



NHDSQC Meeting Minutes for August 19, 2026

Hybrid Meeting and In-Person.

Agenda:

Welcome and introduction (Emily Manire, Chair)

Chair Update & Announcements (Emily Manire, Chair)

- Chair Nominations/Vote in September
- AC/QC Budgets

Approval of July Meeting Minutes (Vote)

Bureau of Developmental Services Update (Jessica Gorton)

- PDMS update
- Family Support Respite cap update
- Person-Centered Services Data/Training

Approval of Annual Report 2022-2023 (vote)

Committee Updates:

- System Review Committee (Emily & Stephanie)
- Rules Committee (Stephanie)
- Data Committee (Louis)
- Membership Relations Committee (Isadora)
- Communications Committee (Karen?)
- Ad Hoc MAC committee
- Ad Hoc Staffing & Hiring Freeze Committee

Legislative Update

Other Business and Announcements

- Family Support Conference Update (Karen Blake & Lisa Steadman)
- Let Shanon know if you would like to receive a stipend

Public Comment



Quality Council Members and Attendance:

Jessica Gorton	Bureau of Developmental Services	Present In-Person
Abigail Conger (Alternate)	Bureau of Developmental Services	Not Present
Tammy Mills *	People First of New Hampshire	Present In-Person
Roseann Tardiff * (Alternate)	People First of New Hampshire	Present Virtual
Louis Esposito *	ABLE NH	Present Virtual
Krysten Evans (Alternate)	ABLE NH	No Present
Gina Cannon*	NH Council on Autism Spectrum Disorders	Present In-Person
Lauren Cole	Brain Injury Association, BIA	Present Virtual
Adam Schrier (Alternate)	Brain Injury Association, BIA	Not Present
Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre Chair of Membership Committee	NH Council on Developmental Disabilities (NHCDD)	Present In-Person
Pamela Stiles (Alternate)	NH Council on Developmental Disabilities (NHCDD)	Not Present
Jim Piet *	NH Council on Developmental Disabilities (NHCDD)	Present Virtual
Lisa Steadman * QC Vice Chair	State Family Support Council	Present In-Person
Karen Hatch * Chair of Recreation Committee	State Family Support Council	Not Present
Karen Blake*	State Family Support Council	Present Virtual
Donna Corriveau	Direct Support Provider	Not Present
Howard Clark	Area Agency Board, Monadnock Developmental Services	Present In-Person
Kelly Ehrhart *	Area Agency Board, Gateways Community Services	Present Virtual
VACANT	Area Agency Board	Position VACANT
Marissa Berg Housing Committee Chair	Community Support Network Inc. (CSNI)	Present In-Person
Sandy Pelletier (Alternate)	Community Support Network Inc. (CSNI)	Not Present
Emily Manire QC Chair & Data Committee Chair	Private Provider Network	Present In-Person
Kenda Howell (Alternate)	Private Provider Network	Not Present
Mary St. Jacques	UNH Institute on Disability, IOD	Not Present
Jen Sulewski (Alternate)	UNH Institute on Disability, IOD	Not Present
Stephanie Patrick	Disability Rights Center (DRC)	Present Virtual
Jennifer Bertrand*	At-Large Member Self - Advocate	Not Present



A Quorum was reached.

(*) Delineates family member of/or individual with a disability which counts toward an in-person quorum.

Guests or Members of the Public:

Guests; Mary Anne Winsell, Michael Ames, Rayne Duclos & Archer Burnum

Welcome and introduction

All Council members and guests introduced themselves.

Chair Update & Announcements – Emily Manire

This month we are accepting nominations for Chair and Vice Chair at next month's meeting for the upcoming year.

- If you're interested in nominating someone, please submit your nomination about a week before the next meeting if possible. It's always helpful to speak with the person beforehand to confirm they're interested in serving. Self-nominations are also welcome if you'd like to be considered for either the Chair or Vice Chair role.
- Our goal is to hold the election and vote on these positions during September's meeting.

As everyone knows, both councils operate with a fixed budget. Over the past year, the Autism Council has devoted considerable time to administrative responsibilities, including responding to several Right-to-Know requests and establishing many of its foundational council processes and work priorities.

