

Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council Meeting Minutes November 4, 2021

Council Member Attendees: Hugh Kelly, Kristen Aller, Mike Vratsinas, Alecia Balduf, Amber Gale, Al Fagerlund, Jean Willard, Julie Bergeson, Judy Warth, Mark Smith, Brady Werger, Rob Roozeboom, Kitty Hedderich, Robert Fisher, Amber Gale, Roxanne Cogil, Mark Schneider, Jason Goulden, Brittney Funston, Paula Motsinger

Council Staff: Brooke Lovelace, Bill Kallestad, and Lindsay Hommer

Council Members Absent: Tiffiny Poage, Colin Priest, Carol Cross, Scott Lyon, Steve Steveson

Members of the Public: Jim Pender Iowa Department of Public Health, Morgan Casey Iowa Department of Aging, John McCalley, Amerigroup

Call to Order:

Council Chair Fagerlund called the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) meeting to order on November 4, 2021, at 10:32 AM. A quorum was established.

Welcome and Introductions:

All meeting attendees introduced themselves.

Agenda Item/Approval of Minutes and Agenda:

Fisher motioned to approve the minutes and agenda, Aller seconded. Motion passed.

Executive Committee report:

Actions and Recommendations since September Meeting: Fagerlund stated that the next meetings in January and March will be the choice of in-person or virtually. Fagerlund stated he would like everyone to be vaccinated that attends but understands this is not a requirement and there may be reasons why some members are not getting vaccinated.

Budget Review and Possible Projects: Lovelace reviewed the final 2021 budget with the Council and the new yearly spending and obligation charts. Fagerlund stated he liked the charts. Lovelace stated there may be approximately \$40,000 left from 2020 budget that would need to be spent by 2022. We will have a clearer picture of what is remaining when the last of invoices come in.

Workforce Crisis: Lovelace stated that support professionals and caregivers are scarce and asked if the DD Council would want to do a campaign to encourage direct care workers as a career. We do not have a proposal or funding at this time, but Lovelace asked for discussion about this. Fagerlund suggested

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that council members research this topic and bring forth ideas at a later date. Aller suggested we team up with The Arc of Iowa and split the cost of this project. Motsinger suggested we look into partnering with Department of Education to get into schools and talk to students who may potentially get into the field of direct care workers

State Plan Review: Fagerlund stated the workplan will be presented at every meeting with updates. Lovelace wanted to mention that federal approval of the plan has not been made yet, but we are working on goals in this plan already. Lovelace asked for all members to commit to 1 or 2 objectives or key activities that each member can help with. For example, be a member of a committee or host community conversations. By January, Lovelace would like all members to let us know what each member will be helping with. Highlighted portions of the Workplan indicate what the Council staff need assistance with currently. Lovelace would like success story videos or stories about people advocating for themselves sent to her. Cogil stated that Tyler did advocacy pertaining to getting autism on driver's licenses. Aller volunteered to do a video. Lovelace stated that we are weak on our Targeted Disparity goal. The Objective with this goal is to host community conversations in rural areas to let people know about the DD Council and find out what is needed for the underserved and underrepresented populations in rural areas. The council would like assistance addressing this goal. Roozeboom, Werger, and Cogil volunteered to help with this.

State Agency Representatives: Lovelace said that all state agency representatives will be asked to present one time in the next year starting at the January 13, 2022, meeting. They are being asked to present an overview/update about the state agency they represent. The presentation should be about 15 minutes long, state what their agency does, state how what their organization does fits in with what work the council does, and any updates. Four volunteers are needed for the January 13, 2022, meeting to present. Volunteers are: Warth, Willard, Motsinger, Bergeson. Aller asked for handouts to be provided from each state agency representative.

Department of Transportation Projects: Kristin Haar presented

Kristin Haar, Kristin.haar@iowadot.us, 515-233-7875

<https://iowadot.gov/transit/iowa-Transit-services/Transit-agency-maps-and-listings>

Review of the Projects, Lessons Learned, and Future Projects: \$100,000 was provided by the DD Council to address transportation barriers for persons with disabilities with transportation. Five grants were issued to regional transportation authorities The five projects were 75% funded by the DD Council and, if needed to complete the projects, the Department of Transportation provided the remaining 25% of funding.

