

December 6, 2023 Public Policy Committee Minutes

Public Policy Committee Members: Kevin Harris, Brady Werger, Caitlin Owens, Kristen Aller, George Thompson, Rob Roozeboom, Emma Bouza

Other Council Members: Matthew Conaway, Hugh Kelly, Roxanne Cogil, Eric Evans, Steve Steveson,

Council Staff: Brooke Lovelace, Carlyn Crowe, Lindsay Hommer

Public: Amy Campbell, Kevin McRae

Welcome

Harris and Crowe welcomed all attendees.

Committee Responsibilities:

Harris reviewed the bylaws that stated there shall be at least 4 members at-large and a chairperson. The chairperson of the DD Council will be ex-officio of the committee.

Harris reviewed the duties of the public policy committee. The committee will propose an annual public policy agenda and non-partisan activities corresponding to that agenda to the full council to vote on. Also, they will work with the Public Policy Manager to review and track current and proposed legislation, provide education to the legislature, and other duties assigned by the Executive Committee (EC).

Members will serve one-year terms but can be reappointed.

Harris emphasized that the public policy agenda can be used all year at state and federal levels. Thompson asked if there are other DD Council's from other states that we could track to see what issues they are addressing. Crowe responded that there is a national council on developmental disabilities and that it mostly tracks federal legislation and policy changes through its public policy committee. There was another group made up of public policy managers from different states that were meeting monthly to discuss state-level policy, but they have not met in a while. The national council on developmental disabilities will be sharing a PowerPoint tomorrow during a meeting and Crowe will share this with the Public Policy committee.

Public Policy Agenda

Crowe shared the public policy agenda for 2024. The agenda is printed and is the same size as last year.

There are three overarching goals of education, employment, and community living. Also, voting is mentioned as an issue. Under each of the three overarching goals, there are three specific issues. Crowe will be developing a policy brief on each of the nine specific issues.

There are personal stories that correspond with each section in the agenda.

Also included in the agenda is a section on Direct Support Professionals (DSPs.)

Council members are also listed this year. Thompson suggested putting ward/district on the council member page for each member.

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Outlook for Legislative Session/Prioritizing Priorities

Amy Campbell presented that the legislative session runs from January 8 through mid-April this year and there are deadlines every month regarding bills. Tax cuts is the big issue for the majority party, house, senate, and governor. Campbell believes the phase in for tax cuts may happen sooner than originally planned. The more funds that are used for tax cuts means the less that is going to be spent on other things. Waiver reform will also be a big cost this session. The shift in thinking from institutional to home and community-based thinking leads into the Department of Justice (DOJ) report. The State is waiting on the final consent decree from the DOJ which should come out around April 2024. To get the State into full compliance, it's estimated that it will cost \$200-\$500 million. Rates must be increased for community providers so people want to work for them. Funding these before mentioned items must all be state funds as the temporary federal funds that were supporting them during the pandemic (ARPA) are gone.

Campbell stated that there was a boards and commissions review that involves merging of professional licensing boards and getting rid of some work groups and advisory committees. This will be a big topic of discussion this session. The recommendation was to get rid of 111 boards and commissions. This may impact Iowans with disabilities. Aller asked if there is a place that lists what boards are going to be eliminated and merged. Campbell wrote about it in infoNET here and will mention again in January.

[Newsletter \(iowaddcouncil.org\)](https://iowaddcouncil.org)

Werger asked when people should go to the capitol this year to speak with their legislators. Campbell stated before mid-February would be best. Campbell stated also that advocacy while they are at home (going to legislative forums) will be key this year.

Campbell stated that Area Education Agency (AEAs) budgets may be zeroed out this year. AEAs provide a lot of services such as special education, library shared services, teacher support, teacher education, student mental health assessments, hearing tests, etc. Bouza asked if AEAs have funding besides state funding. Campbell stated they have federal funding and local property tax as funding. Harris asked how much of the funding was coming from state funding. Campbell stated she was not sure. Cogil asked for a list of the AEA consultants in the schools from Campbell. Cogil stated AEAs provide speech language therapy, behavior consultants, adaptive physical education consultants, vision specialists, orientation and mobility specialists, school nurse consultants, physical therapy consultants, and occupational therapy consultants. Campbell stated she believes the legislators don't know all that AE's do. Cogil stated that the AEA psychologists are very busy in the schools' assisting students with mental health issues. Bouza stated when funds are cut, it disproportionately affects rural schools and services suffer. Crowe stated we will put together a policy brief on it. Cogil stated that AEAs are critical for students transitioning out of high school. Thompson asked if there was an impact to AEAs due to the school vouchers. Crowe stated we don't know yet. Aller and Kelly stated they both used AEA services when they were school which were very helpful. Cogil stated that Autism Speaks and the DD Council should think about forming a coalition. Campbell stated AEAs are complicated so getting help from DD Council members will be critical in explaining why AEAs are needed.

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Campbell stated that employment is also a big issue this year and advocates need to ask their legislators what they are going to do to make it accessible for people with disabilities to join the workforce. Crowe stated policy briefs will be used to educate legislators and advocates about the issues. They will have barriers listed, suggested actions, and will include stories.

Kevin McRae, Werger's house supervisor, stated that he worked as a special education consultant for an AEA for 18 years and taught special education in the classroom for 13 years. Kevin McRae stated he would be willing to do a question-answer session about AEAs and do a presentation on how losing funding for AEAs is going to be very negatively impactful. Campbell thinks it's a great idea to have a learning session on AEAs.

Education and Advocacy Tactics

Policy and Issue Briefs: Working on

Issue Leadership: Think about ways that Council can be a resource not only for legislators but on trending issues for the public.

Training on Take Action Center: Planning on doing training on the Take Action Center.

Capitol Chats and Capitol Snapshots: If you have suggestions for how to improve contact Carlyn.

Other: Working on coalitions with partners and others.

Events in January

Virtual Open House: Thursday, January 4, 2024 @ 12 PM. We will have council members talk about a section of the public policy agenda. Aller volunteered to do a section.

Legislative Session Begins: Monday, January 8, 2024

Legislative Reception at Capitol: Wednesday, January 24, 2024 @ 2 PM. It's Independent Living Day on the hill. Werger volunteered to get in touch with the Iowa Dairy Association supply ice cream for our table at the capitol if the DD Council would like.

Harris suggested people reach out to their legislators and invite them to the January 4th event now. Crowe stated she will get the save the date and the link from Capture and will send to everybody.

Next Meeting

Harris stated that during the legislative session this committee will meet every other week. First meeting will be January 3rd @ 3 PM, January 17th @ 3 PM, January 31st @ 3 PM, February 14 @ 3 PM, February 28th @ 3 PM, March 13th @ 3 PM, March 27 @ 3 PM.

Action Items

- The national council on developmental disabilities will be sharing a PowerPoint tomorrow during a meeting and Crowe will share this with the Public Policy committee.
- Cogil asked for a list of AEA consultants from Campbell.
- Crowe stated she will get the save the date and the link from Capture for the January 4th Open House event and will send to everybody.

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