- Emily, Isadora, Marissa, and Lisa met to discuss how to divide the limited funding available for the coming fiscal year. They determined that the most equitable approach is to split the budget evenly between the Autism Council and the Quality Council, recognizing that both councils have similar needs and shared operating costs.
- While the budgets have not yet been finalized, each council is working to complete its budget for the upcoming year.
- For the Quality Council, Emily expects that the reduced allocation may result in a decrease in member stipends compared with last year. Once the final budget is determined, she plans to present it at the September meeting.
- On the Autism Council side, the council recently met to discuss implementing a stipend process, as it had not previously provided stipends. Any reduction in Quality Council stipends is expected to be reflected in the Autism Council's ability to begin offering stipends to its members.
- Emily noted that she, Isadora, Marissa, and Lisa will meet again to finalize the budget details before presenting them to the council.
- The combined budget is approximately \$32,000, with each council receiving about \$16,000 (approximately \$16,500) to allocate for the coming year.



- The majority of each council's budget is dedicated to administrative support, which is a shared expense for both councils. A small portion is allocated for IT support, and the remaining funds are used to cover member stipends and mileage reimbursement, after these required expenses, there is very little flexibility remaining in the budget.

Approval of July Meeting Minutes

Tammy motioned to approve the minutes as written with the correction of:

Designated Receiving Facility and the spelling of Rodriguez

Gina second the motion.

- ✓ Motion passed with the following in favor; Jessica Gorton, Tammy Mills, Louis Esposito, Gina Cannon, Lauren Cole, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Jim Piet, Karen Blake, Lisa Steadman, Kelly Ehrhart, Howard Clark, Emily Manire & Stephanie Patrick.
- ✓ Abstained; Marissa Berg & Jennifer Sulewski

Bureau of Developmental Services Update - Jessica Gorton

Jessica provided an update on Rule 1001, which governs certified community residences. It was shared that the rule was reviewed by the Rules Committee on Friday and was originally scheduled to go before JLCAR the following day. However, several outstanding questions and operational concerns remained, and additional discussion was needed.

- After internal conversations with agency partners, the Department decided to postpone presenting the rule to JLCAR until September. This additional time will allow staff to engage with key stakeholders, including the Quality Council, the Developmental Rights Committee (DRC), Licensing and Certification, and other partners, to clarify areas of concern. Some issues may require revisions to the rule itself, while others may be better addressed through policy guidance or operational clarification.
- Jessica noted that if JLCAR does not approve the revised rule in September, the current Rule 1001 would remain in effect.
- This decision was finalized the previous evening, Jessica encouraged committee members and guests to share the update with others who may have been planning to attend the JLCAR meeting. While Department staff may still attend, representatives from the Bureau of Developmental Services (BDS) and Licensing and Certification will wait until the September meeting.
- Stephanie asked whether these discussions would occur during the regularly scheduled Rules Committee meeting or through a separate meeting. Jessica responded that a separate stakeholder meeting will likely be scheduled within the next week or two to allow sufficient time for discussion, while the regular Rules Committee meeting will continue as planned. Rules Committee members, the Developmental Rights Committee, Licensing and Certification staff, and interested stakeholders, including representatives from People First and the Provider Participation Network (PPN)—will be invited to participate.



- Tammy asked how the rule could be presented in plain language. Jessica acknowledged that this has been recurring feedback from the Quality Council and explained that the Department has already begun developing plain-language resources for some rules. She agreed that Rule 1001 would benefit from a similar effort, although that work would likely occur separately from the JLCAR process.
- Stephanie suggested using the upcoming gap in the Rules Committee agenda to have a broader conversation about prioritizing which rules should be translated into plain language, recognizing that rewriting every rule at once would be a significant undertaking. She noted that the Intellectual and Developmental Services Bureau has already collaborated with The Arc of New Hampshire on plain-language materials for Rule 310 and suggested using that work as a model.
- Jessica further suggested partnering with People First to identify which rule topics individuals with developmental disabilities consider most important to explain in plain language. Rather than focusing on specific rule numbers, people could identify the topics they find most confusing, allowing staff to determine which rules require additional explanation.

