



## Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board

Monday, September 27, 2021 4:30-6:00 pm  
Virtual Zoom Meeting

### Meeting Minutes

**Board Members Present:**

Gina Bring  
Caroline Applebee  
Megen Porter  
Dana Weber

Raegen Miller  
Valerie Billmire  
Jeffrey Hart  
Ken Larson

**Board Members Excused:**

David Charleston  
Aaron Perzigian

**Board Members Absent:**

Artemis Langford  
Kathy Kershner

**Guests Present:**

Grant Zezula, DDA  
Shannon Neely, DDA  
Beverly Porter, Arc of Whatcom County  
Kait Whiteside, Max Higbee Center

Patricia Alderdate, DDA  
Krishna Herrera, DVR  
Aaron Dickson, Cascade Connections  
Stephanie Jones, DDA

**Staff:**

Jessica Lee, DD Specialist; Ann Beck, Supervisor; Ashley Geleynse, Coordinator

**1.  Call to Order & Introductions**

The meeting was called to order and introductions were conducted. Quorum was present.

**2.  Minutes Approval**

There were no objections to the July minutes as presented. The minutes were approved. Dana was not present for the vote.

**ACTION** July 26, 2021 minutes approved. Aye 7, Nay 0, Abstain 0



### **3. Program Update: DD Transition Coordinator**

Amber Wolpers is no longer with the County, and is now working for the state Developmental Disabilities Administration. The County DD Transition Coordinator position is open and posted, and the Health Department is currently reviewing applications.

### **4. Program Update: Vaccine Mandate and Services to Individuals with Disabilities**

Jessica reviewed potential impacts of Governor Inslee's vaccine mandate on DD services. The mandate is specific to state employees or contractors (including County staff and its contractors) and impacts those working in educational and health care settings. Agencies already struggling with staffing issues may have more difficulty hiring, or may lose staff related to the mandate. The board discussed the impacts the mandate is having on current staffing levels, ability to hire, and service provision. Impacts may be higher in those parts of the county and the state where vaccination rates are lower.

### **5. The North Star Project**

Jessica provided an overview of the North Star Project, convened by the Washington State Developmental Disability Council. The intent is to create a comprehensive [omnibus bill](#) to address improvements to the developmental disabilities service system. The goal is to include a wide range of stakeholders and address issues across service areas including education, employment/day services, caregiving, systems accessibility, healthcare, civil rights, housing, and transportation. The original plan was to design the bill to be introduced in the 2022 legislative session. Given the breadth of the bill, however, those timelines may need to be altered. The board discussed the challenges of and barriers to redesigning the developmental disabilities system. Jessica will keep the board apprised of progress on this project.

### **6. Community Protection Report**

The [Office of Developmental Disabilities Ombuds](#) is a private office that attempts to resolve complaints with the goal of improving services for people with developmental disabilities. Jessica shared a report from the DD Ombuds office titled "[No Way Out, An Introduction to the Community Protection Program.](#)" Concerns noted in the report include the young age at which many are referred, the loss of other DD services if an individual referred opts not to participate and the low "graduation" rate from the program. There are currently no licensed community protection residential programs in Whatcom County. Should that change, a corresponding employment provider trained to serve this population would be needed. The board discussed that education of law enforcement and other agencies would be also be needed before such a program could be implanted.

### **7. Public Comment**

Guest, Susan Jewell, shared that the [Arc of the U.S.](#) national convention is this September 27-29. Additionally, the [People First Convention](#) is happening October 22-24. Ken is also running for his second term as President of People First of Washington.

Housing for people with developmental disability in Whatcom County remains a topic of interest for the board. Ann Beck shared that the Health Department is in the process of hiring a housing specialist focused on affordable housing and development.

Ken shared that the WA State [Developmental Disabilities Council](#) is accepting applications from organizations to request one-time funding which benefits people who are eligible for DDA services. (but does not duplicate existing DD services) Applications will be accepted through October 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **8. Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned by Ken at 5:49 pm

**Next Meeting:** Monday, November 22, 2021. This meeting will be virtual on Zoom.  
Respectfully submitted by Ashley Geleynse, Coordinator

### **HD Staff**

Jessica Lee

### **Direct Phone Line**

360-778-6047

### **Email**

jlee@co.whatcom.wa.us