Developmental Disability Advocates
Connecting Individuals with Resources
IN JEFFERSON COUNTY - SINCE 1978

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY ADVOCATES BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING November 24, 2025

We create opportunities for people with developmental disabilities in Jefferson County to live fulfilling lives, by investing in services and building connections.

This meeting was held as a hybrid meeting in person with a virtual option through Microsoft Teams. The link and phone number to access the meeting virtually were posted more than 24 hours prior to the meeting per Missouri Sunshine Law.

PRESENT: Dr. Marsha Mertens, Chairperson; Amie Merz, Vice-Chairperson; Scott Brothers, Treasurer; Randy Starkey, Secretary; Tony Sokolic, Director; Danielle Moskop, Director; Cara Pellerin, Director; Stacey Ismail, Executive Director DD Advocates; Dave Weiler, Director of Administration DD Advocates; Dawn Warner, Executive Assistant DD Advocates.

ABSENT: Elizabeth Spaugh, Director; Jon Casey, Director

PUBLIC PRESENT: Emily Brouk, Jeff Niehaus, and Jennifer Granda - DD Advocates; Scott Shelton - Lafayette Jeffco; Sue Vogt and Tina Langford - Pony Bird; Jodi Woessner - Pathways to Independence; Rachel Svejkowski – FACT; J. Freeman

I. **OPEN and INTRODUCTIONS** – Dr. Marsha Mertens opened and led the monthly meeting of Developmental Disability Advocates Board of Directors at 6:30 p.m. Introductions of all in attendance were done at this time.

II. **MISSION STATEMENT** – Scott Brothers read the Mission Statement.

III. **MISSION MOMENT** – Jennifer Granda, Service Coordinator, shared about an individual she serves who was given a 30-day notice by her residential provider that she needed to move because they could no longer support her. However, she was not happy there and certain behaviors were putting herself and others at risk which led to an emergency respite need while she looked for a different residential provider. While at Oak Tree Respite, operated by UCP Heartland in Webster Groves, the individual's parents purchased a home to create an ISL for her and roommates to live in. The home needed modifications to meet her physical needs so Jennifer worked with an OT to obtain a modification evaluation, bids for all the needed items, and approval from DMH Universal Design and Assistive Technology (UDAT) committee. This process is very long and structured and required her to stay in respite much longer than expected. However, everything eventually fell into place and she moved on November 1st with services provided in her new home by UCP Heartland. She is very happy and looking for roommates. This process was a good learning opportunity for Jennifer, who can now assist others with this type of situation. Stacey Ismail shared that this individual was able to go to one of the only out of home respite providers in our region, but soon Pony Bird will open their respite home with four beds here in Jefferson County.

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – The open and closed session meeting minutes from October 27, 2025, were presented for approval. Cara Pellerin made a motion to approve the both the open and closed session meeting minutes from October 27, 2025, as presented. Tony Sokolic seconded. Motion carried and minutes approved.

V. **REPORTS**

a. **Financial Report**

The October 2025 financials were presented for review. This represents one-third of the way through the fiscal year. Service coordination is tracking on budget even with 3 recently hired Service Coordinators who are still training. Under expenses there are several items flagged as over budget that are "landlord" items.

These lines will likely be over for the full year. Total expenses are just a little more than 1% over budget due to these items. On the details of financial position page, it shows a treasury bill at 3.78% rate which comes due in December. Enterprise Bank has discontinued their brokerage service so these T-bill funds will be moved to 5- and 6-month CDs instead at around 3.5%. On details of checks written, it shows there were three payrolls in December. A payment to Reinhold Electric was noted in the amount of $11,900. This was for planned parking lot and security lighting at the Pomme's and Lafayette Jeffco locations. Another check noted was to Joint Sealing Solutions in the amount of $38,000. This represents planned repairs and parking lot sealing at the Pomme's and Lafayette Jeffco locations. These repairs were done to finish up projects that are a part of the property transitions. There was a payment to CDW Governmental of $28,000 noted which covers our data backup appliance, firewall, and three years of service. It was paid this way in order to receive a discount on the cost of this service. Scott Brothers made a motion to approve the October 2025 Financial Report as presented. Tony Sokolic seconded. Motion carried.