The Bureau's work with the Office of Medicaid regarding the Granite Advantage Medicaid category and its impact on individuals receiving developmental disability services.

- Under federal requirements, individuals enrolled in Granite Advantage are subject to a six-month Medicaid recertification process, which has raised concerns among the Quality Council due to the administrative burden already associated with annual recertification.
- To reduce this burden, the Bureau is working with the Office of Medicaid to identify individuals receiving waiver services who are enrolled in Granite Advantage but may instead qualify for the Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled (APTD) Medicaid category. When possible, the goal is to transfer eligible individuals to APTD behind the scenes without requiring them to complete a new Medicaid application. The Bureau emphasized that it is working collaboratively with the Office of Medicaid while respecting the eligibility authority of the Bureau of Family Assistance.
- Approximately 137 individuals in Developmental Services and 70 individuals in the Choices for Independence (CFI) waiver are currently enrolled in Granite Advantage. The timing of any transfers will be determined by the Office of Medicaid to balance minimizing participant burden while allowing the state to continue receiving enhanced federal reimbursement available under Granite Advantage.
 - Council members shared personal experiences illustrating the challenges families face during transitions to adult services. One member described receiving conflicting information from Medicaid regarding eligibility and documentation requirements, noting that obtaining Social Security disability benefits delayed their loved one's transition to the APTD category. Jessica acknowledged these concerns and explained that the Bureau plans to receive monthly reports identifying individuals newly



enrolled in Granite Advantage so staff can proactively assist with transitions whenever appropriate.

- Several members expressed concern that families may unknowingly become subject to work requirements or six-month recertification if communication is unclear or paperwork is delayed. Members stressed that misinformation from district offices and inconsistent guidance can create unnecessary stress for families and place individuals at risk of losing critical services or medications.

Discussion focused on improving communication and education for families, service coordinators, schools, and district offices. Suggestions included:

- Working with school districts and special education administrators to educate families during transition planning.
- Reviving a statewide transition conference or summit.
- Developing educational materials through the Quality Council Communications Committee.
- Adding Medicaid eligibility and waiver funding information to the CMAT online training for service coordinators.
- Utilizing the existing Medicaid Matters network to share information broadly.

Jessica agreed that improving Medicaid education is a priority and noted that service coordinators frequently request additional training to better understand Medicaid eligibility, waiver services, and funding distinctions. She indicated that Medicaid-related training may become part of future CMAT educational modules.

The Bureau has partnered with Northern Human Services and Intellect Ability to bring Fatal Five training to New Hampshire.

- The training focuses on the five most common health conditions that contribute to serious illness or death among individuals with developmental disabilities, including issues such as aspiration and bowel obstruction.

The planned training program will include three separate modules:

- A general training available to family members, direct support professionals, neighbors, and other caregivers.
- A module specifically designed for case managers focusing on person-centered planning and risk identification.
- A specialized module for nurses and nurse trainers.

The Bureau hopes to make the training widely available throughout the service system and will provide additional information as implementation plans are finalized.



Jessica reported that the Bureau's Medicaid waivers are progressing through the federal renewal process.

- The In Home Supports (IHS) Waiver was renewed effective January 1.
- The Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver was approved by CMS and will take effect September 1.
- The Acquired Brain Disorder (ABD) Waiver remains on schedule for renewal prior to its November deadline.

No waiver changes will take effect until implementation training has been completed. As with previous renewals, training sessions and recorded webinars will be offered to explain all approved changes.

- One topic generating questions is the revision to the respite service cap. Historically, respite services were limited to 20% of an individual's overall budget, which often produced unintended inequities depending on the types of services a person received. Under the renewed waiver, the cap will instead be a \$7,500 annual limit.
- This amount was developed using historical utilization data and CMS budgeting requirements. However, the cap is intended to function as a soft limit. Individuals whose needs exceed the cap may request an exception through an established review process, consistent with person-centered planning principles.
- Individuals currently receiving respite services above the new cap will be grandfathered and will not experience service reductions because of the waiver changes.
- Members were encouraged to reassure stakeholders that current services remain unchanged until official implementation and training occur.

Jessica provided an update on ongoing work related to Participant-Directed and Managed Services (PDMS).

- Following stakeholder engagement and recommendations from the Quality Council, the Bureau concluded that improvements should focus not only on individual program requirements but also on broader structural issues within New Hampshire's self-direction system.
- While work continues on the PDMS handbook, the Bureau is also exploring additional supports used in other states, including support brokerage services that assist individuals and families in navigating self-direction. Feedback from stakeholders indicated support for additional assistance, while also cautioning against creating unnecessary layers of coordination.
- The Bureau intends to evaluate which approaches would genuinely improve the experience of individuals and families rather than simply replicating models from other states.

The Bureau now hosts the training modules for person-centered planning training, on its website after the original federally funded contract ended. Although the training remains publicly



accessible, the Bureau no longer has the ability to track participation or completion because the modules are no longer housed within a learning management system.

- Members discussed whether completion data could be captured through Relias or another training platform. Jessica agreed to explore that possibility with staff.
- A Council member also requested that the Bureau update its online waiver service overview videos following implementation of the renewed waivers. Jessica noted that updated videos are already planned and will be redesigned into shorter, service-specific modules to make the information easier for individuals and families

Medicaid Eligibility and Family Support Discussion

A member expressed strong support for exploring a service brokerage model, stating that families would welcome having another knowledgeable resource to contact if that person could provide clear guidance about Medicaid, disability services, and system navigation. She shared that families often struggle to find accurate information, particularly regarding disability-related Medicaid issues, and that many parents do not have the professional contacts or experience needed to navigate the system successfully. A member noted that this knowledge gap can create significant barriers to obtaining and maintaining services.

- Individuals experiencing Medicaid problems should contact their Bureau of Developmental Services (BDS) liaison. While liaisons cannot make Medicaid eligibility decisions, they regularly assist by communicating with the Bureau of Family Assistance, helping families and service coordinators understand outstanding documentation requirements, and identifying the status of applications. Jessica emphasized that Medicaid closures are not necessarily the result of service coordinators failing to follow through. In many cases, service coordinators encounter the same communication and administrative barriers as families.
- Maintaining Medicaid coverage is critical because interruptions affect far more than access to medical appointments. For individuals receiving developmental disability services, Medicaid also funds essential daily supports, meaning that a loss of coverage can immediately impact service providers and an individual's ability to receive necessary care. She noted that while the Bureau of Family Assistance has been responsive when contacted, navigating the process remains challenging for many families.

Members discussed the difficulty of locating important information on the Department of Health and Human Services website.

- One member noted that searching for BDS liaison information on the DHHS website returned no results, making it difficult for families to find the appropriate contacts. Jessica explained that liaison information is available on the Bureau of Developmental Services' Individual and Family webpage, but acknowledged that the website's search function can make resources difficult to locate.



- Members are encouraged to notify the Bureau whenever they identify resources that are difficult to find. Jessica also noted that efforts are underway to improve access by creating direct links and making important information easier to locate through partner websites.
- Participants discussed the significant burden that repeated Medicaid eligibility reviews place on families, particularly as more frequent recertification requirements are implemented. Parents already experience considerable burnout navigating complex service systems, and these additional administrative requirements further increase stress. Participants noted that these challenges directly affect supported decision-making, family engagement, and long-term planning.
- The discussion also emphasized the importance of maintaining stable relationships between families and service coordinators. Frequent Medicaid eligibility disruptions, staff turnover, and changes in service coordinators can erode trust and increase frustration for families, even when service coordinators are working diligently to provide assistance and support.
- The discussion also explored the potential role of the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman as an additional resource for families experiencing unresolved Medicaid issues. Jessica confirmed that the Ombudsman's Office has assisted individuals with these concerns and agreed that both the Ombudsman's Office and BDS liaisons are valuable resources for helping families navigate complex Medicaid situations.

Approval of Annual Report 2022-2023 (vote)

Stephanie introduced the agenda item regarding approval of the Council's overdue annual reports. She reminded members that the Council had previously discussed the delay, explaining that staff transitions prevented completion of the 2022–2023 Annual Report and the 2023–2024 Annual Report on schedule.

A draft of the 2022–2023 Annual Report had been distributed to Council members for review. Stephanie noted that the report was intended to be a straightforward summary and asked members to submit any suggested revisions. The goal is to finalize and publish the 2022–2023 report now, followed by the 2023–2024 report at the next meeting. She explained that only the required attachments remain to be added before publication.

- Members discussed several minor edits, including ensuring consistent use of committee names (such as "Rules Committee" versus "Rules and Regulations Committee" and "Membership Committee" versus "Member Relations Committee"), consistent capitalization throughout the report, and adding an acknowledgements section similar to more recent reports.

Stephanie recommended approving the report with authority for staff to make these non-substantive editorial changes rather than delaying publication to perfect historical details. She noted that the primary objective was to fulfill the Council's statutory reporting requirements and post the report publicly.

Isadora moved to approve the **2022–2023** Annual Report, contingent upon:

- Correcting minor editorial inconsistencies, including committee names and capitalization.
- Adding language explaining that the report was completed after the reporting period and represents the best reconstruction of Council activities based on available meeting minutes and contemporaneous records.
- Authorizing staff to make final non-substantive edits before publication.

Howard seconded the motion.

- During discussion, members acknowledged the difficulty of accurately reconstructing historical membership because no comprehensive membership list was available. Stephanie explained that she relied primarily on the September meeting minutes, the final meeting of the reporting year, to identify members and organizational representatives. Members agreed that including a statement acknowledging these limitations would appropriately document the circumstances surrounding the delayed report.
- Several members who had not served on the Council during the reporting period asked whether they should abstain from voting. It was clarified that members could either vote in good faith or abstain if they felt they lacked sufficient knowledge of the report's contents.
 - ✓ Motion passed with the following in favor; Jessica Gorton, Tammy Mills, Lauren Cole, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, Jim Piet, Karen Blake, Lisa Steadman, Howard Clark, Emily Manire & Stephanie Patrick.
 - ✓ Abstained; Louis Esposito, Gina Cannon, Kelly Ehrhart, Marissa Berg & Jennifer Sulewski

Committee Updates:

System Review Committee (Emily & Stephanie)

Emily provided an update on the Systems Review Committee, reporting that the committee met the previous week to prepare for its upcoming public forum on the draft recommendations. The meeting is scheduled for next Thursday from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. and will provide an opportunity for members of the public and other stakeholders to offer comments and feedback. The committee will monitor both verbal comments and the chat to ensure all input is considered.

The purpose of the forum is to gather feedback on the Council's draft recommendations rather than to develop new recommendations. Following the public session, the committee will meet once more to finalize its recommendations for presentation to the full Quality Council at the September meeting.



Lisa B. also volunteered to host an informational session for Quality Council members who would like additional background on the recommendations before the September meeting. The session is intended to help members who have not participated in the committee's detailed discussions better understand the recommendations before voting.

Members noted that the recommendations have been consolidated into six primary focus areas:

- Reporting
- Complaint investigation process
- System data
- Communication
- Adequate resources and funding
- Centralized voices of people with disabilities and families

The committee also discussed planning for the September meeting, including the possibility of inviting legislative leaders to hear the final recommendations and ensuring that the meeting is held in a venue large enough to accommodate additional attendees while remaining fully accessible. Logistics will continue to be discussed before the September meeting

Rules Committee (Stephanie)

Stephanie reported that the Rules Committee has primarily been focused on reviewing He-M 1001, which governs certified community residences. She reiterated that the Department's decision to postpone submitting the rule to JLCAR provides an opportunity to address stakeholder concerns raised by the Rules Committee, the Developmental Rights Committee, providers, area agencies, individuals, and families.

Members discussed the rulemaking timeline, explaining that revisions may still be made before the proposed rule is submitted to JLCAR because the draft remains under review by the Office of Legal Services. This additional review period allows the Department to incorporate stakeholder feedback and respond to questions that have been identified during the review process.

