

Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council Meeting Minutes January 8, 2026

Council Member Attendees:

Eric Evans, Wendy Andersen, Rachel Bussan, Andrea Maher, Nicole Nosbisch, Kevin Harris, Julie Bergeson, George Thompson, Aaron Swartz, Caitlin Owens, Jayde Henry, Mike Dierdorff, Lori Trujillo Roush, Amber Gale, Charlene Wyatt Sauer, Dakota Caldwell, Casey Wilkinson, Kimberly Van Beek, MeLissa Lawson.

Council Staff: Brooke Lovelace, Carlyn Crowe,

Council Members Absent: Joshua Lawernce, Mike Hoenig, Daryn Richardson

Members of the Public: Erika Hertel, Child Health Specialty Clinics, John McCalley, Wellpoint, Tonya Heiman – Iowa Total Care, Director Larry Johnson, Zachary Rhien, Kera Oestreich, Carrie Malone with Health and Human Services

Call to Order:

Council Chair Thompson called the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) meeting to order virtually on January 8, at 10:31 AM. A quorum was established.

Welcome and Introductions:

All meeting attendees introduced themselves with an Ice Breaker.

Agenda Item/Approval of Minutes and Agenda:

- Minutes from the November 13th meeting were approved. Nosbisch made a motion, Wilkinson seconded.
- Agenda for the January 8 meeting was approved with a correction to the date on the agenda. Caldwell made a motion and it was seconded by Nosbisch.

Executive Committee (EC) Report:

Actions and News Since November and Summary of What was Discussed at EC Meeting

- Discussed the Administrative Assistant opening. Thompson asked members to share the posting
- Thompson encouraged people to attend the IABLE training on January 21, 2026, the Legislative Reception on January 28, 2026, and the DD Council night at the Iowa Wolves.

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Budget Summary:

- Lovelace explained that the expenses are only through November. December expenses are done but the Fiscal Department is reviewing to make sure it is correct. A budget report through February will be ready by the February meeting.
- Lovelace shared that we received our Notice of Award for a third of our funding which is \$258,000. The Council is under a Continuing Resolution. Which is typical when Congress fails to pass a budget. Lovelace noted that we have \$230,000 left from 2025 funding.
- Lovelace shared that we will continue to see increases in the Iowa Communication Network costs (ICN). These are costs we saw under our HHS Cost Allocation historically. We should see that go down.
- Lovelace shared the sponsorships since last meeting. The Council will be sponsoring Wilkinson and Ed Esbeck, to participate in the National Leadership summit for 10 months. Esbeck and Wilkinson will be co-leading the Allies in Advocacy

Workplan Update:

- No update this meeting. Council staff have been finishing the federal report for December

State Plan Update:

- Lovelace reviewed the steps and meetings that have happened so far for the State Plan. Lovelace reminded members that Health and Rural areas.
- The Council will need to vote on the plan in March and then we will have it out for public comment. Lovelace said she would like council members to share the stateplan during that time and attend any community meetings they can to share. Thompson encouraged council members to attend at least one of the listening sessions.
- Lovelace reviewed the goals and objectives, what is required and what activities are new activities. Wilkinson commented that storytelling is important activity to talk about why we advocate. Lovelace reminded council members that we currently have three goals. Our new plan is suggested to have two. You are only required to have one
- Lovelace shared that the once required Targeted Disparity is now not required. The State plan committee agreed to keep the objective but not call it that and address rural needs.
- Lovelace encouraged council members to send any other comments or concerns to her or Thompson.