b. **Service Coordination Report** – Emily Brouk, Director of Service Coordination, shared the following information:

- ***Client Tally Report*** – There were 12 new individuals referred to us in October - 10 Medicaid and 2 were non-Medicaid. 2 individuals were discharged for a net growth of 10 for October and year to date net growth of 30 individuals. Currently DDA is serving 1,177 individuals. 830 through Targeted Case Management (TCM) and 347 through the Resource Specialist (RS). There are currently 12 transfers in process.
- ***Personnel*** – There was one resignation since the last board meeting, which was Shannon Carter. Shannon is a long term employe who most recently was working part-time for DDA. She left to devote her time to her real estate business full time.
- ***Logging*** – The October 2025 monthly team average was down slightly from the previous month to 70.3%. This is mainly due to having three new Service Coordinators. Even with the new hires, the teams YTD average is 76.1% which is over the goal of 75%. The three new hires are doing great.
- ***DMH Audits*** – There was an ISP review audit that was completed 11/20/25. Some Federal audits were pulled also. All information has been sent for both and no remediation information has been received on the information submitted.
- ***DMH Updates*** - We are continuing to receive transfers of individuals between the ages of 15-16 from the St Louis DMH Regional Office. We agreed to take 5 per week totaling about 30-35 individuals. The Supervisors have been working hard to make caseload assignments. DMH continues to pilot a new electronic intake application but it is not yet ready for the general public. DMH is also internally piloting a new electronic ISP called the Person-Centered Service Plan (PCSP) and will likely pilot with a few TCM agencies in Spring 2026.
- ***SETWorks Updates*** – We are in the process of working with SETWorks to implement their AI features into our system. These are quality control measures that should improve our billable percentage as it will catch errors in the log notes that make them non-billable. It will also eventually improve the grammar, punctuation and human error mistakes that are made. The Service Coordination leadership continues to participate in SETWorks monthly webinars. Emily also attended their seminar at the Starling Conference.
- ***SNAP Benefits, Food and Hygiene Supply Drive*** – In light of the SNAP Benefits being in jeopardy, we partnered with Sunnyhill on a food and hygiene supply drive. DDA collected more than 615 items and thank the Board members for their contributions. Food baskets and hygiene baskets were handed out to some of the individuals we serve, and Sunnyhill picked up the food we had left to add to their distribution. The hygiene items were collected as a part of the Jefferson County Coalition for the Unhoused. They do blessing boxes for the unhoused in Jefferson County. Our team did a great job and brought in a lot of items to help people.

c. **Executive Director Report** – Stacey Ismail distributed her Executive Director report for review:

- ***Legislative Update:*** The Board was provided a handout of MACDDS Legislative priorities. This session the focus will be on no cuts to the DMH budget instead of requesting any increases as it is going to be a difficult state budget year. A handout on property taxes was included that explains what the proposed legislation means to agencies like ours. SB3 accounts for $26M in SB40 funds statewide. This flyer is an education sheet that explains what the impact would be and is a tool to have when talking with legislators. The third handout is an informational overview of SB3. There are lawsuits filed against it, and right now it isn't known what is going to happen with this. DDA is in the zero-growth category of the legislation. This would make it difficult to add new services, keep up with inflation and cost of living adjustments for our staff and for provider services. Additionally, Governor Kehoe wants to phase out income taxes. There was a Legislative Coffee event at Sunnyhill Camp in Dittmer on November 3rd. Rep. Reuter was the only legislator to attend. There was good public turnout and good conversation.

