



NHCASD Meeting Minutes January 23, 2026
In Person Concord School District
The Board Room- 22 Liberty Street -Concord NH 03301

Agenda Welcome and Roll Call Introductions (Admin)

*Determination of Quorum

Public Comments and/or Announcements

Acceptance of the December Meeting Minutes (Vote)

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair

Parent Information Center (PIC)

Resources (everyone)

Department of Health and Human Services and Bureau of Developmental Services Update
(Jessica Gorton and Dee Dunn Tierney)

Committee Update:

- Annual Report Discussion (vote)
- By-laws committee (vote)
- Membership Committee

Legislative Update



Members Attendance

Position/Agency/ Organization	Representative	Meeting Status
(a) The governor, or designee.	VACANT	
(b) The commissioner of the department of education, or designee.	Kate Scheer	
	Alternate: TBD	
(c) The commissioner of the department of health and human services, or designee	Deirdre Dunn Tierney	Present In-Person
	Alternate: Lisa Fontaine Storez	
(d) The director of the division of public health services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Courtney Keen	
	Alternate: Amanda Merrill	Present In-Person
(e) The bureau chief of the bureau of developmental services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Jessica Gorton	Present Virtual
	Alternate: TBD	
(f) The bureau chief of the bureau of behavioral health, department of health and human services, or designee.	Carolyn Lewis	Present Virtual
	Alternate: TBD	
(g) The director of the Institute on Disability, University of New Hampshire, or designee.	Lesley Blecharczyk	Present In-Person
	Alternate: Vacant	
(h) A special education director, appointed by the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators.	Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu	
	Alternate: Shelly Fagen	Present In-Person
(i) The president of the New Hampshire Medical Society, or designee.	VACANT	
(j) A representative of the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council, appointed by the council.	Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Vice Chair	Present In-Person
	Alternate: TBD	
(k) An individual who has an autism spectrum disorder, appointed by the governor.	Amy Frechette	



(l) A family member of a person who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the governor.	VACANT	
(m) A representative of the Community Support Network, Inc., appointed by such organization.	Marissa Berg	Present In-Person
	Alternate: TBD	
(n) A representative of the New Hampshire Psychological Association, appointed by the association.	Michelle Ronayne	Present Virtual
	Alternate: Jena Motolla	
(o) The director of the office of Medicaid business and policy, department of health and human services, or designee.	Vernon Clough	Present In-Person
	Alternate: TBD	
(p) Up to 5 additional members, nominated by the council and appointed by the governor	VACANT	
(q) A person who has an autism spectrum disorder, appointed by the council.	Gina Cannon	Present In-Person
(r) A representative of the New Hampshire Nurses' Association, appointed by the association	Julianne Taylor	
	Alternate: Paula MacKinnon	
(s) A licensed speech-language pathologist, appointed by the New Hampshire Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Inc	Kathryn Greenslade	Present Virtual
	Alternate: TBD	

Guest

Nichollette King, Amy Rheaume, Karen Blake, Jennifer Baker, Shannon Bourchar & Ering Copelan.

Quorum Confirmation and Attendance

Shanon Smith conducted roll call to confirm attendance and establish quorum. The council confirmed that quorum requirements were met, with 12 members total and 8 required for quorum. A total of 8 members were present in person & 3 were remote.



Public Comments and/or Announcements

The Council reviewed quorum requirements under RSA 91-A, seeking clarification on whether a quorum was present given current vacancies and remote participation. It was noted that New Hampshire statutes do not directly address quorum calculation when vacancies exist; however, guidance was referenced from *Appeal of Net Realty Holding Trust*, 127 N.H. 276 (1985). In that case, the New Hampshire Supreme Court stated that when a vacancy exists in a public body, a quorum consists of a majority of the remaining qualified members, unless a special provision applies.

Additional guidance from RSA 91-A:2, III was reviewed, which requires that at least one-third of the total membership be physically present at the meeting location. Members participating remotely are considered present for purposes of quorum and voting, provided all participants can contemporaneously communicate with one another and with the public.

No objections were raised by members regarding proceeding with the meeting. The Chair and council members determined that the Council is in compliance with RSA 91-A and moved forward with the agenda.

Additional clarification was provided regarding quorum requirements. It was noted that quorum is based on the number of members appointed to the Council under RSA 171-A:32-a, rather than the total number of authorized seats. Quorum is therefore calculated using only the subset of currently appointed members.

It was further noted that, at present, there is one Governor-appointed seat filled, identified as Amy, and no other Governor-appointed seats are currently filled. The Chair indicated that this information would be incorporated into the meeting minutes.

Acceptance of the December Meeting Minutes (vote)

Isadora moved to approve September minutes as written, providing corrections. Gina second.

- ✓ Motioned passed, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Amanda Merrill, Carolyn Lewis, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagan, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Marissa Berg, Vernon Clough, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.
- Abstained: Jessica Gorton & Michelle Ronayne

Nomination for Chair and Vice Chair

Members discussed leadership planning in advance of the end of the legislative session in June and agreed that beginning these conversations now would be helpful.



