



NHCASD Meeting Minutes March 27, 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 February Meeting Minutes (Vote)

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair

HB 1316 & Legislative Update

NH COP Update

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

Committee Update:

- Membership Committee
- Resource Sub Committee (vote)

Member updates/announcements



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- 1:24
	Alternate: Melissa Hardy	
(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	Present Virtual



(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	
	Alternate: Jena Motolla	
(o) The director of the office of Medicaid business and policy, department of health and human services, or designee.	Vernon Clough	
	Alternate: TBD	
(p) Up to 5 additional members, nominated by the council and appointed by the governor	1. Dawn Pelletier 2. Amy Rheaume 3. Elaine Strand 4. Nicollette King 5. Kelly Ehrhart	Present Virtual Present In-Person Present Virtual
(q) A person who has an autism spectrum disorder, appointed by the council.		Present In-Person
(r) A representative of the New Hampshire Nurses' Association, appointed by the association	Gina Cannon	
	Julianne Taylor	
(s) A licensed speech-language pathologist, appointed by the New Hampshire Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Inc	Alternate: Paula MacKinnon	
	Kathryn Greenslade	
	Alternate: TBD	

Guest

Shannon Bourchar

Quorum Confirmation and Attendance

Shanon Smith conducted roll call to confirm attendance and establish quorum. The council confirmed that quorum requirements were met, with 13 members total and 8 required in person with in for quorum. A total of 9 members were present in person & 4 were remote.



Public Comments and/or Announcements

Kelly shared that the NH Family Support State Conference is scheduled for next month, and hotel booking deadlines are approaching.

- Individuals involved with the Family Support Council may be able to receive assistance with registration.
- There may also be small education grants available through the council to help cover hotel costs, though details should be confirmed directly.

Amy shared that the New Hampshire LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities) program is now accepting applications for the upcoming year.

- Participants are encouraged to share this opportunity with colleagues or consider applying themselves.
- Several current or past trainees may be available to answer questions, including Jen Baker.
- Amy noted that she may not always be available to respond but can also be contacted for inquiries.
- The application process is available online.
<https://iod.unh.edu/nh-leadership>
<https://iod.unh.edu/nh-me-lend>
- It was confirmed that interested individuals can find the program by searching online (e.g., UNH LEND program) or by using the shared link.

Isadora shared that nominations are currently being accepted for the Leadership Series training program, which provides annual training for family members and professionals working in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- Participants are encouraged to submit nominations for individuals who may benefit from this opportunity.

The Employment Leadership Awards Committee is also seeking nominations.

- These awards recognize businesses that demonstrate excellence in employing individuals with disabilities.
- Attendees are encouraged to submit nominations for any businesses deserving of recognition.

Acceptance of the February Meeting Minutes (vote)

Isadora moved to approve February minutes as written. Lesley second.

- ✓ Motioned passed, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Amanda Merrill, Carolyn Lewis, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagen, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Marissa Berg, Elaine, Strand, Nicollette King & Gina Cannon
Abstained: Jennifere Baker & Kelly Ehrhart



Nomination for Chair and Vice Chair

Marissa Berg & Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre

- The group revisited the topic of nominations for Chair and Vice Chair positions, especially in light of newly approved members joining the council.
- It was emphasized that leadership roles should ideally be filled by individuals with autism and/or family members to ensure representation of lived experience.
- Members were reminded that the bylaws allow for co-chair positions, which may help share responsibilities.
- Individuals interested in leadership roles are encouraged to reach out to Isadora for more information.
 - Kelly expressed interest in a leadership role but noted current work commitments. She offered to serve as Co-Vice Chair rather than Chair at this time. Isadora will follow up with Kelly to discuss this further.
- Members were encouraged to consider serving as Chair or Co-Chair, with continued emphasis on the importance of lived experience in leadership.
- Leadership positions remain open, and further interest is welcomed.

HB 1316 & Legislative Update

Marissa Berg

All bills have now “crossed over” between the House and Senate. Some bills have not yet been assigned to committees in their new chamber.

House Bill 1337:

- This bill proposes repealing the New Hampshire Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- It has passed the House and is now moving to the Senate.
- A hearing date has not yet been scheduled.
- Members will be notified when additional information becomes available.

[NH HB1337](#) | [2026](#) | [Regular Session](#) | [LegiScan](#)

- It was agreed that outreach would be made to the bill’s sponsor for further information.
- Members who testified on HB 1337 were thanked for their participation and advocacy.
- It was noted that, despite testimony, the bill’s outcome may have followed party-line voting.
- Members are encouraged to contact Senate Health and Human Services Committee members to share their perspectives, particularly regarding HB 1337.

House Bill 1316:



- This bill would have restricted the collection and disclosure of autism-related data by state agencies.
- It did not receive a full vote and will not move forward this legislative session.