- ***DMH Update:*** Emily covered most of the DMH updates in her Service Coordination report. DMH is starting to embrace our interest in serving more people and DDA is seeing more transfers. The ERA Executive Directors are meeting tomorrow, November 25th with Val Huhn, Director of DMH, and Sheila Wunning, Director of Developmental Disabilities, to discuss their priorities for expansion in the eastern region of the state and how we can all partner around those priorities.
- ***FY27 ERA Partner Funding Manual:*** This was emailed to the Board for review for their information on the funding and funding cycle. Stacey provided a summary of changes in the email for the Board.
- ***Starling:*** Starling was previously known as MARF – The Missouri Association for Rehabilitation Facilities. In Missouri, there has been two main statewide disability related organizations, MACDDS and MARF. MACDDS is primarily the SB40 Board association and MARF, now Starling, is more for waiver funded service providers. Several SB40 Boards belong to Starling because of the networking opportunity with service providers, their aggressive legislative approach, and the different perspective you get to understand the full picture. DDA has not been a member in the past, but the team feels it would be strategically beneficial to join at this time. DDA has submitted the membership application and was approved by Starling to join. Starling only meets every other month and the cost to join is around $5,000/year compared to MACDDS who meets every month and membership dues are $12,500/year. This was an action step in our strategic plan. Emily and Stacey have attended the Starling Leadership conference the past two years and found it to be excellent.
- ***LASE Presentation:*** LASE stands for Local Area Special Educators and Cara Pellerin is the current President. LASE hosted a meeting on November 20th where Stacey, Emily and Donna Pulliam from DDA presented about our services. There was much beneficial conversation about how we can partner to serve individuals with I/DD and their families. All local school districts attended with the exception of Dunklin.
- ***Kades Playground Expansion:*** Stacey attended an informational meeting regarding the proposed expansion and brought information to share with the Board. There are different sponsorship levels available. When the playground was originally built, the Board donated/sponsored the build by providing $50,000 toward the playground. They did not provide funding for the second phase. There are several fundraising opportunities being planned by their committee that anyone is welcome to attend. We have not been directly approached as a Board at this time for a specific funding request.
- ***Board Holiday Dinner Reminder:*** A reminder was in the packet about the upcoming Board holiday dinner at Taytro's on Thursday, December 11th at 6pm. The Agency party for all staff is on December 10th at 11am and the Board is welcome to attend.
- ***Annual Rate Adjustment for FY27:*** It is the time of year where the Board needs to decide whether we are or are not adding an Annual Rate Adjustment for FY27 levy funded projects. If we choose to do it, it is automatically added through the ERA portal to all Purchase of Service (POS) and grant funding requests that include wages, and does not apply to any capital funding requested. PLB is planning a 3% adjustment, DDR is doing a 2.5% adjustment and social security is going up 2.7%. St. Charles DDRB is not going to do a rate adjustment. They are in a reduce spending mode and are very concerned with SB3. Dave is recommending a 3% rate adjustment for the FY27 applications. Last year was 3% and in FY25 it was 3.5%. We do not know any levy impact from SB3 at this time, however our reserves are such that we can do it for this year and make future determinations one year at a time based on any fiscal impacts. It was also mentioned

that continuing to support service providers to conduct business in our county aligns with our strategic plan. Scott Brothers made a motion to approve a 3% Annual Rate Adjustment increase being added for FY27 funding requests involving wages. Cara Pellerin seconded. Motion carried.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. **Barb McDowell Memorial Fund Annual Report:** The report is for the fiscal year which ended June 30, 2025. This is the 25th anniversary of the fund which was established by Barb McDowell, the Executive Assistant to Dr. Tony Casey of JCDDRB for many years. She started this to help fill needs that individuals served by DDA and the DMH Regional Office in Jefferson County have where there is no other funding available. The McDowell family regularly donates money to the fund and the DDA team does one or two small fundraisers each year to contribute to the fund. The DDA agency credit card rebate is applied to the fund each year as well. Currently there is $17,000 in the account. During 25 years over $85,000 in funding has been provided.

b. **Accessibility Plan annual Review:** This is a CARF required plan. There have been no significant changes, just small revisions. The end of the report shows the goals and outcomes. Employment and technology data is difficult for us to obtain, so we are looking at ways to better pull this in the future. The information comes from multiple sources making it challenging to report unduplicated data and authorized vs. utilized. However, these are still important areas to continue to assess so we will be diligent about finding better ways to capture and report the data.

c. **Board Succession Plan Annual Review:** This is a CARF standard to outline the process for a planned or sudden departure of a Board member. There have been essentially no revisions to this plan for the past several years other than expanding the Nominating Committee's role to include succession planning when discussing officer candidates each year.

