb-Williams** appointed a Transition Committee that includes herself, **Corey Gilmore, Jena Crafton, Art Delaune, and Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus**. The committee has had several meetings. The executive session scheduled later in the meeting is meant to discuss personnel matters, and there will be more information shared with Council members at that time.

### **BYLAWS AMENDMENT (SECOND COUNCIL MEETING READING)**

**Chair Lieb-Williams** noted that discussions related to the bylaw amendment took place in prior meetings. The first reading was held at the May Council meeting, and this meeting is for the second and final reading for the proposed changes.

**Kristin Vandagriff** provided context for the proposed changes as follows:

1. Ensuring the Council is aligned with the separation of the Council's distinct roles
2. Aligning the committee names with the three new goals of the Five-Year State Plan, which will begin October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

**Kristin Vandagriff** reviewed the changes incorporated from the feedback from Council committee meetings and ACL technical assistance to align with the DD Act.

**Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich** asked if the Council is lessening its commitment to education and not focusing on special education. **Kristin Vandagriff** noted that

education is not a singular goal. In aligning the goals with the committee names, education work will be accomplished in Goal 1, Inclusion, Supports, and Services. She stated that the Council's work as the SEAP will continue as a separate role and responsibility, but it was not written into the plan.

**Ric Nelson** commented that he thinks it is a bad idea to combine all issues. Different issues impact individuals at different times. Education is a whole different issue than services people need for living independently. He noted that special education is 20 years of a person's life, and independent living is throughout the lifetime. His concern is that the Council could lose the bigger picture of what it needs to do if combined. **Kristin Vandagriff** provided the following points of clarification on the planning process:

- The plan was out for quite some time for stakeholder feedback, and ultimately the plan that has been submitted to ACL has three goals.
- The context provided at the spring Council meeting was that Alaska is a minimum allotment state. That means that Alaska gets a set amount of DD Council funding due to having a small population. Other minimum allotment states usually have one or maybe two goals. Alaska had five goals in the last five-year plan, and before that they had even more. The sustainability of being able to do that with current staffing would not be possible.

**Kristin Vandagriff** stated that while there are so many hugely important areas that the Council could certainly lend help on, they did have to prioritize how they could make a quality impact being a minimum allotment state.

**Dean Paul** asked how the Council will handle the Medicaid Ad Hoc Committee if the changes are made and what the review process is when Medicaid has proposed regulation changes. **Kristin Vandagriff** said that those activities are within the plan for each particular goal area. Once the bylaw changes pass, there will be a committee that reflects that goal name, and that group would meet and determine what kind of other groups they might need to do their work. The frequency of when they need to meet to address the work plan will be under their purview. Development of those plans are the next phase should the second reading pass. **Kristin** noted that the Medicaid issues likely fit within Goal 1.

**Kristin Vandagriff** reviewed the goals and objectives as follows:

- Goal 1, Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services
  - Objectives 1-5
    - Choice and independence in long-term supports and services
    - Housing
    - Health and Healthcare
    - Education and Early Development
    - Emerging needs
- Goal 2, Self-Advocacy and Leadership
  - Objectives 1-2

- DD Shared Vision implementation
- Support self-advocacy organization
- Goal 3, Employment
  - Objectives 1-2
    - Employment First implementation
    - Traditional transition

**Dean Paul** asked if there's no DD Committee, how will issues be handled, to which **Kristin Vandagriff** answered that the DD Committee's work falls under Goal 1, broad services to people with developmental disabilities.

**Fred Villa** commented that communication on how the process evolves is critical during the transition, mainly because many issues overlap between goals and committees. He also shared that the restructure may not be intuitive because of the legacy of how long the committees have been in place, but the Council must align the committees to the goals.

**Don Enoch** commented that on page 3 of the bylaws under Article 2, No. 2, some of the SEAP language looks like it is moving from an advisory committee to an enforcement committee. He stated that he is not opposed to it, but he wasn't sure if the Council intended to change that to make it enforcement over the Department of Education versus advisement. He stated that the enforcement tool would actually require a lot more work on the part of the Governor's Council. **Kristin Vandagriff** said the language was intended to assure compliance focused on member composition and filling those roles as the Council needs to ensure compliance of a functioning SEAP and ICC.

**Corey Gilmore** commented that the reasoning for changing the bylaws in his view is to support the DD Shared Vision, "I live the life I choose with the support I direct." To him, it is important to begin thinking about all the goals specified in the Five-Year State Plan in a lifespan context. He noted that the change is not to dismantle committees, but to bring the issues people with disabilities experience to light in a broader sense.