Ames transit Agency (CyRide), "Automatic Passenger Counter Technology Project" was awarded \$19,037 for passenger counter technology to be installed on four buses. Passengers are able to see real time capacity on all buses. This was part of bigger project for automated stop announcements. Survey responses were shared and were positive.

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Marshalltown Municipal Transit, “Pink Route” was awarded \$11,349. The Pink Route was created and used during the summer to transport children to recreational activities and to a day camp for persons with disabilities. 4,993 one-way rides were provided and 282 of these rides were given to persons with disabilities. Marshalltown Municipal Transit will continue this project every summer due to its success.

People Rides, “Healthy Accessibility Program” in Region 6 was awarded \$11,250. They used funds to provide rides to persons with disabilities to volunteer opportunities, recreational and entertainment outings, and long-distance medical appointments. They provided 1,902 one-way rides to people. The feedback provided by persons that utilized this program stated that this program was very uplifting for their mental health. This program was successful but if there is no funding provided, this project cannot continue.

Region 8 Regional Transit Authority (RTA), “ICF & HCBS Transportation” was awarded \$15,000. They used the funds to provide rides for persons with disabilities. 4,090 rides were provided to persons with disabilities. This project was a success. Region 8 is looking for grants to continue this project.

Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA), “Barriers to Transit Equity for People with Disabilities” in Region 11 was awarded \$36,869. This grant allowed HIRTA to contract with EasterSealsProject Action Consulting to conduct an Accessible Transportation Community Initiative for a seven-county region.

Groups were formed from volunteers and input was gathered to determine what the priorities were to improving transportation for persons with disabilities. Some of the objectives that were determined were: Expand affordable transportation options for long-distance trips, Create and implement an inclusive educational experience utilizing social media, printed materials, and website updates to attract new customers, Identify which modes of transportation are appropriate and sustainable in each community, Expand service hours, Assess which services can be expanded and which cannot based on current and future funding, Create marketing strategies to raise awareness, enhance customer experience, and increase ridership, Develop funding strategies to broaden access to transit services, Same-day services, Increase dispatch hours, and Decrease telephone hold times, Eliminate mobility barriers for underserved populations.

HIRTA will be designing marketing materials specific to people with disabilities. They will also have bilingual signage posted. HIRTA will be able to provide one on one travel assistance. They are also starting volunteer driver services.

In summary, 10,985 total rides were given and persons with disabilities comprised 6,274 of these rides. In the future if funding is available, a little more time for project planning would be helpful. The need exists for social and recreational trips to be available.

Fisher stated that he had spoken with a man from DOT who is working with the city of Adel. When Fisher went to Fareway, a car almost ran him over on highway 169 while crossing the street. Kristin Haar

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stated that she could move Fisher's concern along to Andy Loonan who may be able to assist Fisher with his concerns.

Warth stated the grants looked positive and exciting. Warth stated she understands that grants are short-lived and asked what needs to change from the DOT's perspective so that people can continue to benefit from these projects. Kristin Haar stated that the DOT typically does pilot projects with grants for two years and then after the two years, the ridership statistics, mileage statistics, etc. get rolled into their funding formula to be able to fund new services.

Werger stated that as an individual with a disability and living in Glenwood, Iowa where there is not a large public transit system, like there are in bigger cities, he has to rely on the Southwest Iowa Transit Authority (SWITA). Times when he needs rides, the public transit system is sometimes not available. He asked if there is a website or phone number that he can check to see when public transportation would be available. Kristin Haar stated she would provide SWITA's website and the DOT's website that both contain routes and run times. <https://iowadot.gov/transit/iowa-Transit-services/Transit-agency-maps-and-listings>

Cogil stated that the update was wonderful to see how the funds are being used in different ways. Cogil asked that the app that Ames is using, are there any paratransit agencies that are doing something similar either in the urban or rural areas so that people know when their ride would be arriving? Kristin Haar stated she was unsure, and this would be a great topic for a future presentation. She stated that she does know that HIRTA has the Amble app for people to make payments and schedule rides but is unsure if tracked ride arrival times. Cogil stated that people are not always near a window to see when their rides arrive, so this technology is very exciting. Kristin Haar stated she wrote notes about needing to survey the transit agencies about their apps and what their apps do. A future presentation would be great.

