



NHCASD Meeting Minutes July 24, 2026
In Person at NH Council on Development Disabilities
2 ½ Beacon Street Concord NH 03301

Agenda Welcome and Roll Call Introductions

*Determination of Quorum

Public Comments and/or Announcements

Acceptance of the April Meeting Minutes (Vote)

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair

Committee Update

Resource Sub Committee (Vote)

Budget Discussion

Department of Health and Human Services and Bureau of Developmental Services Update

Jessica Gorton & Dee Dunn Tierney

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	
	Alternate: Lisa Fontaine Storez	Present In-Person
(d) The director of the division of public health services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Courtney Keen	
	Alternate: Amanda Merrill	
(e) The bureau chief of the bureau of developmental services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Jessica Gorton	Present Virtual
	Alternate: Melissa Hardy	Present Virtual
(f) The bureau chief of the bureau of behavioral health, department of health and human services, or designee.	Carolyn Lewis	
	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 Virtual
(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	Present In-Person

(l) A family member of a person who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the governor.	Jennifer Baker	Present In-Person
(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	1. Dawn Pelletier	Present In-Person Present Virtual
	2. Amy Rheaume	
	3. Elaine Strand 4. Nicollette King 5. Kelly Ehrhart	Present Virtual
(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 In-Person
	Alternate: TBD	

Guest

Shannon Bouchard

Quorum Confirmation and Attendance

Shanon Smith conducted roll call to confirm attendance and establish quorum. The council confirmed that quorum requirements were met, with 15 members in total and 8 required to be present in person for quorum. A total of 11 members were present in person, and 5 members attended remotely.



Public Comments and/or Announcements

Acceptance of the April Meeting Minutes (vote)

Isadora moved to approve April minutes as written. Shelly second.

- ✓ Motioned passed, with the following in favor: Lisa Fontaine Storez, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagen, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Jennifer Baker, Vernon Clough, Amy Rheaume, Elaine Strand, & Kelly Ehrhart
Abstained: Amy Frechette, Marissa Berg, Michelle Ronayne, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair – Marissa

Isadora and Marissa shared that they originally came on board as interim leadership and worked to help get the Council moving again. They noted that it was encouraging to see such strong attendance and continued engagement from Council members. They are continuing to look for individuals who may be interested in serving in leadership roles, including Chair, Co-Chair, Vice Chair, or Co-Vice Chair.

- At this time, Kelly has been serving in what has been referred to as a tentative Co-Chair role and has been participating in Executive Committee meetings. The Council discussed formally adding a vote regarding Kelly's appointment to the agenda for next month's meeting. Kelly indicated that she would be comfortable moving forward with the vote.
- The Council is still seeking an individual to serve as Chair. Isadora and Marissa clarified that they are not planning to leave the Council but would like to transition from the interim leadership arrangement to more permanent leadership. They believe the Chair's term is two years, although the term length will be confirmed by reviewing the bylaws.
- The Council was originally intended to include leadership from individuals with autism, family members, and others with lived experience. Members in these groups were particularly encouraged to consider whether they would be interested in serving in a leadership role.
- The group discussed the possibility of shared leadership positions. Under the current bylaws, the Chair and Vice Chair positions may potentially be shared. A Co-Chair or Co-Vice Chair arrangement could allow individuals to divide responsibilities based on their strengths, interests, and availability. For example, one person may be more comfortable with public-facing responsibilities, while another may be better suited to other leadership tasks.
- It was explained that serving as Chair or Vice Chair requires an estimated two to three hours per week in addition to attending Council meetings. Responsibilities may include



helping develop meeting agendas, responding to information requests, participating in discussions regarding legislative testimony and the budget, and supporting the overall work of the Council.