Senate Bill 456:

- Establishes a commission to study issues affecting children's public health and safety in New Hampshire.
- The bill includes a wide range of topics, including trends in autism and ADHD diagnoses and children's mental health services.
- Autism-related topics are one component of a broader, multi-issue study.
- The bill will move to the House for further consideration.
- Members were encouraged to review the full bill on the New Hampshire General Court website.

[NH SB456 | 2026 | Regular Session | LegiScan](#)

Senate Bill 646:

- Relates to mental health standards of care and insurance coverage.
- Proposes requiring private insurance to match Medicaid (rather than Medicare) rates and coverage for certain conditions, including autism.
- Discussion highlighted potential impacts on providers, particularly in rural areas, and concerns about reimbursement rates.
- It was noted that this change could have mixed effects, including possible implications for early intervention services and provider availability.
- The bill is expected to move to the House, where additional public comment opportunities will be available.

[Bill Text: NH SB646 | 2026 | Regular Session | Introduced | LegiScan](#)

- Members discussed potential impacts of SB 646 on insurance coverage, provider sustainability, and service access.
- There was interest in obtaining clarification on the bill's intent and implications.

NH COP

Amanda Merrill

Amanda provided an overview of the New Hampshire Transition Community of Practice (COP), which she has been attending for the past two years.

- The COP is a statewide, voluntary group open to all New Hampshire residents.
- Meetings are held monthly on the first Thursday from 9:00–11:00 AM via Zoom, with no in-person requirement.
- Participation is open and flexible; attendees may join as their schedules allow.



- The COP focuses on transition planning for individuals with disabilities, particularly planning for life after high school.
- Each year, the group hosts an “Ed Series” from January through June.
 - First hour: Guest speakers from organizations and agencies present on topics related to transition planning.
 - Second hour: Open discussion, resource sharing, and collaboration among participants.
- Information and resources are currently available through the “Next Steps” website.
- The Next Steps platform will be discontinued this summer and replaced by a new site managed by the New Hampshire Department of Education.
- Members are encouraged to download or save relevant resources before the transition, as some materials may not transfer over.
- Meeting recordings and presentation materials are available on the current site.
- The next Ed Series session is scheduled for April 2, featuring a presentation on assistive technology tools and practices for transition success.
- Two additional sessions are planned for May and June.
- Members were encouraged to share this resource widely within their organizations and networks.
- Participation is free and does not require account creation or login.

NH COP Home Page: [Statewide Community of Practice \(NH COP\) - Next Steps NH](#)

NH COP 2026 Ed Series: [2026 NH COP Education Series - Next Steps NH](#)

Next Steps Home Page: [Next Steps NH](#)

Beyond Classroom Home Page: [Beyond Classroom](#)

PIC and NHFV Transition event – Dream. Plan. Launch. Life after High School for Youth with Disabilities.

Jennife Baker

- A follow-up discussion was held regarding a recent transition-related event.
- The event included separate sessions for families and youth:
 - Youth participated in their own sessions with targeted presentations.
 - Families attended a concurrent session in a separate space.
- Presenters included Leslie and Sarah, who contributed to the youth sessions.
- The event was well attended, with strong participation and engagement from both families and youth.
- Feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
- The format—separate but simultaneous sessions—was noted as particularly effective in helping families feel comfortable while allowing youth to engage independently.
- The event ran from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM and covered a large amount of material in a relatively short time.



- Due to high engagement and numerous questions, there was interest in offering similar events in the future.
- Organizers noted the challenge of fitting extensive content into a limited timeframe.
- The group discussed the possibility of repeating or expanding the event format.

Grant Opportunities

- Members discussed the council's responsibility, as outlined in its legislation, to pursue grant opportunities and support initiatives for families and individuals.
- Concerns were raised about the complexity and time-intensive nature of grant writing, including:
 - Significant time commitment for application, implementation, and reporting.
 - The need for specialized expertise in grant writing.
 - Capacity challenges for council members balancing other responsibilities.
- Some organizations have dedicated grant writers or routinely apply for recurring grants, while others rely on external partnerships or opportunities initiated by funders.
- Past grant efforts through the council and state were noted to be large-scale and resource intensive.
- It was highlighted that there are different types of grants:
 - Large federal/state grants: Typically complex, require a fiscal agent, and involve extensive coordination.
 - Smaller community-based grants: More targeted, less complex, and potentially more feasible for smaller projects.
- Additional considerations discussed:
 - Identifying a fiscal agent to manage funds.
 - Avoiding competition with partner organizations applying for similar funding.
 - Understanding state-level approval processes for grants.
- A previous effort to bring in external training (e.g., parent skills training) was explored and progressed significantly, including discounted pricing and planning logistics.
- The initiative was ultimately not pursued due to restrictions on how available funds could be used (limited to administrative expenses).
- The group discussed whether to:
 - Form a dedicated workgroup to explore grant opportunities, or
 - Revisit the topic at a future meeting.
- Agreed Approach:
 - The grant discussion will be tabled and added to a future meeting agenda ("parking lot" item).
 - The Resource Subcommittee will explore existing programs and initiatives across the state ("environmental scan") to:
 - Identify current efforts.



