

**Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)
January 2025 Council Meeting Minutes
January 16-17, 2025**

Thursday, January 16, 2025

Attendees: GCDD Staff: Charlotte Densmore, Felicia Dillon, Ariel Edwards, Tonya Fair, Tianna Faulkner, Eric Foss, Charlie Miller, Fanta Mitchell, Harry Nelson, Maria Pinkelton, D’Arcy Robb,
Council Members: Melissa Barwick, Kendra Brown, Lori Campbell, Jessica Cowell, Mark Crenshaw, Dorothy Harris, Rena Harris, Martha Haythorn, Dayna Holbel, Nandi Isaac, Tais Keyser, Brook Kubik, Lisa Newbern, Evan Nodvin, Sharifa Peart, Charity Roberts, Jennifer Snyder, Crystal St. Pierre, Zolinda Stoneman, Sharia Stripling, Elana Taylor, Leslie Kate Thornton, Dave Ward, **Guests:** Allyson Banks, Susan Bolton, Brandy Buchanan, Celio Best-Interpreter, Marsha Coles-Felix-Interpreter, Doug Crandell, Catherine Davis, Amy Deaville, Chantay Foley, Roslynn Gunn, Amy Hunsinger, Lara Kim, Sheryl Matney, Jenalee McFadden, Rosalynn Gunn Napolitano, Patricia Nobbie, Tracy Rackensperger, Ilond Tshipau and Philip Woody

Welcome and Announcements

Lisa Newbern, GCDD Council Chair called the meeting to order and shared Charity Roberts-State Director, Georgia Department of Education, and Ben Dell, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA), are both new state agency representatives.

Maria Pinkelton read the GCDD statement of place. Fanta Mitchell explained the Zoom ASL feature for meeting attendees.

Lisa welcomed introductions from meeting participants and opened the floor for anyone to make an announcement. D’Arcy Robb shared GCDD has a new employee and reminded everyone to submit public comments regarding the federal 14(c) bill. Fanta Mitchell sent a packet to members about it.

Lisa reviewed the meeting agenda. Maria and the Georgia People Access Community (G-PAC) committee spoke about the Member Covenant where members can establish rules of engagement to guide behavior and interactions in meetings. Maria asked Council members to share comments the committee can add to the covenant. Fanta shared the document in the Zoom chat for members to share their ideas.

Council Updates

D’Arcy, Harry Nelson and Lisa presented Council updates. Their presentations cover upcoming dates, membership, staffing, budget, GCDD’s mission and items for Council member vote.

- Spring Council meeting will be held in person April 24-25 at the Twin Towers State Building (GCDD’s office).

- Disability Policy Seminar will be held April 7-9 in Washington, DC. The Public Policy Committee is deciding if we'll participate given the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) no longer participates in this conference.
- The Summer Council meeting will be virtual, and Fanta will share dates during day two.
- Advocacy Days are scheduled for January 29, February 12 and February 26.
- Three members are rolling off this year, and we expect six members to join the Council.
- Ariel Edwards is GCDD's new Program and Policy Specialist. They will focus on IPSE, Employment, Research and ongoing work with state and federal agencies.
- Lisa reviewed D'Arcy's performance evaluation and the need to update her job description to better reflect her responsibilities.
- D'Arcy discussed staffing changes and proposed a new staff position, Senior Director of Programs and Strategy.
- Harry presented the budget report, focusing on the five-year plan.
- Lisa discussed voting items: ED job description, mission statement, consent agenda and five-year plan timeline. We will hold voting on the October 2024 meeting minutes.

Member Education

Sheryl Matney and Amy Deaville with the Information and Technical Assistance Center for Councils on Developmental Disabilities (ITACC) presented on Membership Education. They reviewed members' fiduciary duties, how members should act for and on behalf of the Council, federal law responsibilities and how members can engage with the Council.

Breaking Update

Lisa welcomed and introduced Ariel, who just joined the meeting, as well as Charlotte Densmore, who gave an update about Governor Brian Kemp's State of the State Address.

