



NHCASD Meeting Minutes February 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 January Meeting Minutes (Vote)

Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair

HB 1316 & Legislative Update

Update on Medicaid

Financial Update

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
- ES – 7/2025
- NK – 7/2025
- KE – 9/2025
- AR – 9/2025
- JB – Direct application to Gov 11/2025
- DP – Direct application to Gov 2025

Member updates/announcements



**Members Attendance**

<b>Position/Agency/ Organization</b>	<b>Representative</b>	<b>Meeting Status</b>
(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: Melissa Hardy	Present In-Person
(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	
(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.	<b>VACANT</b>	
(m) A representative of the Community Support Network, Inc., appointed by such organization.	Marissa Berg	Present In-Person
	Alternate: <b>TBD</b>	
(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	Present In-Person
	Alternate: <b>TBD</b>	
(p) Up to 5 additional members, nominated by the council and appointed by the governor	<b>VACANT</b>	
(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: <b>TBD</b>	

**Guest**

Nichollette King, Amy Rheaume, Karen Blake, Shannon Bourchar & Kelly Ehrhart.

**Quorum Confirmation and Attendance**

Shanon Smith conducted roll call to confirm attendance and establish quorum. The council confirmed that quorum requirements were met, with 10 members total and 8 required for quorum. A total of 9 members were present in person & 1 were remote.



### **Public Comments and/or Announcements**

Shannon Bouchard - I wanted to understand the council's rationale for continuing to meet, amend bylaws, and exercise its authority while repeal legislation is actively pending.

- We are currently operating under the existing legislation. There is nothing in place that prevents us, or relieves us of our authority and duty, to continue meeting and conducting business under the current legal framework. Until any repeal legislation is formally enacted, we remain obligated to fulfill our responsibilities as set out in the law.

Shannon Bouchard -asked for clarification on what statutory authority is the council relying to continue operating and amending its governing framework while its continued existence is under active legislative consideration?

- The council is relying on the authority granted under **RSA 171-A**, which remains in full force and effect unless and until it is amended or repealed through the legislative process. Pending legislation does not suspend or invalidate the current statute. Therefore, the council continues to act pursuant to its existing statutory authority until any change in law is formally adopted and takes effect.

Shannon Bouchard – asked, were in 171-A1 statute specifically is that that the council can continue to meet and conduct business while being considered for repeal

- Chapter 33

Shannon Bouchard – asked, is today's comment and answers going to be in public record?

- Yes, we will record that.

### **Acceptance of the January Meeting Minutes (vote)**

Amanda moved to approve January minutes as written. Lesley second.

- ✓ Motioned passed, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Amanda Merrill, Lesley Blecharezyk, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Marissa Berg, Vernon Clough, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.

Abstained: Melissa Hardy & Amy Frechette

### **Nomination for Chair and Vice Chair**

Marissa Berg & Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre

As we've shared previously, both Isadora and I are aligned in our thinking that it would be ideal for the Chair and Vice Chair of this council to be individuals with autism or family members of someone with autism. We are continuing to seek anyone who may be interested in serving in either role.



We have also discussed the possibility of a co-chair model. As reflected in the proposed bylaws, language has been added that would allow for a shared leadership arrangement if the council agrees. This could be especially helpful for someone who may want or need additional support in fulfilling the responsibilities of the role. A list of the Chair and Vice Chair responsibilities is included in the bylaws for reference. While these are still proposed bylaws and subject to discussion later today, we encourage members to consider whether they may be interested.

Question:

As a non-voting member, am I permitted to make nominations?

- At this time, nominations must come from council members. Additionally, to be nominated for Chair or Vice Chair, the individual must first be a confirmed council member.

As a council, are we primarily advocating for people with autism, and how does lived experience factor into leadership roles within the council?

- The intent of this council has always been to ensure that individuals with lived experience, including people with autism and their family members, serve in leadership roles. Their perspectives are essential in shaping the council's work and guiding recommendations and activities.
- This council holds a unique position because it allows individuals with lived experience and their families to communicate directly with professionals in the field. They can share their insights and experiences without having to navigate multiple layers of communication. That direct access strengthens collaboration and ensures that real-world experiences inform decision-making.
- In the past, leadership may have primarily consisted of parents. However, the goal now is to support both individuals with autism and family members in serving in leadership positions. The focus is on ensuring that those with lived experience help guide the council's work, regardless of whether they are a person with autism or a family member.