- Avoid duplication.
- Explore partnership opportunities.

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

DHHS Deirdre Dunn Tierney

NH Transformation Funding:

- New Hampshire has allocated **\$204 million** for 2026 Health Transformation funds allocated to NH.
- Key focus areas include:
 - Building and retaining a skilled rural health workforce
 - Developing new payment models
 - Modernizing care delivery
 - Expanding and leveraging technology

Part C Early Supports & Services Federal Grant:

- The public notice for the federal Part C grant was posted on March 16, 2026.
- Public comment period is open April 1–30, 2026.
- Comments can be submitted via the website or directed to Nicole Bashaw, State Coordinator.
- The grant process is highly prescribed, with limited flexibility for additional feedback.

Website Accessibility Project:

- DHS is implementing a department-wide initiative to ensure all documents on DHS websites are accessible.
- Workgroups have been established to review and update documents.
- Non-compliant or outdated documents are being temporarily removed while updates are made.

[FCESS Part C Data and Monitoring | New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services](#)

BDS Jessica Gorton

Internal Operations:

- BBS has been focusing on day-to-day operations and addressing internal bandwidth challenges, similar to other peer departments and agencies.

Waiver Renewals:

- Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver: Set to renew September 1, 2026. Submission to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is expected in the coming weeks to allow for review and questions.
- Acquired Brain Disorder Waiver: Public comment opportunities will open following the DD waiver submission, with review scheduled for November 1, 2026.

Emergency Administrative Rule HM 1001:



- Recently filed as an emergency rule, effective immediately.
- Applies to certified providers in community residences, including enhanced family care models (staffed residential homes supporting individuals with developmental disabilities).
- Emergency rules bypass the standard public comment period initially but are time-limited to six months. Within that period, the full rule must undergo:
 - Robust public comment
 - Review by the Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules
 - Approval or disapproval by the committee
- Emergency rules allow immediate implementation but still require eventual full review and legislative oversight.

Membership Committee Update

Isadora Rodrigues-Legendre

Governor-Appointed Members:

- The council has received the recommended number of governor-appointed members.
- Appreciation was expressed for the patience and participation of those members, especially over the past six months to two years.
 - Currently, there are two vacancies:
 1. Governor's direct representative
 2. Director of the Medical Society

Appointments Process:

- The process has been delayed in part due to transitions in the offices responsible for providing names for appointment.
- Efforts by council staff, particularly Isadora, have helped clarify the process and improve communication for this and other councils.
- Documentation of the steps required for appointments is being compiled to preserve institutional knowledge and streamline future council operations.
-

Resource Sub Committee (vote)

Resource List Development:

- A robust list of resources has been compiled for posting on the council's website under the Resources section.
- Resources have been categorized for easier navigation:
 1. Support Services
 2. Family Support
 3. Other Related Resources
 4. ABA Agencies (linked separately to open the full listing)



Disclaimer Language

- A short public-facing disclaimer will be added to the website:
“To support this mandate, the council curates links to external resources. These links do not necessarily represent the council, and users should contact the council if any links are out of date or inaccurate.”
- The full internal version of the disclaimer will be kept in the committee procedures for reference.

Isadora moved to approve February minutes as written. Amanda second.

- ✓ Motioned passed, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Amanda Merrill, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagen, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Jennifer Baker, Marissa Berg, Elaine, Strand, Nicollette King, Gina Cannon & Jessica Gorton

Procedures for Updates

- A process will be formalized to maintain accuracy and currency of the resources:
 1. Resource update requests will be submitted via email to the council admin.
 2. The Resource Subcommittee will review the request:
 - Nominal changes: corrected by the subcommittee.
 - Major changes/issues: brought to the full council for approval.
 3. This procedure will be documented and maintained to ensure consistent management of website resources.
- Continue organizing resources for clarity and usability.
- Conduct an environmental scan to identify additional resources and potential funding sources for inclusion.
- Finalize and document the formal procedures for ongoing maintenance.

Member updates/announcements

Confirmed Presenters for April 24, 2026, meeting

1. Tina Cabana – Bureau of Family Assistance
 - Topic: Eligibility-related changes in Medicaid and recent process updates.
 - Opportunity: Open to public; ideal for those with questions or challenges related to Medicaid services.
 2. Danie Guinesso – Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester
 - Topic: Efforts to make programs more autism-friendly, including education and support for children and adults.
 - Focus: Promising practices that could be shared and potentially replicated in other regions.
- Encourage sharing of meeting notice with networks, advocacy groups, and online communities to increase participation.



- Consider structuring the next meeting to allow for more public comments or discussion from individuals with lived experience.

Meeting Adjourn

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

Meeting adjourned at 2:02PM