**Kristin Vandagriff** stated that the Council approved the goals and objectives, and that was submitted to the ACL. At this point, there is conditional approval until ACL reviews the plan, and then the Council will be issued a document from ACL that talks about their review and confirms whether or not there are compliance issues. **Kristin** noted that the bylaws are not submitted to the ACL. Bylaws are an internal document of the Governor's Council.

**Art Delaune** commented that he has been on the fence about the changes, citing that his concern is that because of the new structure, the Council might lose focus on some issues, or they may be watered down.

**Chair Lieb-Williams** called for a motion.

**Ken Hamrick MOVED** to approve the amended bylaws as presented in the second reading, **SECONDED** by **Jena Crafton**. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion **PASSED**.

**Kristin Vandagriff** noted that during the State Five-Year Plan discussion, members will be able to talk about what the changes will look like and how the implementation can successfully move forward.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Fred Villa MOVED** to go into executive session, including all Council members, and to invite **Kristin Vandagriff** and **Myranda Walso** to participate, **SECONDED** by **Charlene Tautfest**. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

**Myranda Walso** noted that the executive session intended to take up the issues from the executive session during the 3:00 p.m. additional executive session agenda item.

### **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES (DHSS) UPDATE**

**Chair Lieb-Williams** introduced Commissioner Adam Crum to the new Council members. She noted that Commissioner Crum has supported the Governor's Council's work and cares about people with disabilities and their issues, and he works to make Alaska a better state for people with disabilities amongst his other many duties.

Commissioner Crum shared that the Department of Health and Social Services strives to meet its initiatives and goals, which are very near and dear to Governor Dunleavy's heart and his own. The Governor's Council is inspirational, and they want to ensure individuals are given every opportunity possible.

Commissioner Crum stated that the proposed reorganization of DHSS was initially put forward at the start of the last legislative session. It was pulled back to make changes due to legislative input, and conversations are continuing with the Governor on whether or not to put it forward during the next session.

Commissioner Crum explained that the reorganization consists of cutting HSS in half, taking the groups that provide direct patient care and/or 24/7 services such as Office of Children Services (OCS), Division Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API), and Pioneer Homes, and break them out into a department called the Department of Family and Community Services. They would act as stand-alone entities. The Department of Health would have the Medicaid divisions: SDS, Healthcare Services, Division of Public Assistance, and Division of Behavioral Health, and Public Health. Bifurcating the department in this way would offer more time and the ability to engage with stakeholder groups. Teams and policy staff can focus on items that are affecting individuals, the barriers can be seen, they can work to improve systems, and they can look for innovative programs available with federal partners.

Commissioner Crum stated that there will be no disruption of services. The part of the plan within the executive order includes data sharing agreements across the board.

Commissioner Crum opened the floor for comments or concerns. He and **Director John Lee** answered questions on access to services, COVID-19 mandates, the DSP crisis, and the proposed transition plan. Commissioner Crum said that the State needs to do something that's courageous and is a bold step to improve the system for the better, and that's why he is proposing and supporting the restructure.

Commissioner Crum thanked **Chair Lieb-Williams** for the opportunity to speak, and he expressed his appreciation to **Kristin Vandagriff** for her many years of service. He wished **Myranda Walso** luck, and he stated that he appreciates everything the Governor's Council does. The Council continues to be a fantastic advocate by sharing information and bringing forward relevant subjects.

### **ADDITIONAL EXECUTIVE SESSION TIME**

**Chair Lieb-Williams** shared the results of the executive session. She reported that they voted to have the executive director position opened to the public and appointed **Myranda Walso** as the acting executive director with **Lanny Mommsen** as the executive director backup. They agreed to continue the transition and Executive Committee processes and talked about expanding the Transition Committee.

**Ric Nelson MOVED** to appoint **Myranda Walso** as an acting director while the Council is looking to fill the executive director position, **SECONDED** by **Art Delaune**. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion **PASSED**.

### **OTHER INFORMATION FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER**

**Kristin Vandagriff** invited **Art Delaune** to speak on upcoming legislative affairs. **Art Delaune** noted that the Legislative Committee had discussed how best to organize to focus on the priorities most important to the Council. He stated that in the past, the Legislative Committee had a legislative watch list that was used to guide the discussion on proposed bills. The process became cumbersome due to COVID-19 because many bills on the watch list were not addressed. **Art** said the advantage of talking about the Governor's Council in the next session is that they are not starting with new legislators. The Legislative Committee will begin by looking at the priorities from the previous session, check to see if there are issues the Council would still like to be focused on, and talk about what else is on the horizon and what may be needed to add to the priorities.