- Members asked whether a formal job description or checklist exists outlining the responsibilities of the Chair and Vice Chair. The group agreed that developing a clear outline of these responsibilities would be helpful. This could be discussed and drafted at a future Executive Committee meeting, potentially using similar materials from the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council as a starting point.
- Members were encouraged to take time to consider whether they may be interested in a leadership role and whether they have the capacity to take on the associated responsibilities before making a commitment. It was emphasized that members do not necessarily need to commit to the Chair position, as there are also opportunities to serve as Vice Chair or in a shared leadership capacity.
- Isadora noted that, because of her role with the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council, she could continue attending Executive Committee meetings and provide support, information, and institutional knowledge to the Chair and Vice Chair. She may also be able to attend meetings in person, depending on scheduling and transportation availability.
- The group also discussed the composition of the Executive Committee. At present, the proposed leadership structure would include the Chair, Co-Chair, Vice Chair, and Co-Vice Chair. There was discussion about whether chairs of standing committees should also serve on the Executive Committee, as this could help ensure that the Executive Committee remains connected to the work being conducted throughout the Council. The bylaws will be reviewed to determine what is currently permitted and whether any clarification is needed.
- Members were encouraged to give the leadership roles some thought, with the possibility of revisiting the discussion and formally addressing nominations and appointments at next month's meeting.
- The Council also thanked the Administrator for efforts to coordinate meeting attendance and scheduling. Members were reminded of the importance of responding to scheduling emails so that the Council can plan effectively and avoid situations in which members travel to meetings only to find that quorum cannot be met.
- Members discussed Amanda's contributions to the Resource Committee and noted that she has done an excellent job. Jen also shared a positive experience working with Amanda and described an action plan Amanda had developed in the past that helped provide direction for the Council's work.
 - A nomination was suggested for Amanda to be considered for the Co-Chair position. Shanon agreed to reach out to Amanda to determine whether she



would be interested in serving in the role. The Council will continue the discussion regarding leadership nominations and appointments at the next meeting.

Committee Update:

Resource Sub Committee

The Resource Committee has met several times in person at the NH Council on Developmental Disabilities. The primary focus has been reviewing and identifying resources that can be added to the website to strengthen the information available to individuals and families. These resources include local service providers, national organizations, and groups focused on autism spectrum disorder and related areas.

The Committee included the minutes from its previous meetings in the meeting materials, along with a proposed page-by-page reorganization of the website's resource section. The goal is to make the resources page more accessible, intuitive, and easier for families to navigate.

The proposed organization includes the following categories:

- Family Support
 - Organizations that support families
 - Guides and toolkits
 - Educational resources
 - New Hampshire Family Voices' *Maneuvering the Maze* and other resource guides
 - Autism-focused family supports
 - Peer support groups and community connections
 - State supports and services
- Other Related Resources
 - National disability and autism resource directories
 - New Hampshire disability organizations and advocacy groups
 - Health and healthcare information
 - Transition resources
 - Public health information
 - Medicaid updates
 - Policy and legislative information
 - Aging and disability services
- Sensory-Friendly Events and Activities
 - Sensory-friendly events in New Hampshire
 - National and online sensory-friendly events
 - Sensory tools, products, and resources



The Committee also discussed restructuring the landing page to encourage individuals and organizations to help keep the resources current by submitting updates, corrections, and additional resources.

The Council discussed the importance of being cautious when listing specific products or companies, particularly sensory products. Members noted that listing one company or product without including competitors could potentially be viewed as an endorsement or preferential treatment.

The Committee explained that the intent is generally to provide information about types of resources and tools rather than promote specific companies or products. For example, instead of linking to a specific brand of chewable jewelry, the website could describe the resource more generally as "jewelry specifically designed for chewing."

The Council discussed including a disclaimer on the website. The proposed language was:
"These resources are offered for informational purposes only and do not represent endorsements or official positions of the Council."

Members agreed that a disclaimer would help clarify the purpose of the resource page and protect the Council from appearing to endorse specific organizations, companies, products, or activities.

The Council also discussed adding language inviting individuals to submit additional resources, corrections, or suggestions to improve the usefulness of the resource hub.

Several additional resources were suggested during the discussion, including:

- Autism and neurodiversity support groups
- Additional museums and science centers offering sensory-friendly programming
- The Association for Autism and Neurodiversity (AANE)
- Sexuality education and training resources for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Additional assistive technology and communication resources

Members were encouraged to send links and information about additional resources to the council admin for consideration and inclusion on the website.

Marissa motioned to approve the proposed list of resources and changes presented by the Resource Committee for inclusion on the Autism Council website. Amy R seconded the motion.



