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

January 26, 2026

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

Due to weather, this meeting was held as a virtual only meeting. The in-person option was cancelled. The link and phone number to access the meeting virtually were posted more than 24 hours prior to the meeting per Missouri Sunshine Law. Notification of the virtual only meeting was made by 9:00 am via email and posted to all social media.

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

ABSENT: Cara Pellerin, Director

PUBLIC PRESENT: Emily Brouk, Jeff Niehaus, Nathan Patton and Libby Schueddig - DD Advocates; Scott Shelton, Vicky James and Stacey Elster - Lafayette Jeffco; Sue Vogt - Pony Bird; Jodi Woessner - Pathways to Independence; Rachel Svejkowski – FACT; Josh Freeman

I. **OPEN and INTRODUCTIONS** – Dr. Marsha Mertens opened and led the monthly meeting of Developmental Disability Advocates Board of Directors at 6:32 p.m. Introductions of all in attendance were done at this time.

II. **MISSION STATEMENT** – Amie Merz read the Mission Statement.

III. **MISSION MOMENT** – Libby Schueddig, Service Coordinator, shared about an individual she serves who moved from an ISL to a Host Home. Now that she has settled into a routine, she is doing great. She has been playing soccer and began attending a day program at Aspiring Solutions Imperial location. She is excited to be there and is having a blast. Her host home family says that she is so happy and enjoying the day program. A host home is a residential arrangement where the individual lives in someone else's home with them versus an ISL where there is typically 3 individuals with disabilities living together and have support from staff as needed.

IV. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – The open and closed session meeting minutes from November 24, 2025, were presented for approval. Tony Sokolic made a motion to approve both the open and closed session meeting minutes from November 24, 2025, as presented. Jon Casey seconded. Dr. Marsha Mertens called for a roll call vote. Amie Merz, yes; Scott Brothers, yes; Randy Starkey, yes; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, yes; Cara Pellerin, absent; Danielle Moskop, yes; Jon Casey, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. Motion carried and minutes approved.

V. **REPORTS**

a. **Financial Report** - The December financial report was presented. This report represents half of the fiscal year. The top two lines of the report show Service Coordination revenue. If the two lines are combined it puts Service Coordination at 49% to date. With all the November and December holidays, this is a very good number. County tax revenue was almost $2M received in December. December is typically a high month, however this was a very strong December for tax receipts. There are a few items tracking over budget. These items are timing related, or landlord related including repairs and maintenance for buildings we still own. Total expenses through December is right at 50% target even with the items that are tracking over. On the Details of the Financial Position page, it shows there is a CD which matures this month at $2M and a Treasury bill that matured in December at $1M. These have been renewed as CDs at Enterprise Bank. One for 13 months at 3.5% and the other for 6 months at 3.6%. Previously, we had around a 4% rate so these are earning just slightly below that. On the Details of Checks Written page, Check 32213 to Philadelphia was noted - this is the liability package and umbrella policy payment which renewed October 31st. The invoice was received and paid in December. Check 32228 to Koury Insurance for the Cyber Security policy which renewed January 1st. A question was raised as to why there are two AT& T charges and a Spectrum charge for internet. The agency has duplicated internet connection, so that if one system goes down, the other will take over. They work in tandem with each other. The second AT&T charge is for the service and equipment which combines the Spectrum and AT&T internet called SDWAN. Amie Merz made a motion to approve the December Financial report as presented. Elizabeth Spaugh seconded. Dr. Marsha Mertens called for a roll call vote. Amie Merz, yes; Scott Brothers, yes; Randy Starkey, yes; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, yes; Cara Pellerin, absent; Danielle Moskop, yes; Jon Casey, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. Motion carried and December Financial Report approved.

