NHCASD Meeting Minutes December 5, 2025
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 September Meeting Minutes (Vote)
Nominations for Chari and Vice Chair
Department of Health and Human Services and Bureau of Developmental Services Update (Jessica Gorton and Dee Dunn Tierney)
Committee Update:

- HB 140 – Blue Envelope Committee
- Annual Report Discussion
- By-laws committee
- Membership Committee
  Nicollette King & Elaine Strand (Vote)

Legislative Update

NHCASD
education advocacy inclusion
New Hampshire Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders

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	Present In-Person
	Alternate: Amanda Merrill	
(e) The bureau chief of the bureau of developmental services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Jessica Gorton	
	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 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.	**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 In-Person
	Alternate: **TBD**	

Guest-

Steven Ayotte, Jennifer Baker, Shannon Bourchar, Elaine Strand, Erin Copeland, Tracy Walbridge & Beth Farino

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 total and 8 required for quorum. A total of 9 members were present in person.

Public Comments and/or Announcements

- Communication between BDS, providers, and Area Agencies:
  There was discussion about creating a flow chart, to clarify who is responsible for handling different types of issues, as well as possibly scheduling a future session to review Medicaid eligibility processes. Participants also suggested holding a future meeting to outline the roles of Area Agencies, provider agencies, and service coordination agencies. Special education System & Service Coordinators, receive mixed messages
    - New Hampshire Family Voices could help families navigate these systems.
    - Subcommittee to review Rules, looking at some of those HeM's.
    - State Family Support Council and the Regional Council are also other avenues for support.
    - Collection of information and disseminating as a council.

- Concerns were raised about the recent bulletin articles and how they may impact individuals, their families, and loved ones within the community.

Acceptance of the September Meeting Minutes (vote)

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

- Correction of last name pg. 7 Rodriguez-Legendre.
    - ✓ Motioned passed with corrections, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Courtney Keen, Carol Lewis, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagan, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Marissa Berg, Vernon Clough, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.

Nomination for Chair and Vice Chair

Marissa and Isadora stepped in as interim chair and vice chair to support the work and progress of this body, honoring the intention that individuals with lived experience and family members hold leadership roles on this council. Their roles are temporary, and we strongly encourage others to consider stepping into these leadership positions.

The Council is also facing the added challenge of pending appointments. Several individuals with lived experience and family members have been submitted to the Governor's Office for appointments, but we have not yet received a response, despite several months of waiting.

The hope is to see more individuals, including those with autism spectrum disorder or support those with an individual with autism spectrum disorder, take the lead in guiding this council's work, with agencies providing support as needed. We stepped in to help stabilize and move things forward, but leadership truly belongs with the community members this council represents.

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

- Peggy-Sue Greenwood passed. She worked for the department for 42 years; she was the Coordinator for the Family Support Conference for many years.
- Some of the work that has been done around family support aligns very well with the discussions the council is having. There was a recent opportunity for Deirdre to meet with a group of family members through New Hampshire Family Voices to talk about what family support means to them, what it looks like, when it works well, and when it doesn't. Many of the themes raised in that conversation match what we've heard today about what is and isn't working, which is encouraging and suggests we're moving in the right direction.
    - We are beginning some quality improvement work as we move forward. One of the challenges in the system redesign and in creating the Division of Long-Term Supports and Services has been integrating family-centered services and family support with BDS and figuring out how these components fit together. This contributes to some of the confusion when questions arise.
    - Family Supports looks different for everyone. Family support is about helping families to remain in the community and live their best lives. Family can look very different for different people. Some individuals are raised by grandparents, uncles, or other relatives. Others may not have biological family involved at all and instead rely on foster parents, close friends, or other trusted people in their lives.
    - The Family Support Council are a self-governed body, within the Area Agency, who help to provide support to families in their region. There are written agreements between the Area Agency and the Family Support Council so that everyone knows who's responsible for what and if there are questions who people contact. You do not need to be on a waiver to receive Family Supports. There is Family Support Council for each Area Agency and there is a representative from each council who sits on the State Family Support Council.
    - Council can give input on policies however the Board of Directors would have the final say.
    - Area Agency must follow the Dad's functions and the State of New Hampshire Contract.

Membership Committee Update

HB 140 – Blue Envelope Committee**:**

The Blue Envelope Task Force was a time-limited work group, and although it is no longer meeting, its work has been completed. A draft of the Blue Envelope materials has been finalized

and is expected to be implemented by the Department of Motor Vehicles starting January 1. The timeline moved quickly, likely due to an early January rollout requirement.