- ✓ Motioned passed, with the following in favor: Lisa Fontaine Storez, Jessica Gorton, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagen, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Jennifer Baker, Marissa Berg, Michelle Ronayne, Vernon Clough, Amy Rheaume, Elaine Strand, Kelly Ehrhart, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.

Marissa made a second motion to give the Resource Committee ongoing authority to make decisions regarding information added to the resource section of the Autism Council website, rather than requiring the full Council to approve every routine addition or change.

- During discussion, members raised concerns about potentially controversial topics and whether such matters should automatically be handled by the Resource Committee without review by the full Council.
- Members discussed the importance of providing access to resources related to sensitive topics, including suicide prevention, sexual violence, and LGBTQ+ resources, while also recognizing that some of these topics may be considered controversial in the current political environment.
- The Council discussed the need to balance the Resource Committee's ability to efficiently maintain and update the website with the full Council's responsibility to review issues that may be particularly sensitive or controversial.
- It was suggested that the motion be amended so that the Resource Committee would have authority to approve routine additions to the website, but any information the Committee considers potentially controversial would be brought before the full Autism Council for discussion and approval.

Marissa formally amended to state that the Resource Committee may approve information for inclusion on the website, except for information the Committee determines may be potentially controversial, which must be brought to the full Council for consideration before being added. Gina seconded the motion.

- ✓ Motioned passed, with the following in favor: Lisa Fontaine Storez, Jessica Gorton, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagen, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Jennifer Baker, Marissa Berg, Michelle Ronayne, Vernon Clough, Amy Rheaume, Elaine Strand, Kelly Ehrhart, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.



Budget Discussion – Isadora

The Council discussed the need to develop a formal policy for providing stipends and travel reimbursement to individuals and family members who participate in the Autism Council and represent themselves or their lived experience with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

- The Council currently has approximately \$17,000 available annually for this purpose. The discussion also acknowledged that the Council's limited budget must account for administrative support costs, including salaries and associated employee taxes and expenses.
- It was proposed that an ad hoc committee be formed to develop a formal stipend and travel reimbursement policy. The committee would review available resources and determine appropriate eligibility criteria, documentation requirements, and reimbursement processes. The Council has experience with similar policies through the Quality Council, which provides stipends and travel reimbursement, and members expressed interest in using that policy as a model rather than creating a process from scratch.
- The proposed policy would be brought back to the Council for review and approval. The goal is to complete the work within a limited timeframe, ideally holding one or two meetings in August and presenting a recommendation at the next Council meeting.
- Members volunteering to participate included Gina, Kelly, Marissa & Isadora. It was noted that Kelly would participate remotely. Members were reminded that committee participation requires commitment to attend meetings, as subcommittees are subject to quorum requirements.

The Council also discussed the fiscal agent's role in processing reimbursements. The Autism Council's fiscal agent is Community Crossroads. Because the Council operates with state funding on a reimbursement basis, all expenditures require appropriate paperwork and documentation before reimbursement can be made to the fiscal agent. Unspent funds remain with the State.

Kelly made a motion was made to establish an ad hoc committee to develop a formal stipend policy. Shelly seconded the motion.

- ✓ Motioned passed, with the following in favor: Lisa Fontaine Storez, Jessica Gorton, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagen, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Jennifer Baker, Marissa Berg, Michelle Ronayne, Vernon Clough, Amy Rheume, Elaine Strand, Kelly Ehrhart, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.



Grants and Educational Opportunities

The Council discussed the possibility of forming a subcommittee to explore grant opportunities and educational programming for the autism community.

The Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council) has small grant opportunities that are reviewed annually in conjunction with the state's fiscal year. The DD Council recently updated its grant application and reporting forms, which are expected to be available on its website.

The discussion referenced listening sessions held by the Autism Council in November 2024. Individuals with lived experience, family members, and professionals participated and provided feedback about community needs. Among the themes identified were the need for additional resources, education, and training on topics related to autism.

Members discussed the possibility of developing a specific training proposal and applying for funding through the DD Council. Unlike the Autism Council's limited state funding, DD Council grant funds are federal funds and may be used to support specific projects or activities that provide education, training, and support to the Autism community.