b. **Service Coordination Report** – Emily Brouk, Director of Service Coordination, shared the following information:
   - ***Client Tally Report*** – In December, there were 5 new individuals received and 5 were discharged for a net growth of zero for the month. Currently the agency is serving 1,201individuals. 848 are served through Targeted Case Management and 353 through Resource Specialist. To give some comparison to the previous year there was a graph added to the packet. It shows that in December of 2024 the agency served 1,062 as compared to December of 2025 at 1,201 for a growth year over year of 139 individuals. 100 of those are through the Resource Specialist program and 39 through Targeted Case Management. The goal is to serve all eligible individuals in Jefferson County and based upon Census records that number is believed to be around 3,400 individuals.
   - ***Intake*** – Through intake, we received 12 individuals in October, 30 in November, and 5 in December. 7 individuals were transferred due to turning age 16, 12 were transfers from other counties and 28 were new intakes from SLRO. Donna Pulliam took 36 cold calls in October -16 in November and 17 in December. 26 of those were referred to DMH-DD intake. 12 found us through our website, 1 through their school district, 3 from another community agency, 12 through word of mouth, with the remaining 41 not providing information on how they learned of us.
   - ***Personnel*** – There has been one SC resignation since the last board meeting. The team just finished a very strong round of interviews which resulted in two new hires. Elizabeth Wolk will start with DDA on February 2nd and Raena Reynolds on February 9th. Elizabeth will fill the spot vacated by Kaitlyn Hayden and Raena was hired for caseload growth.
   - ***Logging*** – In December, the team surpassed the logging goal of 75% with 76.8%. The YTD team average is 76.2%. These are impressive numbers considering the three newly hired staff. Q1 Billing review for FY26 was completed. There were 140 notes reviewed from 29 Service Coordinators and only one note was found that needed retraction amounting to $250.56. The note contained both billable and non-billable activity. The team was reminded at the January team meeting to separate the billable and non-billable activity in their logging.
   - ***Partnership for Hope (PfH) Semi Annual Report*** – In FY26, Q1 there were three (3) new Partnership for Hope waiver slots awarded. However, six (6) were terminated and closed. There are currently 88 waiver slots for Jefferson County with one (1) pending and one (1) on the waitlist. There is $633,000 in authorized funding for those 88 active PfH waiver slots. It is anticipated that more PfH waiver slots will close during the year. This is largely due to the rising cost of services. This waiver is capped at a maximum of $12,362.
   - ***Audits*** – Our DMH ISP review audit was completed in December and our MO Healthnet (Medicaid) FY26 Q2 audit completed in January 2026. No issues noted in either.
   - ***DMH Updates*** – There will be a new Self-Directed Services (SDS) fiscal intermediary called Public Partnerships, LLC (PPL) as of July 1. SDS are authorized for families to hire people to come into their home and provide personal assistance and require a fiscal intermediary for payment. This contract is re-bid every three years. We are still not 100% clear whether or not we will continue to get new intakes and transfers from the SLRO due to them needing to fill their caseloads to 35-40 first. We were supposed to receive as many as 30 people who were age 15-16 but only 7 were actually transferred. Overall, we are just taking who is sent to us at this point and

not asking a whole lot of questions as the information seems to be inconsistent and vague. We will continue to monitor how many and who are being transferred and engage in further conversations if warranted.

- ***SETWorks Updates*** – The team is working to embrace some new AI features built into SETWorks. They should make the work more efficient and billable. A small group of users are testing it first and then it will be rolled out to the full team March 1st after training on February 24. The service coordination leadership continues to attend the monthly SETWorks webinars and training courses to remain aware of all the new features rolling out quickly.
- ***Data Manager Position*** – Over the last several months the team has been working with Sarah Buek from The Illumilab on streamlining processes, data collection and reporting and overall efficiency. After assessment and observation, Sara's primary recommendation was that DDA devote a full-time position to process and data management. This position would oversee all the data collection, needs, and reporting; facilitate the automation and streamlining of processes to be more efficient with clearly defined roles for key positions; implement and train on new software and enhancements; etc. The more efficient we become, the more time that can be spent building relationships in the community with people served, their families and other stakeholders at all levels of the agency. Overall, we want to improve the quality of our Service Coordination. The Leadership Team has embraced this recommendation and asked Jeff Dickemper, one of the current Supervisors, to fill this role effective February 1st. He has a unique skill set of understanding the SC processes, making necessary changes to SETWorks, developing AI agents and bots, building databases, and training. It is unknown if this will need to be a permanent role or temporary. The SC staff he currently supervises will be re-assigned between the other three Supervisors.