**Art Delaune** stated that as the Council creates the new committees, they will continue to have those committees bring forward legislative priorities to the Legislative Committee. **Art** noted that the Council also needs to discuss the process for the upcoming legislative session. Last year the visits were done virtually, and a discussion is needed of whether to do them virtually or in person.

Many Council members preferred in-person visits. **Chair Lieb-Williams** proposed appointing Council members and staff to go to Juneau as representatives and also plan Zoom visits so people who don't go would have the opportunity to meet with legislators online and be effective both ways. She believes in the power and impact of in-person visits. **Nona Safra** stated that the Commission on Aging has planned legislative visits for February 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

**Myranda Walso** shared a staff perspective recognizing the interest in in-person visits and the importance of those:

- It is not known yet what the restrictions on in-person visits are going to be.
- The current policies that were in place during the last session restricted Capitol visits from the public, which may be a factor going forward.
- If the previous session was any indication, they had policies in place for the duration of the session which limited access to the Capitol building. That policy was not lifted until the last day of the session.
- The travel budget and approvals: Currently Boards and Commissions has directed a temporary limitation on travel. The hope and expectation would be that that would not be something that would be in place affecting the legislative visits.
- The travel budgets this year are significantly reduced from previous years. It would be worth considering that some of the work plan activities include sending numbers of people to national conferences to present.

**Chair Lieb-Williams** noted that other self-advocates and agencies are planning to go to Juneau in February. **Myranda Walso** clarified that the restriction was on entering the Capitol building itself. There were no restrictions on going to Juneau and visiting with legislators outside of that. **Myranda** noted a need to talk about the winter Council meeting, which is typically held in Juneau. If that is still the intent, then it would make sense to do legislative visits in person. If it is not the intent to couple the Council meeting location with the legislative visits, then separate those and identify whether the visits to Juneau need to coincide with the Council meeting or not. She explained that according to Boards and Commissions, in the event that a staff member, Council member, or an attendee becomes exposed to COVID-19, they need to quarantine or isolate while traveling. The Council would be responsible for covering their lodging and expenses incurred for the duration of the quarantine. That has the potential to change the cost estimates of travel during the pandemic.

***PUBLIC TESTIMONY: How can we best empower individuals with developmental disabilities to live an “I am, I can” type of meaningful life during the pandemic? Are there silver linings about the pandemic to be shared?***

Public testimony was heard, and a full transcript was prepared. During public testimony, Sondra LeClair from CHD provided preliminary survey results from the vaccine hesitancy survey.

## **RECESS**

The meeting recessed at 4:30 p.m.

**Thursday, September 30, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL - 9:30 a.m.**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Jena Crafton** called the meeting to order, roll call was taken, and the floor was opened for announcements and introductions. No changes were made to the agenda.

## **STATE FIVE-YEAR PLAN UPDATE AND IMPLEMENTATION DISCUSSION**

**Kristin Vandagriff** reviewed the documents submitted to the ACL including:

- MOU Assurances
- Five-Year State Plan 10-1-21 through 9-30-26
- Logic Model
  - Impact (Goals)
  - Outcomes
  - Outputs
  - Activities
  - Inputs
- Work plans (First two years)

**Myranda Walso** led the committee through a review of the Five-Year State Plan goals and objectives for year one, highlighted the key activities, and then discussed the committee structure.

- Goal 1, Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services
  - Objectives 1-5
    - Choice and independence in long-term supports and services
    - Housing
    - Health and Healthcare
    - Education and Early Development
    - Emerging needs
- Goal 2, Self-Advocacy and Leadership
  - Objectives 1-2
    - DD Shared Vision implementation
    - Support self-advocacy organization
- Goal 3, Employment
  - Objectives 1-2
    - Employment First implementation
    - Traditional transition



Council members indicated areas of interest as follows:

Goal 1, Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services:

**Jena Crafton**  
**Art Delaune**  
**Dave Fleurant**  
**Corey Gilmore**  
**Margaret Gore**  
**Ken Hamrick**  
**Director John Lee**  
**Travis Noah**

**Ric Nelson**  
**Dean Paul**  
**Nona Safra**  
**Charlene Tautfest**  
**Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich**  
**Chair Lieb-Williams**  
**Margaret Evans**  
**Elizabeth Joseph**