Fisher stated he rides the Met bus in Waterloo and wanted to know if he can call HIRTA for rides. Kristin Haar stated this would be fine. Fisher asked if HIRTA comes to your house. Kristin Haar stated they do.

Recruiting and Retention Projects with the Center for Disabilities and

Development: Caitlin Owens introduced the speakers, Chris Blake, Jolene Sorenson, Michelle Schmidt, and Cody Lewton presenting

Review of Projects, Lessons Learned, and Future Projects:

Chris Blake from Trivium Life Services stated the Innovation Grant was started with the grant funds that supported retaining and recruiting direct support professionals. We are in a severe shortage throughout the state of Iowa. They were able to train an internal Gallup certified CliftonStrengths coach that focused on the natural strengths of the employees and learned how to interact with them based on their strengths. They found that money was not the only answer to solve the issues. They have increased their pay for their employees by 20% and it did not make as much of an impact as they had hoped. They solidified their strengths-based culture at their company. Retaining employees will advance the mission and will benefit the clients.

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Jolene Sorenson from Systems Unlimited looked at personal time off (PTO) for part-time staff. The grant allowed them to try this for one year to see if it improves staff retention and retainment. PTO accrued based on the amount of time worked. 5.4% increase of new part-time employees due to this. Turnover rate from June 2021-November 2021 was 13.3%. Last year at the same time the turnover rate was 19% so it has decreased this year. There will be a staff survey sent out in December and more information will be available then.

Michelle Schmidt from Hills and Dales stated that they established a curriculum that allowed for staff to receive potential pay increases every time they had an evaluation over the next two years. Staff are evaluated every three months and with this grant, this goal was achieved. Another goal was to bring on 8 employees with 40 hours of intense training. This goal was also accomplished. They also wanted to get staff more training. They had Dr. Pomerance conduct a staff training called "Be Kind to Yourself" which promotes the work-life balance. They have enhanced their current application system to track employment applications and are automatically contacting prospective employees. They also started working with local colleges. So far, one college has stated that if a student works for Hills and Dales, the college will reduce the student's college costs.

Cody Lewton from Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI). (cody.lewton@lsiowa.org 515-249-7008) With grant funds partnered with DMACC for new staff to get CNA licenses. They are also having DMACC alert their student population about LSI. Partnered with Project 7 to find people via social media to get information out about host homes program. Application button was added to website and a mentor catalog was created. Females 25-34 was the biggest group to submit interest in the Host Home Program. They targeted nurses for the Host Home program. Met with Money Follows the Person (MFP) and Glenwood Resource Center and Woodward to find out what barriers exist and what can MFP do to assist.

Lovelace stated that with this grant, one of the most parts was to get two persons with disabilities transitioned out of Resource Centers by Sept 2022 and into the community. Werger stated as a former client of the Glenwood Resource Center and now living in the community, he wanted to say that other people can do that too. Werger asked that if any of the organizations related to this grant visit the Glenwood Resource Center, he would love to meet with them and share his story. He also participates in the Community Ambassador program with the University of Iowa and a lot of individuals in that group have lived experience residing in a resource center and could share their stories. Werger is looking for community services in the Waverly, Waterloo, Cedar Falls area and asked Cody Lewton what LSI has to offer for adults there. Cody Lewton stated there is respite and host homes services in that area. He said they can recruit and retain staff based on what Werger is looking for. Lovelace stated that Werger may be able to benefit from a Host Home.