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

- ***Legislative Update*** – Governor Kehoe gave his State of the State address on January 13, and released his FY27 budget with many reductions. Specific to I/DD, he reduced the rate of Day Program from $43.24 per hour to $28.84 per hour (a 33% reduction) that may impact the availability of Jefferson County day programs currently operated by Pony Bird, Judevine, Aspiring Solutions, Sunnyhill and others throughout the state. He also reduced the rate of Self-Directed Personal Assistant from $33.00 per hour to $26.04 per hour. Also, the current Self-Directed Medical Exception Personal Assistant rate is $36.76 per hour, and the Governor's proposal would reduce this rate to $26.04 per hour. These reductions may make it difficult for families to hire staff to support their family member with daily living activities in their home and community. There are also proposed reductions to new Medicaid waiver slots which will very likely create a waitlist for services for people who do not already have one.
  Stacey has been sharing legislative summaries from both MACDDS and Starling with the Board. These have been very informative on the State budget and clarifies that it will be a very challenging budget year. In the packet there were two legislative handouts from Starling. Stacey participated through Starling in their legislative advocacy day at the Capitol. She was paired with representatives from Pony Bird and Judevine for the visits. They met with Representatives Williams, Lucas, Casteel and Senator Henderson. Stacey will continue to forward all the legislative updates. Stacey and Emily are going to MACDDS on Wednesday. MACDDS focus is property tax bill related. SB3 was approved by a Judge in Cole County to appear on ballots in April, so we will get a copy of that language. There are over 100 property tax related bills and the Governor is also wanting to eliminate state income tax. These will all be issues to track through the end of the legislative session in May.
- ***DMH Update*** – The communication DDA received from DMH in December is that they needed to fill their Jefferson County DMH Office caseloads first before DDA would get new referrals. They need 40-45 individuals in order for their caseloads to be full. DDA will receive intakes and transfers that are already in process which is around 17 individuals. Once the Jefferson County Regional office fills their caseloads with the 40-45 individuals, the age cut-off at 16 will no longer be in effect. Typically, DDA's referrals were 16 and older. DMH has ended age cut-offs throughout the State and going forward they will send all intakes no matter the age. All new Pony Bird residential clients will come to us due to the complexity of those plans.