Goal 2, Self-Advocacy and Leadership:

**Jena Crafton**  
**Corey Gilmore**  
**Travis Noah**  
**Ric Nelson**  
**Dean Paul**  
**Nona Safra**

**Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich**  
**Fred Villa**  
**Chair Lieb-Williams**  
**Margaret Evans**  
**Elizabeth Joseph**

Goal 3, Employment:

**Anna Attla**  
**Jena Crafton**  
**Margaret Gore**  
**Ken Hamrick**  
**Travis Noah**  
**Chair Lieb-Williams**

**Ric Nelson**  
**Deal Paul**  
**Fred Villa**  
**Charlene Tautfest**  
**Lyle Downing**

Potential workgroups within Goal 1 for consideration:

- Housing:
  - **Nona Safra**
  - **Charlene Tautfest**
- Emerging Needs (DSP):
  - **Dean Paul**
  - **Nona Safra**
- Education and Early Development:
  - **Margaret Gore**
  - **Dean Paul**
  - **Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich**
  - **Fred Villa**
- Health and Healthcare:
  - **Jena Crafton**
  - **Margaret Gore**
  - **Dean Paul**
  - **Charlene Tautfest**

- Legislative Committee:
  - **Dean Paul**

**Chair Lieb-Williams** asked **Myranda Walso** to forward **Travis Noah, Nona Safra, Dean Paul, Charlene Tautfest,** and **Ric Nelson** to the Executive Committee for approval to participate in the Transition Committee. She noted that the Transition Committee will continue with the current members and will add those names pending the decision of the newly constructed committee chairs. The roster for the Executive Committee is pending.

The chair chooses chairs of the committees, and Council members were asked to consider if they would like to offer their services as chairs of any of the committees. **Chair Lieb-Williams** opened the floor for Council members to show their interest, and the following Council members volunteered:

- Goal 1: **Corey Gilmore, Travis Noah**
- Goal 2: **Ric Nelson, Travis Noah**
- Goal 3: **Dean Paul, Travis Noah, Charlene Tautfest, Anna Attla**

## **PARTNER REPORTS**

### ***Peer Power***

**Ric Nelson** reported that the DD Collaborative met and decided they wanted Peer Power to become more of a voice for advocacy. With the help of Kim Champney, Peer Power developed a strategic plan that includes the following goals:

1. How to implement and educate on the DD Shared Vision and how to do more advocacy training
2. How to make Peer Power become a non-profit.

**Ric Nelson** shared the activities of Peer Power as follows:

- Peer Power developed a self-advocacy training program for people with disabilities, which will roll out in the new year.
- Peer Power postponed its annual summit until the end of April 2022 because of COVID-19; however, they will provide self-advocacy training to the people who signed up for the summit.
- Peer Power is working on recruiting new board members. The deadline for application is October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021.
- Peer Power applied for a partnership grant with the Trust. Those funds will be used to help Peer Power become a non-profit.

### ***Key Coalition***

Michele Girault reported that it has been a dynamic year. The Key Coalition stayed very

active, meeting nearly every week throughout the pandemic. The advocacy last year was held virtually, and next week they will decide whether the upcoming session will be fly-in or virtual.

Michele Girault reported that Key kept legislators well informed during the summer months on the current dynamic facing primary stakeholders and families as follows:

- The workforce shortage has been the top issue, and they have kept the HSS Committee members on both the Senate and House sides informed about the challenges.
- The concerns relayed included the background check issues that have kept providers from getting staff in the door, the dynamics of how that impacts individuals that are currently in service who are not able to get staff, and the number of providers that are not able to take new clients because they don't have adequate staff.

Michele Girault noted that no legislation could be put in place specifically to create staff, but Key wanted to make sure that as lawmakers go into the session to talk about a stable fiscal plan, disability issues are at the top of the list. They must understand the dynamic and the challenge to the community system right now. If that system would fail, because it is eroding right now, the cost to the State would be astronomical, and the impact on people is unconscionable.

Michele Girault stated that moving forward, Key will continue to bring forward the issues. She shared that she was told that the National Guard had been brought in in Colorado to staff people who experience disabilities because their staff shortages are so dire. She also noted that Key has new people expressing interest in being on the Key board, parents who want advocacy for their family's needs to be broadened to greater advocacy.

### ***Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS)***

**Director John Lee** shared a PowerPoint presentation and highlighted the following information:

#### Mission statement of SDS:

- 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.