- This initiative came from legislation that the Autism Council participated in, with the goal of creating a Blue Envelope program in New Hampshire for individuals with autism spectrum disorder or anxiety-related disabilities. The program allows a driver who becomes overwhelmed during a traffic stop to present a Blue Envelope that contains important information for both the driver and the officer.
- A key component of the program includes law-enforcement training so officers can recognize the Blue Envelope and understand that the driver may have communication or anxiety-related challenges. The envelope includes icons and visual cues to help both parties communicate, especially if the individual is too overwhelmed to speak.

The Division for Behavioral Health gathered input from the task force, which included contributors like Sarah Valli, the technology director at the UNH Institute on Disability. They reviewed successful Blue Envelope programs from other states and adapted the model for New Hampshire. The envelope has two sides—one for officers and one for the driver.

- The officer side provides guidance such as: the individual may not respond as expected, may need extra processing time, or may use alternative communication.
- The individual's side explains what they can expect during a traffic stop, such as being asked for their driver's license, and provides helpful suggestions like requesting an officer to turn off flashing lights or avoid shining a flashlight directly at them.

One concern raised was the suggestion to keep a driver's license inside the Blue Envelope. Many felt this is not a good idea because a license is often needed for other essential tasks (such as picking up medication or traveling) and may not always be stored in a vehicle. A better option may be keeping documents like vehicle registration in the envelope instead.

One way the Council can support this effort is by helping share information once the program rolls out in January. We could be instrumental in creating a one-page, plain-language overview of the Blue Envelope program—who qualifies, how it works, and what people need to know. This document could be posted on the website as supporting materials and distributed by all Council members.
This was a BIG WIN!

Annual Report Discussion

The first draft of the annual report has been completed. The team gathered information on the Council's accomplishments, challenges, membership growth, and meetings held over the past year. After reviewing the draft, I revised it to ensure it was written in plain language, easier for screen readers to navigate, and free of repetitive information. The finalized draft highlights the Council's key activities, legislative work, and major challenges from the past year.

A condensed summary of the listening session results was also included, since the listening sessions were one of the Council's major efforts to gather community feedback on priority issues affecting people with autism.
Appendices were added with the original bill language and the version that ultimately passed and was signed by the Governor, providing a clear snapshot of the Council's legislative involvement.
Unlike some past reports, we did not include the full historical timeline, keeping only a brief overview to prevent the report from becoming excessively long.
The draft has been sent to all Council members. We need to adopt the report, and a final vote must occur at the January meeting. Council members may still submit remaining feedback, but all feedback must be received no later than Friday, December 12, to allow enough time for revisions before the January vote.

Bylaws Committee
A public bylaws committee meeting on September 23. The committee consisted of Gina and Merissa in person. A draft of the updated bylaws was sent to all Council members prior to today's meeting.
Please review the draft bylaws and submit any feedback or suggested edits. We will follow the same timeline as the annual report: all feedback must be sent to Shannon no later than Friday, December 12.
Depending on the amount of feedback received, we will either hold another public bylaw committee meeting or move to adopt the bylaws at the January Council meeting.

Membership Committee
The committee is currently working to schedule a meeting. While there are no new membership applications to review currently, the group plans to address some housekeeping items, including the lack of response from the Governor's Office on recent nominations.
Gina moved to accept moving both Nicollette King and Elaine Strand forward to them forward to the Governor. Isadora second.

- ✓ Motioned passed, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Courtney Keen, Carol Lewis, Lesley Blecharezyk, Shelly Fagan, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Marissa Berg, Vernon Clough, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.

Legislative Update
Three Legislative Service Requests (LSRs) this session specifically relate to individuals with autism. The full bill language has not yet been released, but all LSR language is expected to come out over the course of this month. We will monitor these closely and bring updates back to the Council once the text is available.

The relevant LSRs are:

- **LSR 2026-2958:** Restricting the collection and disclosure of autism-related data by state agencies.
- **LSR 2026-2933:** Repealing the New Hampshire Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- **LSR 2026-3076:** Protecting the privacy of personal information and medical data regarding individuals with autism.

We will continue to track these and update the Council once the bill language is released.

Meeting Adjourn

Isadora motioned to adjourn the meeting. Kathryn seconded. All in favor.
Meeting adjourned at 2:03PM
Minutes approved at the January 23, 2026 Meeting. SS