

March 12, 2026 DD Council Minutes

Council Member Attendees: George Thompson, Kevin Harris, Casey Wilkinson, Wendy Andersen, Charlene Wyatt-Sauer, Julie Bergeson, Rachel Bussan, Michael Hoenig, Catherine Johnson, Joshua Lawrence, MeLissa Lawson, Andrea Maher, Nicole Noshish, Caitlin Owens, Daryn Richardson, Aaron Swartz, Lori Trujillo-Roush, Jayde Henry, Amber Gale

Council Staff: Brooke Lovelace, Carlyn Crowe, Melissa Thomas

Council Members Absent: Kimberly Van Beek

Members of the Public: Erika Hertel-Title V, Laura Leise-Aging and Disability Services, Megan Marsh-Iowa Finance, Tonya Heiman-Iowa Total Care, Christine Kayse-Molina Healthcare

Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Thompson called the meeting to order at 10:34 and confirmed a quorum. Housekeeping announcements were provided for in-person and virtual participants.

Chair Thompson welcomed Melissa Thomas, newly serving as Administrative Assistant to the Council.

Council members and guests introduced themselves and participated in an icebreaker aligned with the meeting theme “Lights, Camera, Advocacy.”

Agenda Item/Approval of Minutes and Agenda

The January meeting minutes were approved. Noshish made a motion, Richardson seconded. All members approved

The agenda for the March 12th meeting was approved. Bussan made a motion and it was seconded by Noshish. All members approved

Executive Committee Report

Budget and Administrative Updates

Staff reported that the Executive Committee reviewed the 2026 budget, including ID Action account activity. Recent expenditures included Directors and Officers insurance and payment processing fees.

Staff also reported working with Capture Marketing to update the ID Action bylaws, clarifying roles, meeting cadence, and budget references.

State Plan Public Comment

Members were encouraged to participate in upcoming State Plan listening sessions. Wilkinson will facilitate the first session.

Open Records Training

Members were informed of a new open records training requirement for public board members. Members appointed prior to July of the previous year are exempt but may complete the training voluntarily. Staff will provide additional information.

Woodward State Resource Center

Members discussed recent reports of abuse and neglect at the Woodward State Resource Center. The council is drafting a letter to the Governor advocating for stronger oversight, improved training, and accountability.

Oversight roles of Department of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing A Health and Human Services (HHS), and Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) were also discussed.

Election Committee

Members discussed upcoming vacancies including:

- **Two Self-Advocate/Family Advocate positions**
- **One State Partner position**

An Election Committee was formed to oversee nominations.

Volunteers:

- **Caitlin Owens, Nicole Nosbish, and Joshua Lawrence**

The committee will coordinate meeting times via scheduling poll.

Budget Summary

Lovelace reported FY2026 federal funding remains level funded.

Expenses are lower than projected due to the cancellation of the January in-person meeting and a temporary staffing vacancy.

Recent council sponsorships included:

- **Iowa Disability Film Festival**
 - **Brain Injury Association Capitol Day and Conference**
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Work Plan Updates

Legislative Advocacy

Staff reported ongoing advocacy activities related to the Let Us Work campaign.

Planning is underway for the Make Your Mark Conference, scheduled for September 16–17, themed “Lights, Camera, Advocacy.”

Applications will soon open for the Youth Leadership Academy, a virtual program for youth ages 14–21.

State Plan Discussion and Approval

Lovelace presented the draft 2026–2031 State Plan, noting that the council had reviewed the document in previous meetings and only minor revisions were made. Hoenig noted accessibility issues including missing alternative text. Lovelace confirmed corrections will be made before publication.

Members discussed renaming the section currently titled “Our Plan” to “Our Action Plan”

Goal 2 Discussion

Members discussed expanding work related to emergency preparedness, including partnerships with UCEDDs and Disability Rights Iowa.

Wilkinson suggested educational workshops on emergency alerts.

Nosbish emphasized accessible housing and shelter considerations.

Hoenig moved to approve the 2026–2031 State Plan with discussed edits. Bussan seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The plan will be released for 45 days of public comment.

Listening sessions scheduled:

- **April 9 – 6:00 PM**
- **April 15 – 12:00 PM**
- **April 21 – 4:30 PM**

Public feedback will be reviewed at the May meeting

Public Comment

Leise-HHS provided an update on the Iowa Olmstead Plan, noting delays due to COVID-19. The revised plan includes data analysis and measurable goals and is awaiting final signatures. She highlighted disparities in health, housing, mental health, and service access for individuals with disabilities and shared *Flourish Magazine*, a youth-focused transition resource. Discussion included promoting the Youth Leadership Academy application on the Flourish site. Wilkinson noted that *Allies in Advocacy* is recruiting members.

State Partner Update (had to leave early, so spoke early)

Maher-Medicaid updated on the Home Waivers project, noting 176 public comments were reviewed, leading to clarifications and changes, including lowering respite provider age from 18+ to 16+. Waiver applications were submitted to CMS on March 2, with federal review expected over several months. Members raised concerns about transparency, information access, and CCO budget impacts.

Council Member Spotlight

Nosbish shared her advocacy work and background.

Nosbish founded Special Patriots, promoting civic engagement and employment advocacy for individuals with disabilities. She also supports the Work Without Worry initiative, which promotes employment without loss of benefits.

Nosbish discussed policy concerns related to proposals to separate students with disabilities into different schools and emphasized the importance of inclusive education.

She also shared her involvement in Special Olympics and adaptive skiing programs and expressed interest in running for public office.

Public Policy Committee Update

Crowe reported a vacancy on the Public Policy Committee following Dakota's departure. A volunteer may participate immediately, with a formal vote scheduled for May.

Committee meetings occur intermittently during the legislative session.

Crowe reported that Work Without Worry Legislation House and Senate bills are moving independently. Advocacy efforts helped move the bill forward.

Crowe reviewed Senate File 2422, which includes provisions related to Medicaid, SNAP, and healthcare services.

The bill proposes codifying Medicaid managed care, which members noted could make policy changes more difficult in the future.

Andersen collected stories from families about Medicaid service denials, compiling approximately 50 pages of testimony that were shared with legislators.

Crowe reported progress on legislation requiring accessible prescription labels for individuals who are blind or have low vision. The bill has passed the House and a Senate subcommittee.

Crowe discussed proposals including video cameras in special education classrooms and separate schools for students with disabilities. Members raised concerns about privacy, stigma, and compliance with federal IDEA law.

Anderson discussed a legal challenge related to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Iowa and Nebraska have withdrawn from the lawsuit. Several other states remain involved.

Upcoming Advocacy Events

Disability Advocacy Day

Date: April 1

Organizer: Iowa Disability Policy Alliance

State Partner Updates (cont):

Johnson – Disability Rights Iowa shared two open positions (Lead Intake Specialist and Litigation Attorney) and announced a March 31 employment event at the Harkin Institute with a virtual option. Link to register:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ArvhABqww/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

Lawson-Department of Education shared that special education improvement plans have been completed with districts, site visits are ongoing to support programs and partnerships, and a new assistive technology task team has launched to provide training on legal requirements and IEP supports in general education.

Bergeson-Aging and Disability Services shared updates on local advisory councils, the Bridging Aging and Disability Network project, and ongoing work in supported decision-making, with additional training opportunities forthcoming.

Owens – Center for Disability and Development: Caitlin noted that *Money Follows the Person* is set to sunset in September 2027. She plans to meet with Senator Grassley's

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office to discuss advocacy efforts and hopes to share updates and talking points at a future meeting. The goal is to maintain funding and avoid premature program closures.

Evans-Iowa Workforce Development: (via Lovelace) provided an update on *Rural Resource Rambles*, a statewide initiative by Vocational Rehabilitation. The first two events will be held in Clarinda on April 30 and Sheldon on May 6, with flyers to be distributed soon. These events aim to address workforce needs in rural areas.

Public Comment

Hertel-Title V shared RAPS Autism Basics webinar series is underway, offering a free 4-week program for parents of newly diagnosed children, with a Spanish session planned for May. She noted interest from families in sharing advocacy stories and suggested sharing the council's story collection link if reopened.

Adjournment

Owens made a motion to adjourn, and Bussan seconded the motion. After a unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 2:53pm.

Action Items

| Task | Responsible |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Finalize accessibility updates to the State Plan | Council Staff |
| Release the State Plan for 45-day public comment | Brooke Lovelace / Council Staff |
| Share listening session information | Council Members |
| Distribute open records training information | Council Staff |

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| Task | Responsible |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Finalize draft letter regarding Woodward Resource Center | Executive Committee |
| Schedule Election Committee meeting | Lovelace |
| Explore Youth Leadership Academy listing on Flourish website | Lovelace |
| Reopen story collection tool on Medicaid service denials | Lovelace |
| Recruit volunteer for Public Policy Committee | Council Members |
| Continue advocacy on Work Without Worry legislation | Council Members |
| Doodle Poll for Election Committee volunteers | Thomas |