Fisher asked Cody Lewton if he had spoken to his mother Marsha Fisher. Cody Lewton said he did not believe he had. Cody Lewton provided his email and phone number. Cody.lewton@lsiowa.org 515-249-7008

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Make Your Mark! (MYM!) Presentation: Emily Koss and Teri Freeman from Capture Management Solutions presented

Self-Advocacy Conference Evaluation: Attendees 215, 86 were persons with disabilities, 39 were family members, 55 were service providers, and 35 were “other.” There were 22 exhibitors and 1 sponsor. Revenue was \$4800. Cost of the conference was \$69,279.89. Koss reviewed survey and feedback results Overall, the conference was a success with great satisfaction results from surveys. A PowerPoint providing further detail can be found: <https://iowaddcouncil.org/documents/cms/docs/Make-Your-Mark--Conference---Follow-up-Presentation.pdf>

Further discussion will be had starting in February planning the MYM! conference for next year. Lovelace recommended that Capture Management see where everyone that attended the conference traveled from. A virtual option may not be an option in the future due to the cost. Cogil suggested the Council look into places that have a virtual option in their conference centers already set up. She stated that Unity Point Conference Center is one of these places.

Werger stated he was grateful to receive the Mia Peterson award at the conference. Werger stated the Glenwood newspaper ran an article about him and Lovelace asked that Werger provide her a copy of the article. Werger stated that everyone should start thinking about an advocate to nominate for next year.

Policy Updates:

Kallestad Will Share Information on Policy, Policy Committee Updates, Legislative Priorities for the 2022 Session, and Changes to infoNet:

Townhall grants were developed. Balduf hosted one of these in Mason City. They asked about transportation and lack of caregivers to legislators and state officials. At the town hall meeting, Balduf stated that she wanted more information provided about the ABLE accounts. She then gave examples of why this is important. Finally, Balduf gave a solution of examples of how they could get engaged. Four other grants have been given and there will be more than 50 people at the townhalls. Legislators will also be at these townhalls.

Legislators had 2 special sessions this fall. During these sessions they approved two bills. Legislative Redistricting map: The second Redistricting map was proposed and passed. This will be effective during the November 2022 elections, and it could change who your current elected official is. Workplace Vaccine Mandates: Requires an employer to waive the vaccine requirement for employees if the vaccine would cause them harm or conflicts with their religion.

Policy Committee: The committee will consist of 4-5 council members. They will meet virtually two times per month during the legislative session, January-April. The rest of year, the committee will convene one time per month. They will serve as a sounding board, an influencer, an advocate for the next year’s

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priorities, and attend capital chats. The busiest time of the year is January-May. Aller volunteered to assist with this but cannot attend the capitol chats on Fridays.

InfoNet: There will be some format changes to our product, the InfoNet. A reminder that the Information Network is how we share legislative news. In the past we have sent out a weekly hardcopy mailing. This year, we will send weekly updates by email, Facebook, and twitter. Also new this year, Amy and Bill will do a video every Monday recapping what happened legislatively the last week. Additionally, we will also be doing a more in-depth quarterly newsletter, this will be sent along with weekly updates via email. These will also be available on the website. A stakeholder meeting was held last week, we received a lot of good feedback on how people use our newsletters and capital chats, and the agencies in the meeting stated they use InfoNet for their legislative updates. A postcard will be sent to all to let them know of the changes about the quarterly newsletter and weekly updates.

Federal updates: There are a few bills we are following. Infrastructure bill that includes support services for persons with disabilities that could be on the house floor in the upcoming week. The Build Back Better Act includes cuts to HCBS services, and this could be troublesome, and could provide opportunity for needed advocacy. The Transformation of Competitive Integrated Employment Act is also an active bill. The continuing resolution holds up our appropriation of funding for the DD Council and the deadline is December 1.

Link on DD Council website: <https://iowaddcouncil.org/documents/cms/docs/Policy-Updates-Powerpoint.pdf>

Council Updates:

Lovelace stated that we will be updating our advocacy toolkit.

Gale asked, "As people outside of the council are contacting their legislators and sharing their experiences with caregiver shortages, would we also recommend they copy the DD council on those email communications/share that information with the council so we have more stories to rely on as well?" Lovelace said definitely.

Werger applied for position on President's Committee for Persons with IDD, has not heard anything. He understands that when Covid hit, the committee was paused, and a proposal has been put in to start the committee up again.

Bergeson stated that the Department of Aging has entered a partnership with Easter Seals pertaining to assistive technology. Encouraged everyone that could use this to get in contact with Easter Seals. Lovelace stated the grant application will be available on Facebook. The grant is \$750 per person.

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Public Comments:

None

Adjourn: Werger made a motion to adjourn, and Kelly seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:23 PM.

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