### **HB 1316 & Legislative Update**

Marissa Berg

#### **House Bill 1316- Relative to the Collection and Disclosure of Autism Related Data**

- The Council reviewed the status of House Bill 1316, which proposes restricting the collection and dissemination of autism-related data by state agencies.
- It was reported that during the committee meeting held on the 18th, the majority voted the bill "Inexpedient to Legislate" (ITL), while a minority report recommended that the bill ought to pass. As a result of the majority ITL recommendation, the bill remains in a holding status and has not been approved to move forward.
- The Council clarified that an "Inexpedient to Legislate" recommendation indicates that no changes to current law will occur at this time. Therefore, existing practices regarding the collection of autism-related data by state agencies remain unchanged.



- The Council revisited a prior discussion regarding the potential invitation of one of the bill's prime sponsors, Representative Keith Howard, to attend a future meeting to provide additional context regarding the bill's intent and underlying rationale. It was noted that Representative Howard had not been scheduled to attend the present meeting.
- Members discussed whether it would be beneficial to invite the sponsor to present information concerning the bill's origins, its intended purpose, and any broader policy considerations related to data privacy and the protection of individuals with autism. Consideration was also given to whether such a discussion would be warranted given the bill's current ITL status, particularly if the Council does not intend to pursue similar legislation in the future.
- Following discussion, the Council agreed to table further action on this matter at this time and to prioritize other pressing issues affecting individuals with autism and their families.  
<https://legiscan.com/NH/bill/HB1316/2026>

#### **House Bill 1337 – Repealing the New Hampshire Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders**

- The Council received an update regarding House Bill 1337, which proposes the repeal of the New Hampshire Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- The public hearing on HB 1337 was held earlier this week on Wednesday morning. The hearing was recorded and is available publicly via YouTube. A link to the recording will be distributed to Council members for reference.
- The Council expressed appreciation to members and prospective members who provided testimony at the hearing.  
<https://legiscan.com/NH/text/HB1337/id/3286985>  
<https://www.youtube.com/live/lhfNq6N2-C0?si=65xhkKBMbhdAOvQH>

#### **Update on Medicaid**

Vernon Clough

Vernon serves as the administrator for Medicaid medical services. There are several upcoming changes and processes underway.

One major initiative is the Rural Health Transformation effort funded through the World Health Fund. The state received approximately \$204 million. These funds are not intended to directly pay for services such as doctor salaries or appointment reimbursements. Instead, the money is meant to build infrastructure, to make care delivery more efficient, sustainable, and accessible across the state, especially in rural areas. The goal is long-term system improvement rather than direct service funding.

Looking ahead, there are also policy changes coming at the federal level. A work requirement will be mandated federally, and New Hampshire previously had a state-level work requirement



that was briefly implemented several years ago. The new federal requirement will impact how Medicaid eligibility redeterminations are handled.

Currently, redeterminations are typically done once per year. Under the new requirements, individuals in the Medicaid expansion population may need to complete redeterminations every six months and demonstrate that they are working or meeting community engagement requirements. There will be exemptions, such as for individuals who are medically frail, but the exact criteria are still being finalized. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has until June 1 to issue final guidance to states. Once that guidance is received, the state will be able to provide more specific projections and implementation details.

The work requirement rules are expected to take effect January 1, 2027.

As currently understood, if someone completes a redetermination shortly before the effective date, for example, in November, they would not immediately need to complete another in December. Instead, their next redetermination would likely occur six months later. However, these details depend on final federal guidance.

There are still open questions about how the work requirements will apply to individuals with developmental disabilities or those receiving Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver services. Those determinations have not yet been finalized.

Even individuals who qualify for an exemption may still need to complete redeterminations every six months to verify continued eligibility, including confirmation of medical frailty status. For non-expansion Medicaid populations, it is not yet confirmed whether redeterminations will remain annual.

The expansion population — often referred to in New Hampshire as Granite Advantage, includes individuals whose income is above the traditional Medicaid poverty level cutoff but who qualify under expansion rules. This group is distinct from individuals who purchase coverage through the federal marketplace. If someone applies through the marketplace and qualifies for Medicaid, they are enrolled in Medicaid rather than marketplace coverage.

Most adults receiving HCBS waiver services are eligible for traditional Medicaid, not Granite Advantage.

Another anticipated change involves retroactive coverage. Currently, applicants can request Medicaid coverage going back 90 days. Under the new rules, retroactive coverage will likely be reduced:



- For Granite Advantage members, retroactive coverage may be limited to one month.
- For other Medicaid populations, it may be reduced to two months.

This change would take effect after January 1, meaning three-month retroactive coverage would no longer be available.

There are also concerns about eligibility processing capacity. If individuals lose coverage due to missed recertification deadlines or system issues, there is worry about whether redeterminations and reinstatements can be processed quickly — especially with anticipated increases in workload and potential staffing limitations. Delays could create serious consequences for individuals who rely on Medicaid for housing stability, long-term services, and essential supports. Even a short lapse in coverage can create crisis-level situations for families and providers.

Currently, managed care organizations assist with outreach, including phone calls, mailings, texts, and emails, to remind individuals when redeterminations are due. The state has previously managed increased workloads, such as when ex parte renewal processes changed, but stakeholders remain concerned about the potential scale of upcoming changes.

There is significant anxiety within the provider and disability communities about possible coverage disruptions. Service providers worry about delayed payments, retroactive coverage limitations, and the risk of individuals losing essential supports.

Once CMS releases final guidance in June, the state expects to provide clearer information. Stakeholders have suggested revisiting the topic in July to review finalized federal requirements and discuss how the state plans to implement them, as well as what information should be shared with affected individuals and families.

In the meantime, families and individuals with lived experience are encouraged to share concerns, questions, and eligibility challenges so those issues can be documented and addressed in future discussions.

### **Council Comments**

- My son is 20 now. When he turned 18, we applied for Medicaid, and it took six months to get approved. I had to repeatedly call, wait on hold for long periods, and eventually contact the Ombudsman just to move the process forward. If I hadn't been able to advocate for him so persistently, I don't know what would have happened. During that time, we went six months without in-home support waiver funding. Thankfully, he lives at home and I can advocate for him, but not every family is in that position.

When Medicaid is delayed or shut off, it's not just about missing a doctor's appointment. Services, staffing, housing stability it's all connected. Even short gaps can create real crises. I'm very concerned about how these upcoming changes will affect families who can't advocate the way I did.

- Our daughter's redetermination was scheduled for January, but we received the first notice in November. We immediately completed and submitted everything. In December, we received a second packet, so I called to confirm they had our paperwork, and they did. The second mailing had just crossed in the mail. Then the managed care company called saying we needed to complete the redetermination. I explained we already had and confirmed it was received. Even so, it took three months for the paperwork we submitted in early November to be processed. We just got confirmation last week that it was approved and she remains eligible. If it's already taking three months to process a standard annual redetermination, before a six-month requirement even begins, there are real concerns about timeliness. We tried to be proactive by submitting everything early, and it still took months. That's why families are worried.

Melissa Hardy suggests reaching out to Tina Cabana from the Bureau of Family Assistance to come to speak to the council, specifically about processing timelines and wait times.

### **Financial Update**

Deirdre - I was mainly looking for an update on expenditures. Specifically, has this group been reviewing expenses and invoicing? Where are we in terms of reimbursement through the contract for administrative support?

I know that with some of our other councils, reviewing the budget is a standing agenda item. I'm also wondering whether invoices have been submitted, whether Shannon is being paid appropriately, and how that entire process is working.

- As of now, everything is managed through our fiscal agent, Community Crossroads. There haven't been any concerns raised. The most recent budget update I have is year-to-date through December 31, 2025. At that point, we had used 52.46% of our total budget.
- Salary and wages are slightly higher than anticipated, which indicates that Shannon has been working more hours than originally projected to meet the needs of the council. We may eventually reach a point where we'll need to rely more on council members to help with certain tasks. Overall, though, we are at 52.46% of the total budget as of December 31, 2025.
- Regarding whether the higher salary costs were due to onboarding, that could certainly be part of it, as onboarding a new position often requires additional time. To clarify, this



budget reflects only the total for the Autism Council; it does not include the Quality Council.

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

Jessica Gorton and Deirdre Dunn Tierney and others

Jessica Gorton - Aside from the ongoing conversations regarding Medicaid and related legislation, there are no significant additional updates to share at this time.

- The Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver: the public comment period ended on February 11. Our next step is to compile all public comments and incorporate them into the waiver document for full transparency before submitting it to CMS. This will allow us to begin the federal review process well ahead of the renewal deadline. The current waiver expires on August 31, 2026, and our goal is to secure approval before September 1, 2026 for the upcoming DD waiver.
- The ABD (Acquired Brain Disorder) Waiver. Its public comment period will begin relatively soon, as its renewal date is November 1, 2026, so these two processes follow closely on one another. As with the DD waiver, we will create a dedicated webpage and a comparison chart to help stakeholders easily identify proposed changes. Later in the process, similar to our rules process, we will publish a summary of public feedback along with explanations of whether changes were made based on that feedback and why certain decisions were made.
  - 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>.
- Also to highlight a couple of resources that may be helpful. Some council members may already be aware, but there are discounted memberships available through Walmart+ and Amazon Prime. According to their websites, individuals who receive Medicaid benefits may qualify for up to 50% off membership costs. More details are included in our weekly update. If this could benefit the families or individuals you work with, please consider sharing it broadly, including in parent or family support groups.
- The New Hampshire State Police Contact Notification Program. This is a voluntary program designed to assist individuals whose disabilities may affect communication during interactions with law enforcement. Participants can choose to share information in advance to help facilitate more effective communication during encounters. Details are also included in our weekly update for anyone interested in learning more or sharing the resource with families and community members.
  - [Contact Person Notification Program | NH State Police](#)



- Otherwise, similar to last month, much of our work has focused on backend operations, including IT system development, implementing enhancements that have been in progress, and managing day-to-day operations.
- The contact notification information will be included in the Blue Envelope Program, with space provided for individuals to list a support person if they choose.
- We've checked with the DMV on its status. Due to registration backlogs, rollout was delayed, but now that those issues have largely been resolved, it is back on their radar. The program is reportedly in the final stages of legal approval before launch.

### **Annual Report Discussion**

At the last meeting, there were a few additional edits and comments that needed to be addressed before we could vote on the annual report. I made those revisions the same day and sent the updated version back to Shannon. That revised report was then distributed to everyone for review and approval. I did not receive any further feedback, so my understanding is that we are ready to move forward with a vote to approve the annual report.

Isadora moved to approve the Annual Report. Amanda second.

- ✓ Motioned passed, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Amanda Merrill, Lesley Blecharezyk, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Marissa Berg, Vernon Clough, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.
- Abstained: Melissa Hardy

### **Bylaws Committee**

The group previously met to review the Bylaws, and a question was raised last month about adding language to allow for a Co-Chair. That language has since been added. This was the only change made to the draft. The revised draft bylaws were shared with the group in advance of the meeting

Gina moved to approve the Bylaws. Isadora second.

- ✓ Motioned passed, all in favor: Deirdre Dunn, Amanda Merrill, Lesley Blecharezyk, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Amy Frechette, Marissa Berg, Vernon Clough, Gina Cannon & Kathryn Greenslade.
- Abstained: Melissa Hardy

### **Membership Committee Update**

Isadora Rodrigues-Legendre

Additional clarification was received from the Governor's Office regarding the information required to move appointments forward. While it was previously understood that necessary information would be pulled directly from the portal, we have now been informed that the administrator must also send a direct email to the staff member overseeing appointments



outlining the specific details for each nominee. That information was shared with Shanon to ensure the appointments.

- Shanon reported that she submitted the required email Sunday or Monday evening and received an automatic reply indicating the staff member was on vacation. She plans to follow up again this coming week.
- Special thanks were extended to Isadora for identifying this additional step in the process.
- There are currently six individuals, listed by initials, who are awaiting appointment. Appreciation was expressed for their patience, continued engagement, and willingness to remain involved.

### **Member updates/announcements**

Gina Cannon- As a liaison to the Quality Council

- Provide a brief update. Our meeting this month was cancelled because several members needed to testify before the legislature. However, the Quality Council is scheduled to meet next month for strategic planning. They'll be setting priorities for the next three to five years, barring any major disruptions.
- In addition, the Quality Council has formed a committee to examine systemic issues related to the incidents that occurred. The focus is not on reinvestigating the specific incidents themselves, but rather on looking at the broader system: who is responsible for what, where the gaps exist, and where processes may be breaking down. The goal is to gather input from various stakeholders and ultimately develop recommendations to strengthen the system.
- While we don't yet know what those recommendations will look like, the hope is to improve responsiveness, effectiveness, and possibly proactive safeguards so that similar situations are far less likely to occur in the future.

Related to that, many council members attended the hearing for Senate Bill 670. The bill addresses several areas, including establishing a Developmental Services Oversight Commission, updating membership and duties related to the Incapacitated and Vulnerable Adult Fatality Review Committee, modifying reporting requirements regarding the death of a child in residential care, and changes to the registry of founded reports of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Given that this council works directly with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, many felt it was important to attend and advocate alongside people with disabilities. This is legislation we will continue to monitor closely because of its direct connection to quality outcomes and service delivery.

[NH SB670 | 2026 | Regular Session | LegiScan](#)



Kathryn Greenslade – University of New Hampshire’s Neurodiversity Task Force

- Amy, Scott, and I have been serving for the past several years on the University of New Hampshire’s Neurodiversity Task Force. I’m excited to share that the Neurodiversity Center at University of New Hampshire has officially soft-launched and now has a website. If you search “Neurodiversity UNH,” you’ll find it. The site currently outlines our mission, goals, and objectives, and we’re beginning the process of building out additional resources.
- Our goal is to develop supports for students across the neurodiversity spectrum — including prospective students, current students, families, and faculty. As many of you know, building out web content takes time, particularly working through university IT processes, but we’re making steady progress.
- The task force includes a range of campus stakeholders, including professional services staff, academic coaching and advising representatives, faculty members, and others who are committed to advancing this work. We are also in the process of rebuilding and expanding membership.

Amy Frechette – Neurodiversity Center at the University of New Hampshire

- Thinks it’s going to be a really exciting year for the Neurodiversity Center at the University of New Hampshire. We haven’t had a formal “grand launch” yet with promotional materials and campus-wide visibility, things like water bottles, T-shirts, and other outreach items, but that will come as we continue building momentum.
- This month, UNH is also rolling out updated training related to Universal Design for Learning (UDL). There have been conversations about instructional platforms — for example, Brightspace replacing Blackboard — and faculty are receiving training around those transitions as well. I think having the Neurodiversity Center in place will really complement that work.
- Ideally, the Center can serve as a resource if departments want someone to come speak about neurodiversity, Universal Design for Learning, or practical strategies and tools to support students. It could also provide sessions for students themselves — for example, “Tips and Tricks for Thriving in College as a Neurodivergent Student.”
- This task force has been working on these efforts for about three years now, so it’s exciting to finally see it taking shape. I’m really looking forward to what the next several months will bring

**Resource Sub-Committee**



- The Resource Subcommittee meeting was canceled two weeks ago. One of the council's identified goals is to gather and organize resources for the website to help families navigate various challenges. I would like to be involved in that effort.
- Although the meeting was canceled, participation is welcome. Subcommittees may include both council members and members of the public, and meetings are open, including virtual attendance options.
- Families frequently ask, "What does the Autism Council actually do for me?" In light of prior discussions, such as transition planning at age 14 and preparing for adulthood, is there any reason we cannot post resources as we identify them, rather than waiting? Providing timely resources would allow us to offer families something concrete.
- There does not appear to be a barrier to adding resources as they become available. However, forming a subcommittee would allow for a light review process to help ensure information posted is accurate and up to date, since some previously helpful resources may no longer be current.
- A possible approach would be for resources to be reviewed by the subcommittee first and then recommended to the full council for approval. Meeting frequency should also be considered, particularly at the outset when there may be a larger volume of materials to review, to ensure a timely turnaround for families.
- A review of the current website content is needed. Are links included for established organizations such as Family Voices, ABLE NH, and Disability Rights Center of New Hampshire, as well as other partner organizations?
- While adding links to well-established organizations is appropriate, the website should include a standard disclaimer noting that, although we strive to provide accurate and helpful information, we are not responsible for content on external websites.

### **Meeting Adjourn**

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

Meeting adjourned at 2:02PM