#### COVID-19 Response:

- Flexibilities provided:
  - Appendix K, 1135, regulation suspensions
    - Note: Appendix K flexibility has the ability to keep in place six months beyond the end of the pandemic.

- Supports for partners:
  - Grants, COVID-19 relief funds, guidance, support
    - Note: SDS put out an e-alert on COVID-19 funding that's available for providers. (Provider Relief Funding Phase IV)
- Vaccine distribution:
  - Production, allocation, distribution, and support and guidance.
    - Note: Boosters are available for the Pfizer vaccine within criteria.
- Crisis standard of care: What is it?
  - Crisis Standards of Care are peer-reviewed guidelines that help healthcare providers and healthcare systems decide how to deliver the best care possible under the extraordinary circumstance of a disaster or public health emergency. Crisis Standards of Care guidelines can be activated when resources are insufficient to provide the usual standard of care to people who need it.
    - Note: As of Sept 29<sup>th</sup>, no hospital in Alaska has contacted the State and officially initiated Crisis Standards of Care.
- What is the Crisis Care Committee?
  - The Crisis Care Committee is the tool to learn what is happening at the hospitals so the State can provide tools and resources to hospitals, and they can learn from each other.
  - The committee discusses strategies to prevent Crisis Standards of Care, not to implement it.
  - The committee makes recommendations to DHSS for consideration.
- The state of Alaska is one of the first states to put out an anti-discrimination reminder. It reminds providers of the importance of not using the disability as a decision point:
  - "Persons with disabilities should not be denied medical care on the basis of stereotypes, assessments of quality of life, or judgments about a person's relative 'worth' based on the presence or absence of disabilities. Decisions by covered entities concerning whether an individual is a candidate for treatment should be based on an individual assessment of the patient based on the best available objective medical evidence."

#### NCAPPS Technical Assistance:

- SDS was awarded a two-year grant from the National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS) to help the State to make supports for older adults and people with disabilities more person-centered. NCAPPS technical assistance enhances systems change efforts that aim to ensure the person is at the center of thinking, planning, and practice. The TA includes 100 hours of consultative services.
  - This TA opportunity will complement and enhance the Living Well activities.
  - SDS will receive consultation to enable better implementation of the Shared Vision statewide.
  - Alaska was one of ten states that received this award.

- The person-centered system technical assistance will fall within eight domains:
  - Leadership
  - Person-centered culture
  - Eligibility and services access
  - Person-centered service planning and monitoring
  - Finance
  - Workforce capacity and capabilities
  - Collaboration and partnership
  - Quality and innovation

**Director Lee** reported the next steps as follows:

- NCAPPS will hold an orientation with SDS in October.
- SDS will recruit stakeholders to partner with the State once orientation is complete.
- The TA provides 100 hours of consultation over the two-year life of the cycle of the program.
- Implement changes based on what SDS learned through the technical assistance.

**Director Lee** shared the following information on Residential Habilitation Services:

- SDS is interested in receiving stakeholder input on potential changes to residential habilitative services. Substantial changes have been made to the original proposal from April of 2021.
- The changes are intended to make the difference clearer between the two types of daily (24/7) residential habilitation, family home habilitation, and group home habilitation making it easier for family home habilitation providers to become Medicaid certified.
- SDS will hold a webinar on October 13, 2021 from 10-12:30 to present a concept paper and discuss the proposed changes. A link for registration is available online.

**Director Lee** shared the following American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Enhanced Federal Match information:

- On July 12, 2021, DHSS submitted a plan to receive an enhanced federal match under ARPA. Last week the Commissioner's Office received word that CMS has partially approved the plan as submitted.
- SDS will be working with CMS to clarify and respond to CMS's requested clarification to Alaska's plan.
- SDS looks forward to engaging with stakeholders on implementing the projects once CMS accepts the clarifications.
- The six initiatives:
  - Enhanced payment for targeted care coordination
  - Transitional supports

- Staffing-based rates for assisted living homes
- Training initiative for DSPs
- Companion services for seniors
- HCBS critical incident detection system to safeguard the vulnerable population.