It was emphasized that the proposed grant would need to identify a specific project, including the training topic, anticipated costs, and how participants would access the training. The group could consider multiple potential training topics before determining which specific project to propose.

One potential training opportunity discussed was working with Ross Greene's organization to provide training for parents, educators, and others on Collaborative & Proactive Solutions and approaches to understanding and supporting challenging behavior. The Council discussed the importance of reframing behavior and focusing on identifying unmet needs and missing skills rather than labeling behavior as "problem behavior" or "disobedience."

Members expressed strong interest in this training opportunity. Several members shared positive experiences with Dr. Ross Greene's approach and similar programs being used in school settings, including training focused on being "curious, not furious" when challenging situations arise.

It was also discussed that the DD Council could potentially provide seed funding for a project that could later develop into a larger partnership or more sustainable program supported by other organizations. Members referenced a previous autism-focused summer institute or conference that had been offered in New Hampshire as a possible model for a future larger-scale event.



The group agreed that the immediate focus should be on developing a specific grant proposal, with larger educational events or partnerships considered as potential future projects.

It was suggested that the subcommittee be called an Educational Opportunities and Grants Subcommittee or a similar name. The initial task would be to review the DD Council's grant application process and develop a specific proposal for an educational opportunity that would benefit individuals and families affected by autism.

Members interested in participating included Leslie, Amy F, Gina, Kelly and Kathryn. It was noted that individuals who are not Council members may attend meetings as guests and provide input, but formal committee membership is limited to Council members.

Members were reminded that participation on a subcommittee requires commitment to attend meetings because subcommittees are subject to quorum requirements.

Shelly made a motion was made to establish a subcommittee to formalize the Council's grant application process and explore and apply for appropriate grant opportunities, including the DD Council grant. Lesley second the motion.

- ✓ Motioned passed, with the following in favor: Lisa Fontaine Storez, Jessica Gorton, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagen, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Jennifer Baker, Marissa Berg, Michelle Ronayne, Vernon Clough, Amy Rheume, Elaine Strand, Kelly Ehrhart, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.

Department of Health and Human Services and Bureau of Developmental Services Update

The Council discussed ongoing changes to Medicaid and acknowledged that there are still many questions regarding how the changes will affect individuals and families.

Members were encouraged to review resources available through the New Hampshire Medicaid advocacy community, including educational materials and information about upcoming listening sessions. It was noted that additional listening sessions are expected to take place in August, including one in Plymouth.

The discussion focused particularly on potential changes affecting individuals enrolled in Medicaid Advantage plans. Members noted that state and federal requirements continue to evolve, and agencies are still awaiting additional guidance before they can provide definitive information about how the changes will be implemented.



The Council acknowledged the importance of continuing to share accurate information and resources with individuals and families who may be affected by Medicaid changes.

The Council received information about updated resource cards from the Bureau of Family-Centered Services. The materials provide an overview of services offered by the Bureau and organizations with which it collaborates.

- Members requested that electronic versions of the materials be provided so they can be distributed to the Council and included with meeting materials or shared through the Council's email and website.

Member updates/announcements

The Council received updates regarding the work of the Quality Council's Systems Review Committee. The committee was established to examine potential systemic gaps that may have contributed to serious incidents previously reported through a public bulletin.

- The Systems Review Committee has met with a variety of stakeholders within the Bureau of Developmental Services (BDS) and the broader developmental services system. The committee has examined the system from multiple perspectives, including potential bottlenecks, gaps, areas where individuals may fall through the cracks, and opportunities for additional support.
- The committee has completed its stakeholder meetings and plans to meet in August to develop recommendations. The recommendations will focus on strengthening the overall system infrastructure and reducing the likelihood of serious incidents occurring in the future.
- A member requested additional information about the bulletin referenced during the discussion. It was agreed that more detailed information could be provided after the meeting.

Information was also shared about "Zebra Crossing," which provides recreational opportunities and resources for individuals with autism, chronic conditions, and rare disorders. It was noted that the organization is not limited to serving individuals with autism but offers activities and opportunities that may be beneficial to the broader community.

Meeting Adjourn

Isadora motioned to adjourn the meeting. Jennifer seconded. All in favor.
Meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM