



NHCASD Meeting Minutes * March 26, 2025

Concord School District, The Board Room, 33 Liberty St., Concord, NH 03301

Members and Attendance

Name	Organization/Representing	Meeting Status
VACANT	(a) The governor, or designee.	VACANT
Kate Scheer (Alternate – TBD)	(b) The commissioner of the department of education, or designee.	Present Virtual
Deirdre Dunn Tierney (Alternate – TBD)	(c) The commissioner of the department of health and human services, or designee.	Present Virtual
Amanda Merrill (Alternate: Iain Watt)	(d) The director of the division of public health services, department of health and human services, or designee	Not Present
Jessica Gorton (Alternate – TBD)	(e) The bureau chief of the bureau of developmental services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Not Present
Carolyn Lewis	(f) The bureau chief of the bureau of behavioral health, department of health and human services, or designee.	Present In Person
Andrew Houtenville (Alternate – Lesley Blecharczyk)	(g) The director of the Institute on Disability, University of New Hampshire, or designee.	Present In Person
Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu (Alternate- Shelly Fagen)	(h) A special education director, appointed by the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators, Inc	Present In Person
VACANT	(i) The president of the New Hampshire Medical Society, or designee.	VACANT
Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre (Alternate – TBD)	(j) A representative of the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council, appointed by the council.	Present In Person

Amy Frechette	(k) An individual who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the governor.	Present In Person
VACANT	(l) A family member of a person who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the governor.	VACANT
Marissa Berg (Alternate – TBD)	(m) A representative of the Community Support Network, Inc., appointed by such organization	Present In Person
Michelle Ronayne Ronayne (Alternate: Jena Motolla)	(n) A representative of the New Hampshire Psychological Association, appointed by the association.	Not Present
Vernon Clough (Alternate – TBD)	(o) The director of the office of Medicaid business and policy, department of health and human services, or designee.	Present Virtual
1. VACANT	(p) Up to 5 additional members, nominated by the council and appointed by the governor.	1. VACANT
2. VACANT		2. VACANT
3. VACANT		3. VACANT
4. VACANT		4. VACANT
5. VACANT		5. VACANT
Gina Cannon	(q) A person who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the council	Present In Person
Nancy A. Wells (Alternate: Paula MacKinnon)	(r) A representative of the New Hampshire Nurses' Association, appointed by the association	Not Present
Kathryn Greenslade (Alternate: TBD)	(s) A licensed speech-language pathologist, appointed by the New Hampshire Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Inc	Not Present

A QUORUM WAS REACHED

(*) delineates family member of/or individual with a disability which counts toward an in-person quorum.

Guests or Members of the Public

Louis Esposito	Executive Director, ABLENH	In Person
Ann Sanok	Member of the Public, Parent	Virtual
Cheryl Paquette	Member of the Public	Virtual
Kelly Ehrhart	Member of the Public, Individual	Virtual
Holly C.	Member of the Public, Parent	Virtual
Suzanne Bagdasarian	CFO Community Partners	Virtual
Will Stacy	Member of the Public, Parent	Virtual
Carrie Duran	AC Administrative Support	Virtual

Introductions and administrative items

- Each person on the call introduced themselves and stated which seat they were representing or if they were a member of the public.
- Review of correct contact email for council administrator. Please use casdnh@gmail.com for all Autism Council correspondence.

MOTION: Gina Cannon made a motion for the in-person members of the council to make a motion to accept the members of the council into the meeting who are attending via Zoom.

Council Member Name	Vote
Lesley Blecharczyk	Yes
Amy Frechette	Yes
Marissa Berg	Yes
Gina Gannon	Yes
Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre	Yes
Shelly Fagan	Yes

HB 634 Autism Council Legislation Update – Marissa Berg, Interim Chair

Introduced HB 634 -Housekeeping bill

Amended HB 634 – Amended to repeal the Autism Council

- Council Chair invited members of the public and council members to provide testimony in support of the Autism Council continuing. If you would like the Autism Council to continue, encourage the Senate to vote No on HB 634.
- Council Members asked for further clarification on why Representative Edwards changed his support of the Autism Council.

- Marissa Berg encouraged Council Members to review the testimony on the General Court of New Hampshire for further clarification. <https://gc.nh.gov/>
- Marissa Berg clarified there is no funding associated with the work of the council other than administrative functions.

New Member Application and Onboarding Process

Council Administrator gave an update on the steps to council members for the five at-large seats. Motion: Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre made a motion to accept this form with the following amendments (All caps removed). Amy Frechette seconded the motion.

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Deirdre Dunn Tierney (Alternate – TBD)	(c) The commissioner of the department of health and human services, or designee.	Not Present
Amanda Merrill (Alternate: Iain Watt)	(d) The director of the division of public health services, department of health and human services, or designee	Not Present
Jessica Gorton (Alternate – TBD)	(e) The bureau chief of the bureau of developmental services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Not Present
Carolyn Lewis	(f) The bureau chief of the bureau of behavioral health, department of health and human services, or designee.	Yes
Andrew Houtenville (Alternate – Lesley Blecharczyk)	(g) The director of the Institute on Disability, University of New Hampshire, or designee.	Abstain
Jane Bergeron-Beaulieu (Alternate- Shelly Fagen)	(h) A special education director, appointed by the New Hampshire Association of Special Education Administrators, Inc	Yes
VACANT	(i) The president of the New Hampshire Medical Society, or designee.	VACANT
Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre (Alternate – TBD)	(j) A representative of the New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council, appointed by the council.	Yes
Amy Frechette	(k) An individual who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the governor.	Yes
VACANT	(l) A family member of a person who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the governor.	VACANT

Marissa Berg (Alternate – TBD)	(m) A representative of the Community Support Network, Inc., appointed by such organization	Yes
Michelle Ronayne Ronayne (Alternate: Jena Motolla)	(n) A representative of the New Hampshire Psychological Association, appointed by the association.	Not Present
Vernon Clough (Alternate – TBD)	(o) The director of the office of Medicaid business and policy, department of health and human services, or designee.	Yes
1. VACANT	(p) Up to 5 additional members, nominated by the council and appointed by the governor.	6. VACANT
2. VACANT		7. VACANT
3. VACANT		8. VACANT
4. VACANT		9. VACANT
5. VACANT		10. VACANT
Gina Cannon	(q) A person who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the council	Yes
Nancy A. Wells (Alternate: Paula MacKinnon)	(r) A representative of the New Hampshire Nurses' Association, appointed by the association	Not Present
Kathryn Greenslade (Alternate: TBD)	(s) A licensed speech-language pathologist, appointed by the New Hampshire Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Inc	Not Present

Motion approved.

Establishing a Membership Committee

- Membership Meeting must be held hybrid with quorum in person.
- Volunteers: Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Shelly Fagen, Lesley Blecharczyk, Amy Frechette, Kathryn Greenslade, Gina Gannon

Review of November Listening Sessions

- Marissa Berg, Chair, facilitated a discussion regarding the community listening sessions held by the council in November of 2024.

Feedback from November 2024 Listening Sessions

**Virtual Listening Sessions were held via Zoom on
November 14th at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, November 16th at 10:00 a.m.**

Attendees: Family Members, Individuals, professionals (15 in total)

Topic Area/Area of Concern	Feedback/comments/questions
Autism Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why did it disband? You left us hanging with no explanation• At-Large Seats should be made up of only parents and individuals• Autism council should focus on IDD and Mental Health• Neurodiversity affirming place• Have a mental health provider on as a council seat.• Provide a space for providers to collaborate• Provide education for parents and individuals• Keep up to date on alternative practices• Facilitate peer support groups• Adult diagnosis assistance and support• Financial support with assessments• Mainstream mental health providers are not equipped to assist in dual diagnosis of IDD and Mental Health.• The Autism Council needs more parents and individuals on the council.• The Autism Council should ensure continuity and consistency throughout the state of services and supports.• Autism council needs to advocate for individuals and families.
Budget and financial concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I don't understand how much money is in my budget or how to use it (adult individual)• Low-income families have no supports or funding available to them. Especially concerning in adulthood.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of funding for parents who make too much for Medicaid: Children still need services and therapies, but they are expensive and families can not always afford them.
Adult Services/Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources and supports are lacking after high school. • I feel forgotten about. I feel lost and demoralized and a 5th class citizen. (adult individual) • Parents need assistance in handling the role of parent and caregiver once a child transitions from high school. • Disconnect between services available and actual access to services. • There should be a menu of services available to everyone. • It should not matter where you live and the quality of services you have access to. • Uniformity from all area agencies and the services provided and the level of supports. • The current service delivery system and department process is not equitable. • I feel my son and our family have fallen off a cliff after transition to adult services • There is nothing out there for adults. We are creating it for ourselves. • Lack of relationships and friendships is concerning for adults. • Isolation and loneliness and mental health is a concern. • Socialization once out of high school is an issue. I am lonely and have no way to meet people or make friends.
Education/Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals at all levels need more training. • Education of the public is needed • What we understand about Autism has grown and changed. Public has not kept up. So many archaic views and misconceptions still around. • Offer consistent professional development for doctors, social workers, educators and other professionals. • Offer trainings to adults on social skills, relationships and intimacy • BCBA • Lack of mandates for paraprofessionals is concerning. Anyone can be hired to work with our children. • More education and training for paraprofessionals is needed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is failing our children ○ Council needs to hear from experts in the education fields ○ Students rights are violated. IEP's are not followed. ○ Schools are short staffed and underfunded. ○ AC should collaborate with NH Family Voices and PIC on trainings for families, educators, medical professionals. ○ Paraprofessionals should be well trained and educated. ○ Schools should have medical support for children of high-risk medical needs.
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help employers to understand the positive aspects of employing people who experience autism. • Train employers in how to support their employees. • Support therapists who are neurodiverse, brain difference, sensory issues at community mental health centers.
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is offered in other states? How can we replicate? • A "state of the state" of services for people with autism should be assessed. • Do not take granted that the need for advocacy is never over. In many ways we are starting from scratch for the rights of people with disabilities. (adult individual) • Self-advocacy is daunting and overwhelming. The constant need to fight for my rights is exhausting. (adult individual) • People with autism should not be the only ones speaking up.
Medical/Medicaid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents need support in navigating Medicaid. Too challenging to get approval for what my child needs. • New Hampshire is lacking in sufficient medical professionals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complex Care pediatricians needed. ○ Families have to travel to Boston for medical care. ○ We need to partner with mental health providers and bring them to NH. ○ We do not want to have to travel out of state for care but we have no choice. ○ We need wrap around care in New Hampshire. • Neuro-behavioral developmental disorder