The Council reaffirmed the importance of leadership that reflects lived experience and discussed concerns about the sustainability and appropriateness of certain members serving as the public-facing chair. Members emphasized the value of clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of Chair, Vice Chair, and potential Co-Chair positions so interested members understand expectations.

The possibility of a co-chair model was discussed as a way to share responsibilities and better align leadership duties with individual strengths. Members noted that the current draft bylaws do not define officer roles and may need revision to address this.

The Chair noted these items for follow-up, including potential bylaw updates, and indicated the Council would return to the topic at a future meeting. Members interested in leadership roles were encouraged to reach out individually.

Parent Information Center (PIC)

The presenter provided an overview of the Parent Information Center (PIC) and Family Voices, which operate under the same organizational umbrella in New Hampshire. While they function as two distinct programs, they share the same mission and staff, all of whom are parents with lived experience navigating systems of care.

PIC is New Hampshire's Parent Training and Information Center, and Family Voices serves as the state's Family-to-Family and Family Health Information Center. Every state has comparable programs, though names and structures may vary. New Hampshire was one of the first states to establish both programs. Community leaders, including Martha Dean and Terry, were acknowledged for their role in advancing Family Voices in the state.

Both programs provide training and technical assistance to families, professionals, and organizations, with a shared goal of ensuring meaningful family engagement across education, healthcare, and related systems.

Parent Information Center (PIC)

PIC focuses primarily on education-related supports, including:

- Training on special education rights and processes, including the Volunteer Advocate Program (a multi-month course)
- Workshops on IEPs, Section 504 plans, and transition points (early intervention to school, elementary to middle school, middle to high school, and post-secondary transitions)
- Online learning modules, tools, and sample advocacy letters
- One-on-one support for families via intake and follow-up assistance



PIC does not attend meetings with families but instead supports families in building confidence, understanding their rights, and preparing to advocate effectively on their own.

Family Voices

Family Voices focuses on healthcare navigation and systems of care, including:

- Support with healthcare financing and insurance systems
- Assistance with applications for Home Care for Children with Severe Disabilities (formerly known as Katie Beckett)
- Guidance on waivers, grants, and other financial support programs
- Support for families across early childhood, youth, and transition-to-adulthood stages

Staff assist families in identifying goals, understanding options, and determining the right questions to ask, recognizing that families often contact the organization immediately following a new diagnosis.

Additional Resources and Supports

- A private Facebook group for New Hampshire families to connect, share experiences, and provide peer recommendations
- A lending library with over 3,000 titles related to special healthcare needs, including children's books, diagnosis-specific materials, and education system resources (available to New Hampshire residents by mail)
- "Maneuvering Through the Maze," a comprehensive resource guide currently undergoing updates
- Confidential assistance provided by phone and email
- Participation on advisory councils and committees to elevate family perspectives across systems
- A newly launched podcast available on major platforms
- A joint newsletter, *Pass It On*, distributed by PIC and Family Voices

There are no eligibility requirements to contact either program. While grant funding typically serves individuals up to age 26, families of individuals of all ages are supported and assisted with referrals and guidance as needed.

Question:

A member asked whether PIC and Family Voices conduct outreach in schools or regions, noting that despite long-standing work in the field, many people are still unaware of the organization's services.

Response:

The organization regularly participates in transition fairs, conferences, and community events. They emphasized the importance of building relationships with schools and shared an example of current collaboration with Dunbarton, where staff are working with the school principal to engage families before children enter school. This includes partnering with the Watch Me Grow coordinator on a program focused on developmental awareness and early family engagement.



The organization is available to present upon request and will work with schools or regions to determine the best format. While virtual presentations have increased accessibility, in-person presentations are arranged when appropriate. PIC and Family Voices serve families statewide, although they are based in Concord.

www.nhfv.org

www.picnh.org

jsp@nhfv.org

Department of Health and Human Services and Bureau of Developmental Services Update (Jessica Gorton and Deirdre Dunn Tierney and others)

Jessica Gorton provided updates from a Bureau of Developmental Services (BDS) perspective and invited other DHS partners (including Medicaid and Mental Health) to share updates as time allowed.

- The **In-Home Supports Waiver** was approved shortly before January 1 and has entered a new **five-year renewal cycle beginning January 1**. While the waiver is approved, not all changes take effect immediately, as operational steps (such as obtaining authority and establishing billing codes) must be completed first. Additional information will be shared as implementation progresses. Updates are relevant to service providers, service coordinators, and individuals accessing services. Changes reflected significant public input, and BDS is hopeful these updates will better address community-identified needs.
- The **Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver** is currently open for **formal public comment**, which began on **January 7** and remains open through **February 11**.
 - Upcoming public sessions include:
 - One in-person session in Concord on **February 4**
 - Two virtual sessions on **January 29** and **February 4**Links and notifications have been or will be shared with the group.
- The **Acquired Brain Disorder (ABD) Waiver** is scheduled for renewal on **November 1**, following completion of the DD Waiver process. Public comment opportunities for the ABD Waiver will be announced later.
- From an operational standpoint, BDS has been focused on **IT system upgrades and internal processes** that have been in development over the past several months. No additional major updates were reported at this time.