d. **Critical Incident Annual Analysis:** It is required by CARF to review all critical incidents annually and conduct an analysis to identify trends, outline action taken, and discuss remediation strategies. The most significant incident for DDA this past year was the tornado that impacted Jefferson County in March 2025 and resulted in generator failure at the Pomme Apartments, which we own. That incident was thoroughly analyzed in the report with suggested changes for the future. There were no trends identified when comparing all the incidents this year. All incidents are discussed by the Leadership Team as they occur and are addressed as necessary.

e. **CARF Appreciation Request:** The Board has typically expressed their appreciation to DDA employees for their efforts to maintain our CARF accreditation each year. In previous years, this has been a $50 bonus added to a December payroll. The Leadership team feels this is a worthy practice to continue and is appreciated by employees. Scott Brothers made a motion to approve a $50 CARF Appreciation Award to all DDA employees on the next payroll cycle. Randy Starkey seconded. Motion carried.

f. **Health Insurance Renewal:** A handout was provided to the Board showing the health insurance renewal options for the January 1, 2026 renewal. A 10% rate increase was budgeted, however to renew with the same United Healthcare PPO plan, it would be a 12.5% increase. If this is the chosen option, one strategy could be to increase the employee contribution from $36 to $46 per payroll (26 per year). This increase would keep us within the 10% increase which was budgeted. They also offered options to consider which would increase deductibles or decrease the network of doctors. An example is if DDA opted to drop the BJC network, the increase was only 3%. BJC is too valuable to our staff and was not a viable option to drop. The recommendation was Column D, where the deductible increases from $500 to $1,000 resulting in a 10.5% increase. That combined with the increased employee contribution keeps us within the 10% budgeted increase. The HSA health savings account plan currently has 4 employee participants. Column G is the current plan for this and by increasing the deductible as shown in Column J would be a 6.6% increase and is what is being recommended for the renewal. There are no changes to dental and vision plans. Scott Brothers made a motion to approve the agency health insurance renewal with United Healthcare using Columns D for PPO and J for HSA from the handout. Tony Sokolic seconded. Motion carried.

g. **D&O/Cyber Security Insurance Renewal:** This is a reminder that the Directors & Officers and Cybersecurity coverages renew on January 1, 2026, with Philadelphia for D&O and a Consortium of Providers for Cybersecurity. We will keep consistent levels of coverages from the prior year.

h. **Board Re-Appointments – Randy, Scott, Tony and Cara:** Randy Starkey is up for Board renewal in November 2025 and Scott Brothers, Tony Sokolic and Cara Pellerin are up for renewal in January 2026.

Emails were sent to each of them with the application information for reappointment and we would love to see each of them continue for another term. Cara has submitted hers to the County Executive's office and Randy and Scott have both agreed to serve another 3-year term. Tony is still considering his options and will let Stacey know before the end of the year.

i. **2026 Board Calendar Approval:** A draft 2026 meeting calendar was presented for approval. Scott Brothers made a motion to approve the 2026 Board Calendar as presented. Cara Pellerin seconded. Motion carried.

VII. OLD BUSINESS – None

VIII. APPROVAL OF REQUISITION – The Requisition for December 2025/January 2026 was presented for approval since there is not a Board meeting in December. This requisition is based upon the FY26 budget. Amie Merz made a motion to approve the December 2025/January 2026 requisition as presented. Tony Sokolic seconded. Motion carried.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT – There were no comments from the public in attendance.

X. COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD – There were no comments from the Board members.

XI. CLOSED SESSION – Missouri Sunshine Law RsMO610.021 (2) Real Estate – Amie Merz made a motion to go into Closed Session at 7:47 pm pursuant to Missouri Sunshine Law RsMO610.021 (2) Real Estate. Tony Sokolic seconded. Dr. Marsha Mertens called for a roll call vote to go into Closed Session. Randy Starkey, yes; Danielle Moskop, yes; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, absent; Cara Pellerin, yes; Jon Casey, absent; Scott Brothers, yes; Amie Merz, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. Motion carried.

XII. ADJOURN – Being no further business, Amie Merz made a motion to adjourn the regular session at 8:13 pm. Scott Brothers seconded. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Starkey, Secretary