### ***Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)***

Acting Deputy Commissioner Heidi Teshner joined the meeting and shared the following updates from DEED:

- The special education team at the Department has completed all of their FY 20 compliance monitoring. They have also completed the reviews and reports for FY 21 monitoring; however, they are still working with some districts on corrective actions.
- The FY 22 compliance monitoring began in September and is expected to be done by December of '21. Staff is doing limited onsite monitoring visits.
- The weekly special education webinars continue to focus on COVID-19 related issues. Other special education updates and a Q&A session are also included in each of the webinars. The Department plans to continue the webinars indefinitely.
- The Special Education Part B, the State Performance Plan, and Annual Performance Report data have been processed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The Department's special education team is beginning the planning process for stakeholder input on target setting for the next State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report submission.
- School districts have received their grant award for the ARPA Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief at the district level, and they are actively working on their budgets. In addition, the Department will soon distribute ARPA funding designated explicitly for IDEA activities similar to other COVID-19 money. Districts will be required to write a budget plan for the new special education funding.
- October 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, the Department is conducting the first of two special education director trainings. The first training is virtual, and the second training scheduled for March 2022 may be in person, but that is yet to be determined.
- All the federally required up-to-date data is available on the Department's special education website.
- The complaint and due process hearing information remains available to the public, but it is not posted on the website per federal regulations.
- Regarding the due process and the administration complaints, there is one due process hearing in progress and one complaint investigation in process.

**Dave Fleurant** asked about the removal of the administrative compliance, the due process proceedings from the website. He understood that the regulations required the Department of Education to send due process decisions redacted to the Governor's

Council so they would be available to the public and ultimately published on the DEED website. **Don Enoch** answered that the regulation doesn't state that it has to be posted online. When the Department did post them online, there were issues with OSEP because it individually identified students in small communities based on their disability. DEED does meet the requirement for making it available to the public, but it has to be a telephonic, written, or fax request.

**Dean Paul** asked what system is in place and how it works to ensure that special education funding to school districts goes solely into special education students and their benefit. Heidi Teshner answered that with the federal funding, the chart of accounts for school districts is where districts have to code things in certain functions. When their budget is reviewed, it shows where they coded their federal money, and then it's reported through the quarterly reimbursement and the annual audit. There is funding for special education at the State level, specifically intensives, and then there's a special needs factor. Districts report to the Department how they spend all of their operating funding, including special education funding. She noted that once it goes through the foundation formula, it is discretionary money, and it is up to the district to allocate that amongst schools within the district. Another method of oversight is when DEED audits and monitors.

### ***Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA)***

Mike Abbott and Jimael Johnson joined the meeting and shared an update from the AMHTA as follows:

- The Trust adopted its budget for FY 23 and transmitted it to the Governor in mid-September. The budget is growing year over year due to solid land management performance and outstanding investment performance. The invested assets are managed primarily by the Permanent Fund. Last year the Permanent Fund had a 30 percent growth during the fiscal year. The result for the Trust for FY 23 was more funding than FY 22, which will transfer into increased programmatic spending.
- On October 20 – 21, 2021, the four Trustee committees will be meeting: Audit, Finance, Resource Management, and Program and Planning. There will also be a special board meeting.
- The newest Trustee appointed by the Governor, Kevin Fimon, a tax accountant in Anchorage, fills the vacancy created when a candidate failed to be confirmed by the legislature in May.
- The Legislative Audit Division recently completed a follow-up audit of the Trust. In 2018, the Trust had a legislative audit, and over a year later the legislature wanted to find out how the Trust was doing regarding the findings made in 2018. A second audit was commissioned, which was finalized weeks ago. More information on the results of the latest audit can be found online on the Trust's website.
- The Trust is looking for a new CEO. Mike Abbott is retiring in January of 2022, and the recruiting process has begun. The posting for the position can be found

on the Trust's website. The vacancy will be posted for another couple of weeks, and then on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, Trustees will begin considering the resumes they receive. The hope is to have someone identified and onboard in December.

Mike Abbott, on behalf of Steve Williams, Jimael Johnson, the rest of the Trust staff, the Trustees, as well as the Trust beneficiaries, took an opportunity to recognize an amazing contribution from **Kristin Vandagriff** to the work of the Governor's Council, and of Alaska generally. Mike shared that it has been a privilege to work with **Kristin**. She is the model of both professionalism and personal commitment to the work of the Council. It is awe inspiring to have worked with her and to have been able to partner with the Council, and **Kristin** in particular, in advancing the needs of Alaskans with disabilities.