One of the Quality Council's roles is bringing together concerns from multiple stakeholder groups so they can be addressed collaboratively before rules are finalized.

Jessica then outlined several additional rules expected to come before the Rules Committee following completion of the He-M 1001 revisions. These include:

- **He-M 517**, governing waiver services, which will require updates to reflect recently renewed Medicaid waivers.
- **He-M 507**, governing certification requirements for community participation (adult day) services, which will likely require revisions consistent with changes made to He-M 1001.
- **He-M 310**, addressing individual rights.



- **He-M 202**, governing the complaint investigation process administered by the Office of Legal Services for allegations involving rights violations, service agreement concerns, and complaints of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Members observed that He-M 310 and He-M 202 are among the most significant rules governing protections for individuals receiving services. The Council agreed that there will be an important opportunity to align future rule revisions with the recommendations emerging from the Systems Review Committee to strengthen protections related to rights, complaint investigations, and accountability throughout the developmental services system.

Data Committee (Louis)

Update on the Data and Performance Measures Committee, explaining that technical difficulties prevented the committee from completing its planned meeting. The committee intends to continue meeting and finalize its performance matrix, which will serve as a standing framework for future meetings. The goal is to establish a consistent process so members know what information will be reviewed each month, including regular updates, performance measures, and data summaries.

The committee also revisited its discussion on employment data for individuals receiving developmental disability services. Members agreed that more comprehensive and current employment data are needed to better understand service outcomes and identify unmet needs. Marissa volunteered to develop a draft SurveyMonkey questionnaire to help collect employment information, and the committee plans to continue refining that effort.

Jessica acknowledged that the Bureau of Developmental Services (BDS) currently has limited capacity to create new data collection systems or manage large-scale surveys. She explained that while BDS could encourage participation if a survey were distributed, additional planning is needed to determine who would distribute the survey, how responses would be collected, and how to ensure participation rates are sufficient to produce meaningful, representative data.

The discussion also addressed the challenge of measuring service access. Jessica clarified that New Hampshire does not maintain a traditional waiting list for developmental disability services. Instead, individuals may have funding authorized but still experience delays in accessing services for a variety of reasons, including provider shortages or workforce limitations. BDS is working to improve its information technology systems to better capture these circumstances so that future reporting can move beyond anecdotal information gathered from service coordinators and provide more detailed system-wide data on barriers to service access.

- Data collection should extend beyond simply gathering numbers and should help identify trends, service gaps, and the impact of policy changes over time. Jennifer noted that while surveys can be valuable, data should also be analyzed in ways that provide meaningful context and support quality improvement efforts. Members agreed that



establishing reliable baseline data now will make it possible to evaluate the effects of future system changes.

- Improving data collection will require collaboration among BDS, area agencies, providers, and other stakeholders. Members recognized that no single organization has the authority or resources to collect all necessary information independently, making continued partnership essential to developing a more comprehensive understanding of the developmental services system.

Member Relations Committee (Isadora)

The Member Relations Committee met the previous week to review and update the Council's interview questions and evaluation rubric for prospective Quality Council members.

The committee focused on ensuring that the interview materials reflect current terminology and practices. Revisions included updating language to align with current inclusive standards and ensuring that the interview questions more closely correspond to the evaluation rubric used to assess applicants. The revisions are editorial in nature and do not represent substantive changes to the Council's selection process.

Because the committee meeting occurred shortly before the full Council meeting, the revised documents were not available for Council review or approval. Members can expect to receive the updated materials for consideration at a future meeting.

There are currently vacancies on the Quality Council and encouraged members to recruit individuals who may be interested in serving. The committee is particularly seeking applicants with lived experience, including:

- Individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Individuals with acquired brain disorders.
- Family members of individuals receiving developmental disability or acquired brain disorder services.

Interested individuals may obtain an application and additional information about Council membership through the Quality Council website.