Updates from Director Johnson and Health and Human Services Leadership Team

- Johnson introduced himself and shared his background with state government. Johnson said his main goals are to continue to make HHS as efficient as possible and a big project is modernizing the state management system
- Oestreich, Deputy Director, Medicaid, gave an overview of the Hope in Many Environments (HOME) Project and the public comment period. The waivers are moving from seven to three and to a needs-based system instead of a diagnosis based.
- Oestreich stated these changes need public comment before they receive federal approval. She emphasized that these changes are technical. HHS developed quick guides to help support people as they navigate the changes. <https://hhs.iowa.gov/medicaid/about-medicaid/medicaid-projects/home/public-comment-information>
- Public comments will be open for five weeks.
- Phase one will go in effect October 1, 2026. Phase two will go into effect July 1, 2027
- HHS is building toolkits for case managers so they can help people they service understand the changes to individual service plans.
- Harris asked HHS leadership how we could work with HHS to make sure information is accessible before it goes out. Oestreich stated that they have received feedback from the steering committee. If the Council members see anything that doesn't make sense, HHS would take that feedback.
- Maher said there may be opportunities for Council members to join the steering committee and to contact her if interested.
- Harris shared that they had many errors with their assessment with their daughter and that Maher was able to navigate. Harris asked where people can go if they do their assessment is not accurate describing their needs. Oestrich said there is a review process for redetermining and an FAQ on the process. Rhein suggested also working with the Disability Access Points when this happens.
- Caldwell asked about the cost of Intermediate Care Facilities compared to the cost of waiver and what happens if the costs for waivers are higher. Oestrich said it is an aggregate cost over all who are served.
- Swartz and Nobsich states support for the Work without Worry bill and hoped the HOME project wouldn't be affected by it. Oestrich said it should not have an impact.
- Anderson asked what role the Council can play to help navigate these changes. Oestrich said being involved in the process and reviewing the guides.
- Wyatt Sauer asked what would be considered meaningful comments that HHS

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would like to see with the public comment. Wyatt Sauer also asked about how the funding each person will receive. Oestreich suggested making the comment as specific as possible, which appendix you are commenting on and if you are for or against that section. Maher wasn't sure if that amount of detail is provided in the appendix J. Maher said the changes to the funding will not be in Phase one but in Phase two.

Public Comment:

- John McCalley with Wellpoint discussed the work requirements that will be in place January 2027 for those on the Medicaid Expansion program. In response to this, Wellpoint created a new jobs connection program for anyone on Medicaid. It is online and helps people connect to jobs. It also has job resources such as resume developing. More than 300 people have created profiles to find work. McCalley offered to do a demo for this group.

Council Member Spotlight: Casey Wilkinson

- Wilkinson shared her advocacy story and her journey to arrive with the Council.
- Wilkinson encouraged other advocates to share their story at the next meeting. Nobsch agreed to share her story.

Public Policy Update:

- Anderson discussed the current advocacy work with the Let us Work Campaign and the goal of getting people to the Capitol in February and March. Securing funding for transportation has also been part of the effort.
- Wilkinson shared the work of the Allies in Advocacy in capturing Medicaid stories
- Caldwell shared work on setting up a townhall meeting in his areas
- Thompson shared information about his discussion with Hy-Vee and Principal on gaining support for the "Let us Work Campaign".
- Harris shared his discussion with Unity Point on the Campaign.
- Crowe provided an update on the Legislative Open House held on January 10th and Legislative Reception on January 28th and the tentative schedule.
- Crowe provided an update on the legislative session noting that the Work Without Worry legislation could be incorporated into broader Medicaid changes. If this happens there could be items in the bill that the Council could not support
- Crowe reviewed the other advocacy groups scheduled to come to the Capitol this session so far.
- Crowe stated that she has not seen the fiscal analysis on the work without worry bill.

State Partner Updates and Council Member Updates:

- Evans provided an update on the Vocational Rehabilitation mobile unit available for

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- outreach at high schools and other events.
- Johnson shared a presentation on 504 regulations and healthcare she is doing for Mary Greeley Hospital in Ames.
 - Owens provided an update on the LEND training program. They are recruiting advocates for the 2026-2027 year. Applications are due February 20.
<https://cdd.center.uiowa.edu/iowa-lend/applycontact-us>
 - Owens also shared they are looking for participants for a survey about Augmentative Alternative Communication.
<https://redcap.icts.uiowa.edu/redcap/surveys/?s=WEKYDY38CK398JKT>
 - Lawson provided an update on the staffing hirings at the Department of Education and the data review they are doing with school districts. She noted they are seeing an increase in state complaints, and they are investigating why that is the case
 - Hertel shared that the Iowa Family Leadership Training Institute is taking applications. https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4MYFMQqfuQ8IWYJ

Public Comment:

None

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned at 1:50 PM.

Action Items:

- Let Thompson know if you are interested in being a mentor or having a mentor.