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-morbidity concerns and co-occurring health issues: 30% of people with autism have epilepsy – where is the awareness and training. • We do not qualify for Medicaid, but we need supports. What is the route to take if this happens? Where do you turn if you don't qualify? • Trauma Informed Care • Health Insurance is inconsistent: Health disparities is a public health problem. • NH needs professionals and well-educated providers. |
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Written Feedback from a parent:

My apologies for joining the listening session late this evening. I am a mother of a 22yo son whom people would consider is high functioning. He can drive, is working full-time and finishing up his undergrad degree online at SNHU. He has never received services from an area agency because we did not think he would qualify, but he did have an IEP & some services when he was in the public school system and we paid for him to do OT when he was young. He has been a strong advocate for himself, disclosing to his employers that he is on the spectrum and making requests for accommodations at work as well as at SNHU. He is not on any public assistance, as he is working & has his own health insurance.

I feel like someone like my son could fall between the cracks if we weren't there to support him. He is someone who could use some help fostering friendships - he is social and would like to have a good friend network, but struggles to maintain those relationships because of his focus on particular interests, among other reasons. I also worry about housing options for him as he gets older. He hopes to move out once he graduates school, but we worry about how he will handle the dynamics of having roommates and being able to manage "adulting" skills such as maintaining a clean home, etc. If he is unsuccessful, we have thought about having an ADU for him to live in, but what happens when we are no longer around?

We are very thankful that our son has been as successful as he's been, yet there are still quirks to him that we can see may make life challenging as an adult. I look forward to your renewed engagement with the ASD community, and I hope to learn more or help if I can.

Planning for April Meeting

Motion: Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre made a motion to change the meeting date to April 18, 2025, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. due to conflict with school vacation. Gina Cannon seconded the motion.

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VACANT	(a)The governor, or designee.	VACANT
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Amanda Merrill (Alternate: Iain Watt)	(d) The director of the division of public health services, department of health and human services, or designee	Not Present
Jessica Gorton (Alternate – TBD)	(e) The bureau chief of the bureau of developmental services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Not Present
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3. VACANT		13. VACANT	
4. VACANT		14. VACANT	
5. VACANT		15. VACANT	
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Kathryn Greenslade (Alternate: TBD)	(s) A licensed speech-language pathologist, appointed by the New Hampshire Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Inc	Not Present	

Motion Passes

Vote on Interim Appointment to the New Hampshire Developmental Services Quality Council

Motion: Isadora made a motion to nominate Gina Cannon to serve as interim appointment on the New Hampshire Developmental Services Quality Council. Shelly Fagan seconded the motion. Gina Cannon accepted the interim nomination.

Name	Organization/Representing	VOTE:
VACANT	(a)The governor, or designee.	VACANT
Kate Scheer (Alternate – TBD)	(b)The commissioner of the department of education, or designee.	Yes
Deirdre Dunn Tierney (Alternate – TBD)	(c) The commissioner of the department of health and human services, or designee.	Not Present
Amanda Merrill (Alternate: Iain Watt)	(d) The director of the division of public health services, department of health and human services, or designee	Not Present

Jessica Gorton (Alternate – TBD)	(e) The bureau chief of the bureau of developmental services, department of health and human services, or designee.	Not Present	
Carolyn Lewis	(f) The bureau chief of the bureau of behavioral health, department of health and human services, or designee.	Yes	
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1. VACANT	(p) Up to 5 additional members, nominated by the council and appointed by the governor.	16. VACANT	
2. VACANT		17. VACANT	
3. VACANT		18. VACANT	
4. VACANT		19. VACANT	
5. VACANT		20. VACANT	

Gina Cannon	(q) A person who has an AUTISM spectrum disorder, appointed by the council	Abstain	
Nancy A. Wells (Alternate: Paula MacKinnon)	(r) A representative of the New Hampshire Nurses' Association, appointed by the association	Not Present	
Kathryn Greenslade (Alternate: TBD)	(s) A licensed speech-language pathologist, appointed by the New Hampshire Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Inc	Not Present	
Public Comment			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Louis Esposito of ABLE NH expressed his support for the Autism Council and is opposed to the new amendment repealing the Autism Council. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest a needs assessment for Autism in New Hampshire. 			
April Meeting Agenda Ideas			
Resources and Training: Gina Cannon Autism Council Bylaws Special Education Resources Update on HB 634			
Meeting Adjourned at 02:05 p.m.			
Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre made a motion to adjourn, and Gina Cannon seconded the motion. Meeting notes respectfully submitted by: Carrie Duran, Quality Council Administrator, nhcasqc@gmail.com			