### ***Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD)***

Lizette Stiehr joined the meeting to share an AADD update highlighting the following information:

- AADD has 60 members that include providers, care coordinators, assisted living homes, and individuals from Kotzebue to Ketchikan.
- AADD has representation on:
  - DD Collaborative
  - Alaskans Together for Medicaid (ATFM)
  - WINGS
  - Aging and Disability Summit
  - ANCOR SAE State Executive Group
  - Alaska Health Care Work Force
  - DD Committee
- AADD advocates for:
  - Shared Vision
  - Workforce Issues
  - Sustainable funding
- AADD provides input to SDS on:
  - Family habilitation
  - 10% FMAP
  - Care coordination
- AADD's grants (in FY 22):
  - Mental Health Trust grant
  - Letter of interest approved for a care coordination study
  - ACL Grant: Community Engagement
- AADD's monthly teleconferences:
  - Membership Zoom calls, state and partner updates (Average of 60+ lines)
  - Chief Finance Officer Group
  - Compliance Group
  - Care Coordinator Group
  - Hot Topics calls



- AADD's written communication:
  - Monthly or as needed
  - Newsletters
  - Monthly report
  - E-mail resources
  - Respond to public comment.

Lizette Stiehr reported that in place of the monthly meeting, AADD is hosting a virtual face-to-face meeting on October 19 – 20, 2021. There will be a morning and afternoon session from 9:00 - 10:30 and 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. They have invited two keynote speakers, Alvin Law and Joe McBeth, from the National Association of DSPs to speak on workforce post-pandemic. She reminded Council members that they are welcome to participate in any events hosted by AADD.

Lizette Stiehr expressed gratefulness to Kristin Vandagriff for all she has offered to AADD, and Lizette thanked the Trust for their support.

### ***Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)***

**Director Duane Mayes** joined the meeting to share an update on DVR activities as follows:

- The field offices, which were reopened in June of 2021, will continue to be open. DVR has done quite a bit around the implementation of the hybrid model of telework. The majority of people DVR serves are considered vulnerable according to the CDC, and one-third of DVR employees are people with disabilities.
- DVR has created an effective virtual online platform to serve people with disabilities virtually and give them a choice between either being served in person or virtually. A good percentage of consumers feel very comfortable being served virtually, and counselors report being more efficient using the hybrid model.
- DVR has put a lot of time and effort into elevating business engagement through the Business Engagement Service Team (BEST). BEST has embraced a two-customer approach, the consumer with a disability that applies for services and works with a counselor on staff and then the employer. BEST has done extensive outreach to the employer community and has been providing compassion fatigue assistance.
- DVR is working with DHSS on the At-Risk Youth Initiative and has invested resources into additional positions to address at-risk youth that come out of the foster care system, the juvenile justice system, and the educational system.
- Because of the struggle with hard-to-fill positions, DVR has made quite a bit of effort to enhance senior employment. They work very closely with the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) and the Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training Program (MASST).
- The Alaska Work Matters Task Force has 24 members who have met three

times. The next meeting is scheduled for December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A report with recommendations will be created that will go to key department commissioners and the Governor in March of 2022.

**Director Mayes** expressed his appreciation for **Kristin Vandagriff**, and he added that he looks forward to working with **Myranda Walso**.

### ***Disability Law Center (DLC)***

**Dave Fleurant** provided the following update on the activities of the DLC:

- DLC has participated in 26 outreach events.
- Over the last fiscal year, DLC has fielded 1,136 calls from individuals statewide resulting in 278 cases, and 115 of those so far have been successful.
- Of those cases, 168 (71%) were related to government benefits. DLC currently has a program in Juneau where DLC provides Social Security application assistance to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- Individuals with I/DD who have called for assistance over the last year:
  - 299 calls
  - 36 became cases
  - 9 successful so far
  - 47 percent of those cases were education
  - 31 percent were government benefits
- Regarding COVID-19, DLC has received 71 calls for information and referral where COVID-19 was the issue.
- Currently working on five cases where the issue is COVID-19 related.

Work done since the pandemic began:

- Alaska Airlines implemented a no-exception mask policy. DLC received a call from a child who needed to travel out of state as a follow-up to an operation. DLC negotiated with Alaska Airlines and worked with the Northern Justice Project, AADD, Stone Soup Group, and the SILC. The issue was eventually resolved at the federal level when the new administration insisted that DOT issue guidance.
- Regarding the Alaska Crisis Standards of Care, DLC sent a letter in March of 2020 with four recommendations to ensure that the standards could not be read in a manner that discriminated against individuals with disabilities. After another review of the standards in light of the current surge, the State came out with a revised version in August of 2021, and they incorporated three of the four recommendations. DLC continues to monitor the processes.
- DLC received funds to address vaccine hesitancy and barriers amongst Alaskans with disabilities. DLC meets regularly with partners, and the primary product from DLC are videos they created on the subject.
- DLC received a grant from its membership organization, and DLC chose to do a project on accessible smoke alarms. Because fire safety is important, DLC wanted to evaluate the laws, regulations, and policies in the state, as well as

what is happening in other states. They started the project by engaging with the National Association of the Deaf. The objective is to develop a white paper that analyzes what Alaska and other states have done to make sure accessible smoke alarms are readily available and that people know they can request them. Another benefit will be the discussion on what is a better model than what currently exists.