- During discussion, a member asked whether recruitment flyers distributed at a recent disability event had generated interest. Isadora reported that, to her knowledge, only one inquiry had been received, and that inquiry related to requesting an accommodation during the application process rather than submitting an application. No new membership applications had been received as a result of the event.
- To increase recruitment efforts, members suggested announcing the current vacancies during the upcoming Systems Review Committee public meeting and sharing the recruitment flyer and application link through the meeting chat to encourage additional participation.



Communications Committee (Karen)

Karen reported that the Communications Committee will now meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 9:00 a.m. and plans to maintain a consistent meeting schedule moving forward.

During its most recent meeting, the committee finalized its committee scope and purpose, along with a summary document, and submitted both for Council review. Karen highlighted that, under the committee's proposed structure, at least two-thirds of committee members should be seated members of the Quality Council. She noted that the committee is currently out of compliance with that goal because it consists of only two seated Council members and two volunteer members who are not Council members. Karen expressed that the Communications Committee should primarily be composed of seated Council members since it is responsible for communicating on behalf of the Quality Council.

Karen encouraged additional Council members to join the committee, emphasizing that members do not need experience with social media or communications. The committee is seeking individuals who can contribute ideas, develop content, identify educational materials, and assist with projects such as the Council's annual report and public information efforts.

Karen also asked whether other Quality Council committees have written scope or purpose statements. She explained that the Communications Committee developed one by following a general format but could not locate similar documents for the Council's other committees. She suggested that creating consistent one-page descriptions for each committee would help current and prospective members better understand each committee's responsibilities and determine where their interests and expertise would best fit.

- Lisa explained that the Communications Committee was asked to develop a scope because it is a relatively new committee that emerged from the Council's strategic planning process and members had expressed differing ideas about its role. Jessica agreed that developing similar one-page scope documents for all committees would improve consistency and could become a future project for each committee chair. She noted that these summaries would also be valuable recruitment tools by clearly describing each committee's priorities and responsibilities for new Council members.

Ad Hoc MAC committee

There has been a brief meeting, Marissa is feeling this should only take two meetings. She will to draft a letter to the full Council outlining concerns about the reduced meeting frequency.

- Previously, the MAC met monthly, but with the implementation of the Access Rule, meetings have been reduced to a quarterly schedule. During several previous MAC meetings, there are concern that the committee has historically shared a significant amount of valuable information, including Medicaid enrollment data and other important updates. While that information is still being shared, receiving it only on a quarterly basis

instead of monthly limits its usefulness. Marissa will suggest that it would be beneficial if this data could be distributed more regularly outside of the quarterly meetings.

- Feedback from several individuals regarding their experiences with the Beneficiary Advisory Committee (BAC). Described frustration and confusion surrounding meeting scheduling, cancellations, quorum issues, and a general lack of clarity about committee processes. These concerns will also be reflected in the draft.
- Acknowledgement that staff are clearly stretched thin, and there is an understanding of the resource challenges they are facing. However, there is also a broader system that is willing and ready to help ensure this important work continues effectively.
- Marissa is currently drafting the letter. If any members of the Beneficiary Advisory Committee have feedback, whether positive, constructive, or suggestions for improvement regarding the BAC's processes, she encourage them to send it to her so she can consider incorporating it. As with any recommendations, the draft will come before the Quality Council for discussion before it is shared more broadly.

Ad Hoc Staffing & Hiring Freeze Committee

An update was provided on the proposed ad hoc Staffing and Hiring Facilities Committee, which was intended to bring together members interested in expressing concerns about the hiring freeze and its impact on the system, including its downstream effects.

- Currently, only one additional member has expressed interest in participating. While Emily also offered to serve on the committee, it is important to have at least three members involved so that multiple perspectives are represented. As a result, the committee is currently on hold.
- If anyone is interested in participating, please reach out to either Shanon or Emily. Because this would be an ad hoc committee, it is anticipated it would require only two or three meetings at most. If we do not receive interest from at least one more member, Emily will assume there is not sufficient interest to move the committee forward at this time.
- Kelly expressed interest, Emily will reach out to set a meeting.

Legislative Update

An update was provided on several legislative initiatives affecting the developmental disabilities services system.