Link for the Developmental Disability and Acquired Brain Disorder Waiver Renewal.

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/nh-developmental-disabilities-waiver-and-acquired-brain-disorder-waiver-renewal-2026-2031>.



Carolyn Lewis - New Hampshire's **Rural Health Transformation Grant**.

- **Grant Purpose:** The federal grant provides funding to states nationwide to prepare rural areas for anticipated Medicaid cuts over the next five years. The goal is to mitigate potential service losses in rural communities.
- **Funding Awarded:** New Hampshire applied for approximately \$200 million and was awarded **\$204 million**. The state adjusted its budget to account for the additional \$4 million, which is currently awaiting approval. Funds will be distributed over five years, with the first portion expected by the **end of February**.
- **Public Input:** The state solicited suggestions from organizations statewide on potential uses for the funds. These inputs were consolidated into the grant application.
- **Planned Use of Funds:** Funding will support workforce strategies and the expansion of community behavioral health clinics (CBHCs). Currently, the state has 10 nominal centers, including three Primary Care Clinics (PCCs); the remaining seven are planned to transition to CBHCs over the next five years.

Resources (everyone)

- Council discussed developing a centralized resource guide for families supporting individuals with autism, with and without intellectual disabilities.
- Jen noted that materials being developed by the Parent Information Center (PIC) may be linked on the council website once available electronically.
- Council members were asked to share relevant resources (e.g., departmental guides, instructional materials, tools).
- Shannon will collect and organize submitted resources for website inclusion.
- Suggested resources include support for Medicaid-eligible individuals, transition-age students, and programs such as the Blue Envelope Program.
- Website is relatively new and can be updated quickly to add resources.

Resource Committee Formation

- Council revisited a prior discussion regarding the formation of a resource committee.
- Current standing committees include Annual Report, Bylaws, and Membership.
- Public participation in committees was discussed.
- Volunteers for the resource committee:
 - Isadora
 - Nicolette
 - Amanda
 - Shelly
- Resource committee meetings will be held in person, with scheduling based on member availability.

Amanda motioned to create a Resource Work Group Committee. Isadora second.



- ✓ Motioned passed, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Amanda Merrill, Jessica Gorton, Carolyn Lewis, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagan, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Marissa Berg, Michelle Ronayne, Vernon Clough, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.

Annual Report Discussion

- The Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025).
- The report had been discussed at the previous meeting, and time was allotted for final comments prior to a vote.
- Additional edits were received recently but have not yet been fully integrated.
- Due to the timing of the edits and limited opportunity for review, the council did not vote to adopt the report at this meeting.
- The Annual Report will return for a vote at the February meeting and is expected to be finalized at that time.

Bylaws Committee

- No additional feedback has been received on the draft bylaws since the last meeting.
- The committee will meet again to incorporate updates, including:
 - ✓ Addition of officer positions
 - ✓ Language allowing for co-chairs
- Revised bylaws will be shared in advance of the February meeting, with changes clearly flagged to allow adequate review.

Membership Committee Update

- No new membership updates at this time.
- The council is still awaiting appointments from the Governor's Office.
- Follow-up with the Governor's Office will continue; in some cases, in-person follow-up has been helpful.
- A list of pending appointments is included on the agenda.
- It was noted that the list of pending candidates may not be complete; follow-up will occur to confirm accuracy.
- Council members discussed prior actions taken before the holidays, including:
 - ✓ A meeting held earlier in the year where additional candidates were voted on by the full council to be put forward.
 - ✓ Confirmation that the most recent three candidates discussed were correctly identified.
 - ✓ Clarification that one applicant (JB) applied directly through the Governor's Office.



Legislative Update

• HB 1316 – Autism-Related Data Scraping

- Addresses concerns about the collection (“scraping”) of autism-related data and protected health information.
- Intended to prevent disclosure or automated collection of protected health information by external entities.
- No hearing has been scheduled at this time.
- The council discussed the possibility of inviting a bill sponsor to a future meeting to explain the intent and background of the bill.
- Council members expressed interest in hearing directly from a sponsor to better understand the rationale and implications.

• HB 1337 – Autism Council

- Proposes abolishing the Autism Council.
- No hearing has been scheduled at this time.
- If enacted, the bill would result in the dissolution of the council.
- Additional details, including timelines, will be shared as information becomes available.
- Council members and the public were encouraged to monitor legislation by subscribing to specific bills through the New Hampshire General Court website to receive automatic updates, including hearing notices.
- Legislative updates may also be shared with the council via email as developments occur.

Meeting Adjourn

Gina motioned to adjourn the meeting. Isadora seconded. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 2:01PM

Minutes approved February 27, 2026 - SS