Program Update

Tracy Rackensperger and Doug Crandell with the Institute on Human Development and Disability (IHDD) and Advancing Employment gave an update on the Coalition Against Unfair Salaries in Employment (CAUSE) initiative, including projects GCDD funds and/or supports:

- Advancing Employment/CAUSE
- Preparing for Employment (ended)
- SWTCIE Subcontract
- RRTC Subcontract
- Improving Employer Practices and Hiring Policies
- Supporting Coalition Building to Phase out 14(c) (ended)

Five-Year Plan

D'Arcy presented an overview of GCDD's current five-year plan, network goals and DD Network collaboration. Participants go into "World Café" breakout rooms where GCDD's program staff discusses the five-year plan, including targeted disparities, systems change and self-advocacy. D'Arcy explained the plan timeline, information gathering, survey/feedback and town halls.

Media Training

Tianna Faulkner presented media training for Council members.

Meeting ended for the day and will resume Friday, January 17, 2025, at 9 am.

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Guests: Eunique Banner-Interpreter, Brook Baumgardner, Susan Bolton, Brandy Buchanan, Marsha Coles-Felix-Interpreter, Catherine Davis, Roslynn Gunn, Lara Kim, Rosalynn Gunn Napolitano, Patricia Nobbie, Ilond Tshipau, Vincent Vaughters and Philip Woody

Vote

Lisa Newbern called the meeting to order, and the meeting began with three votes:

1. Nandi Isaac motioned, and Evan Nodvin seconded to approve the Executive Director job description. The vote passed; no one opposed or abstained.
2. Dave Ward motioned, and Evan seconded to approve the updated mission statement. The vote passed; no one opposed or abstained.
3. Evan motioned, and Leslie Kate Thornton seconded to approve the five-year plan timeline. The vote passed; no one opposed or abstained.

Updates and Agenda Overview

Fanta added a poll in the chat for participants to vote on a survey review meeting, scheduled for January 24 from 4 pm to 5 pm.

She also announced the Summer Council meeting is scheduled for August 7-8, 2025; the meeting will be virtual.

Lisa reviewed the meeting agenda: state agency updates, committee meetings, public policy update, public comment and closing remarks.

State Agency Updates

Rena Harris, Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), begins the state agency updates.

- Participant Direct Advocates of Georgia organization is beginning initiatives around sustainability.
- GAO is working on solutions to problems of direct support professionals (DSPs) who abuse, neglect and/or exploit people with I/DD. GAO is collaborating with GCDD.
- An unlicensed personal care home coalition has formed to help provide housing for people with disabilities. GAO following.

Mark Crenshaw, Center for Leadership and Disability (CLD):

- Applications are open for AUCD Leadership Academy, a national leadership academy that brings together 24 participants from across the country who work with people with disabilities and their families.
- Leadership Education and Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) application is available.
- Upcoming events:
 - GEEARS is hosting “Strolling Thunder” with advocates and their small children to meet at the Capitol.
 - GA Autism Conference & Expo – end of May – for professionals who work with people who have autism, self-advocates and families.
- My Voice My Board applications will come out soon. Molly Tucker is the contact.

Lori Campbell, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD):

- Partnered with Guidehouse to create a report about the “Planning List” (waiting list). The goal is to significantly reduce and eventually eliminate the Planning List.
- The DSP competency-based development program will end soon. DBHDD has partnered with the University of Minnesota to provide feedback for the DSP program initiative regarding effectiveness and efficiency of the models used. The longer-term goal is how to incorporate increased DSP competency into the waiver(s) rate studies to support a career ladder for DSP wages.
- DBHDD is transitioning from using health and risk screening tool assessment (HRST) combined with the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) to determine service categories. Beginning in July 2025, the SIS 2.0 will be used for people who have I/DD to better identify long-term support needs and service categories. Georgia was only state in the United States that used HRST to influence funding decisions, which was never the intent of the “risk screening tool.” The SIS is completed at service entry and redone every three to five years unless there is a significant change in condition that would trigger a SIS update. AAIDD will provide trainings to explain the updates to the SIS 2.0. An additional in-depth training of the SIS 2.0 assessment tool and the various domains will be available on the Relias Training format with DBHDD.