Regarding SB 670, it was noted that the bill has not yet been scheduled for further action. The legislation establishes a new oversight committee and makes additional changes related to the developmental disabilities registry. Under the legislation, the Senate President is responsible for appointing the Senate members of the committee, and the Speaker of the House appoints the



House members. Once the Senate appointments are made, the designated Senate member is expected to convene the committee's first meeting. As of the discussion, it was unclear whether those appointments had been made.

- The Governor is also responsible for appointing two family members of individuals with disabilities and two individuals with disabilities to serve on the committee. Members noted that the appointment process remains unclear, and individuals interested in serving have been encouraged to express their interest to the Governor's Office. The committee's first report is due by November 1, making timely appointments particularly important.

HB 763, which created a committee to study siting and maintenance rules for certain intellectual and developmental disability and acquired brain injury community residences. The committee has already held its first meeting. Concerns were raised that testimony presented reflected significant misconceptions about community residences and could lead to recommendations that unnecessarily restrict where these homes may be located.

- The Quality Council is identified as one of the stakeholder groups expected to provide testimony during the committee's work, along with Disability Rights Vermont, representatives of the Agency of Human Services, residential service providers, planning and zoning officials, and others. Members discussed the importance of preparing for that testimony and ensuring the committee understands its obligations under the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, including protections against discrimination in housing for people with disabilities.

Other Business and Announcements

Council members also discussed the widespread misunderstanding of what community residences are. Community residences are often incorrectly equated with transitional housing, halfway houses, or other residential programs, leading to community opposition based on inaccurate assumptions. Members suggested that any future testimony should clearly explain both what community residences are and what they are not.

- Examples were shared illustrating how inconsistent local zoning and permitting requirements create barriers to developing community residences and independent living opportunities. Requirements have varied significantly between municipalities, with some local officials requesting features or modifications that are unnecessary or based on misconceptions about the intended use of the home. Members noted that these inconsistent requirements can substantially increase project costs and discourage families and providers from pursuing community-based housing developments.
- Improving public understanding of community residences and educating policymakers and local officials will be critical as the legislative study committee continues its work. Accurate information about community-based services and housing models will help ensure future policy decisions support, rather than hinder, opportunities for individuals with disabilities to live in their communities.

Public Comments

The discussion continued regarding barriers to developing community residences and strategies for improving education and advocacy.

- One member noted that, in many cases, local planning or zoning boards are composed of volunteers who do their best but often have limited training in housing and disability law. As a result, misunderstandings and errors can occur during the permitting process. Members noted that decisions can be appealed through the state's established process, where appeals are reviewed based on applicable statutes and regulations rather than local opinion. This process can help ensure that local decisions comply with state law.
- It was also suggested that families encountering these barriers connect with advocacy organizations that have experience navigating similar issues and can provide technical assistance and support.
- Another member shared that their position is housed within one of the Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs), which regularly provides technical assistance to local planning boards and municipalities. If the Council wishes to pursue a broader, systemic educational effort, engaging the directors of the Regional Planning Commissions could provide an effective avenue for reaching local officials throughout the state. Members also discussed the possibility of developing a unified educational presentation after stakeholder testimony on HB 763 is complete. Such a resource could incorporate perspectives from developmental services, the Department of Health and Human Services, rights advocacy organizations, and other partners to promote consistent messaging about community residences and disability services.
- The study committee established under HB 763 could ultimately recommend changes to state law that make it easier for communities to exclude community residences. It was noted that much of the public discussion has been shaped by misinformation and isolated negative incidents that do not accurately reflect the experiences of most individuals living in community-based settings. Participants emphasized that these narratives could contribute to the devaluation of people with disabilities as members of their communities.
- Integrated community homes and inclusive housing models can provide meaningful opportunities for people with disabilities to live alongside other community members rather than in larger, segregated residential settings. These models promote inclusion, distribute housing opportunities more broadly throughout communities, and support the goal of community integration. Participants emphasized the importance of continuing to educate policymakers and the public about these models and the benefits they provide.

Let Shanon know if you would like to receive a stipend.

The meeting adjourned at 12:03PM