- DLC was invited by the Alaska Supreme Court to submit an amicus brief in a guardianship case. The protected individual was to be evaluated and refused to answer some of the questions asked in an evaluation. DLC asserted that an individual has a right not to provide evidence against themselves. The Supreme Court agreed, and protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities won that day.

### ***UAA Center for Human Development (CHD)***

Karen Heath joined the meeting and shared an update of activities at CHD as follows:

- CHD has received new grants: Traumatic Brain Injury State Partnership Grant, a five-year grant that started August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, and the Training Initiative to Support People with Co-occurring I/DD and Mental Health Disabilities through ACL, which begins September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Karen Ward and Danielle Reed are the leads on those grants.
- CHD started the Family Services Training Center this year. They will be sending out a training survey next week to assess the training needs of behavioral health providers providing services to children and families.
- CHD's ECHO Project is going strong with a continued focus on COVID-19, but they continue to host the Family, Neurodevelopmental, Traumatic Brain Injury, Mental Health, and the Mental Health/DD ECHOs. CHD will be starting a Home Visiting ECHO in October. CHD recently hired an ECHO director after a long vacancy.
- CHD is part of the COVID-19 vaccine effort, and a survey was developed and administered. The results were presented to the committee last week.
- CHD's Partners in Health Project just completed, and they provided training to pre-service and current medical providers on how to best provide services to patients with developmental disabilities and intellectual developmental disabilities, as well as peer training on how to best engage medical providers.
- CHD completed its in-person National Core Indicator Survey. They are now ready to send out the Child Family Survey and the Adult Family Survey. They will use the online survey for the first time, but if people are not comfortable using the online format, it will be followed up with paper or phone calls.
- CHD is looking for new members for its Consumer Advisory Council. If interested, contact Karen Heath. There are at least two meetings per year.

### ***Special Education Services Agency (SESA)***

Patrick Pillai joined the meeting and shared an update on SESA's activities as follows:

- SESA welcomed **Michele Binkley**, Clayton Holland, and **Elizabeth Joseph** to the SESA board,
- SESA's COVID-19 mitigation plan includes updating the return-to-work plan with the new state and municipal guidelines. SESA had one employee who tested positive for COVID-19, went through the entire quarantine process, and staff who were exposed tested negative in subsequent testing. SESA purchased the Binax COVID-19 rapid tests that were given to SESA specialists as they traveled to rural Alaska.
- HB 19 reauthorizing SESA was signed into law on June 29, 2021 and extended SESA's reauthorization period until 2029.
- SESA FY 22 insurance policy with risk management is enforced. SESA had one negative incident in May 2021. A brick was thrown through the window of the technologist's office. The incident was reported to the police, and the landlord replaced the window.
- SESA has created clear documentation in itineraries as the specialists travel to individual school districts, and SESA works with each district's mitigation plan to ensure the specialists are compliant. SESA also had board authorization to ask for vaccination cards because of liability to the agency for staff travel.
- The Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC) Indicator Grant and the Alaska Center for Accessible Materials were funded for FY 21. SESA has commenced services in those grants.
- The annual Deaf Blind Project has a performance report that will be completed in March, and the census will be sent in after December of 2021. In addition, SESA will be submitting quarterly reports for each of the grants.
- The emotional disabilities specialist's vacancies have been filled, but SESA continues to have an ongoing vacancy for an AARC specialist.
- SESA is investigating moving the entire referral process into the cloud. Because of technology innovations, SESA created a new position, an assistant to the technologist, that they plan to fill internally.

### **VOTE ON WINTER COUNCIL MEETING DATES**

**Lanny Mommsen** led the Council members through a Doodle survey process to choose the winter Council meeting dates.

**Ric Nelson MOVED** to schedule the Council meeting for January 31 - February 1, 2022, **SECONDED** by **Dean Paul**. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

Many Council members expressed their appreciation to **Kristin Vandagriff** for her tireless work and stated that she would truly be missed.

### **ADJOURN**

**Dean Paul MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by **Ric Nelson**. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.