- New crisis services and a related diagnostic center will be physically complete by March 25 and operational in late May. Services will include residential and outpatient wellness care. DBHDD is partnering with DD provider River Edge and Mercer University. Mercer's mission is to expand awareness of serving the healthcare needs of individuals with IDD to physicians in rural areas statewide. The diagnostic center is intended to be a resource for medical professionals statewide.
- Newly approved CRA services are coming online this year.

Ben Dell, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA):

- GVRA has a new district map for Georgia. Ten districts are now staffed. Ben shared the district managers' information.
- GVRA launched a new intake unit October 1, 2024. No updates for IPSE or GAIPSEC. 102 IPSE students enrolled, and the graduation total is 53.
- GVRA has more than 30 new hires, the supported self-employment initiative has begun, and Project Search has 65 participants who have been employed (50% employment).
- GVRA is preparing a GCDD White Paper, which is due early February.

Zolinda Stoneman, IHDD:

- The Disability History Symposium will be held Fall 2025. Currently securing guest speakers, including Daniel Habib.
- Another event, March 29 by Out of Hand Theater Group partnering with a middle school in Athens, GA, will focus on inclusive education.
- New center named on behalf of David Ralson, former Georgia House Speaker. Clearinghouse is leading this initiative that is a result of Georgia Behavioral Health Reform and the Innovation Commission. The Center will provide information to counties about the prevalence of people who have behavioral health diagnoses ending up in jail. Many of these people have I/DD.

Melissa Barwick, Department of Human Services (DHS):

- The agency has revamped the eligibility process. CMS can no longer rely on GVRA's determination of disability for Medicaid disability determination. This means DHS must do much more eligibility work for Aged Blind Disabled (ABD) Medicaid.
- There has been an increase in food stamp fraud. The federal government is ending the program for participants who receive food stamps to recoup stolen food stamp funds. DHS is working on tips and tricks to help participants avoid food stamp scams and fraud.

Sharifa Peart, Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH):

- This July, DPH will hold the Georgia Child Health Conference. It was previously named the Babies Can't Wait Conference.

- World pediatric healthcare began in 2023. This partnership among DPH, Mercer University and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta is helping families and children in Georgia, especially in rural areas.
- DPH is working on a new five-year plan. So far, the agency has surveyed 300 families and hosted three focus groups, and is planning community partnership meetings.

Lisa thanked the state agency reps for their updates, welcomed new guests and turned the meeting over to Fanta to discuss the committee portion of the meeting.

Committee Meetings

Before assigning everyone to breakout rooms, Fanta explained to guests they can join breakout rooms, but can only make comments during the Public Comment portion of the Council meeting at 12:15 pm. Fanta then assigned everyone to breakout rooms for committee meetings. Following the meetings, each committee gave a brief report.

State Plan: Georgia as Model Employer (GAME) grant is going to Blind Bear Creative.

Public Policy: As noted earlier, the committee will need to decide if GCDD will attend the Disability Policy Seminar. A decision has to be made soon to make travel arrangements for Council members.

GPAC: The committee met last week to discuss updating the name of committee to reflect committee members and focus on goals. The committee’s new name is GPAC = Georgia People Access Community.

Public Policy Update

Charlotte Densmore and Charlie Miller reviewed GCDD’s state policy agenda, federal policy updates and how people can get involved through advocacy days and public comment.

GCDD’s State Policy Agenda includes:

- Increasing state funding to reduce the waiver waitlist by advocating for 2,400 new NOW/COMP waivers.
- Creating an intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) innovation commission
- Ending subminimum wages
- Partnering with other organizations to ensure people with I/DD have adequate protection from abuse and neglect and to improve police training to better serve people with I/DD.
- Working with other organizations on death penalty and guardianship bills.

Public Comments

No public comments during this meeting.

Closing Comments

Participants shared comments about the Council meeting.

Leslie Kate Thornton motioned to end the meeting. **Evan** Nodvin seconded.

Meeting adjourned.