- ***Plass Campus*** - There is a tour planned for tomorrow with MO Mentor. Dave has been working with MRC Restoration to remediate the mold in Plass B basement. During the remediation, asbestos was found in one area of the basement and had to be addressed. The work is now completed and looks great. This work cost around $30,000 and was needed in order to transfer or sell the property.
- ***Foundation Work*** – DDA was awarded a Jefferson Foundation grant of $20,000 to help cover the cost of foundation repair needed at the Imperial office. Foundation Recovery Systems completed the foundation work at a cost of $60,398.13. There was an electrical line in the way of some of the foundation work. Reinhold Electric was contracted to move it at a cost of $2,500. In addition, some of the landscaping had to be moved 10ft out from the building to make way for this work at a cost of $1,500. There will be additional costs in the spring to re-do the landscaping around the building. Some additional work inside the building will need to be done to repair cracks in drywall and floor.
- ***HRIS*** – DDA uses a homegrown system that was developed by Doug Oiler prior to the separation from Next Step for Life. It is built on an Access Database that is no longer supported by Microsoft. It is not stable and has security concerns. The team met with and received bids from Paychex (Paycor), ADP and SETWorks. Payroll is currently done through Paycor. Paycor was purchased by Paychex. The team is going to sit down and look at features and prices. The full package through Paychex would cost an additional $27,000 per year. It would give us access to a SHRM profession to help with HR needs. A Jefferson Foundation grant will be submitted to help with some of the initial cost. That grant application is due February 6th.
- ***Board Re-appointments*** – Randy, Cara and Scott all submitted their paperwork and have been re-appointed and sworn in by the County Council. Tony has also submitted his paperwork and may be on their agenda this evening and if not, will be on the February 9th agenda for re-appointment. Stacey expressed thanks on behalf of the organization that everyone agreed to continue on the board. The continuity of members is very beneficial.
- ***Partner Review Meetings*** – The FY27 budget cycle started this month. Partner review meetings are done every other year with the funded agency. If funded by more than one of the ERA boards, there is one meeting versus separate. Stacey and Dave have met with Pony Bird, UCP Heartland, FACT, Lafayette Industries and Pathways to Independence this year.
- ***Agency E-mail*** – Stacey and Nathan Patton have met and discussed a plan to assign agency email addresses for the Board members. DDA has an attorney's opinion that it would be better to have agency information sent in this manner. Nathan will get with you to once set up to get you connected. During the transition, emails will be sent to your personal email alerting you to check your DDA email. In March there will be testing of the Sharepoint site where all the board materials will be housed as well as historical documents that members might want to refer back to for information.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. **Annual Declaration of Personnel, Medical and Consumer Records as Closed** – According to the Missouri Sunshine Law, the Board annually must make this declaration and have it recorded in the minutes in order to maintain certain records as closed records. Jon Casey made a motion to declare all personnel, medical and consumer records as closed records. Tony Sokolic seconded. Dr. Marsha Mertens called for a roll call vote. Amie Merz, yes; Scott Brothers, yes; Randy Starkey, yes; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, yes; Cara Pellerin, absent; Danielle Moskop, yes; Jon Casey, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. Motion carried.

b. **Agency Benefits Statement** – Dave shared that it is a best practice to provide an annual Agency Benefits Statement to employees and the Board. Each employee received a statement with their own personal benefits information to demonstrate the full cost of their compensation package. The one presented to the Board is the summary of the full agency. The total compensation package for 2025 was $3,000,920. The cost of employer sponsored benefits as a percentage of total compensation is 33%. The back side of the document has a description of each benefit offered by the agency.

c. **Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Recommendation** – During a recent Leadership Team discussion, it was stated that many of our employees are in crisis from time to time and experience trauma through work and personal life. The Supervisors often feel that they become counselors. The idea to explore a more robust EAP program was suggested. The current EAP plan, provided by MetLife, includes some grief counseling – online or in-person, and also on-site support if a critical incident or tragedy occurs. Other options were reviewed by the Benefits Committee and then presented to the Leadership team for review. Lincoln Financial who currently provides dental and vision coverage for the agency, has a plan that the team felt would be of great benefit to add for a minimal cost. It includes several in-person and online options and the employees' spouse and dependents can take advantage of it as well. Six in-person counseling sessions per person, per issue, per year are included on a variety of issues. Many online resources are available on a variety of topics as well. There are legal services available including one free 30-minute consultation. It includes work-life balance assistance also, which was very important to the Leadership team. The cost is $1.32/month per employee, which is about $650 per year to cover the entire agency. If added, the agency would keep the MetLife on-site trauma benefit provided through the Life and Long-Term Disability coverage. If approved by the Board, it would likely go into effect March 1, 2026. Elizabeth Spaugh made a motion to approve the addition of EAP services through Lincoln Financial at a cost of $1.32/month per employee. Jon Casey seconded. Dr. Marsha Mertens called for a roll call vote. Amie Merz, yes; Scott Brothers, yes; Randy Starkey, yes; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, yes; Cara Pellerin, absent; Danielle Moskop, yes; Jon Casey, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. Motion carried.

d. **Meal and Rest Break Policy Approval** - Some recent situations led the Leadership Team to do a more thorough review of what is communicated to employees about the agency meal and rest break policy and practices. It was determined that information provided is not as clear as it should be with regard to the expected practice. Therefore, a revised policy was written to provide thorough clarification. This policy complies with federal and state wage and hour rules. Tony Sokolic made a motion to approve the Meal and Rest Break Policy as presented. Amie Merz seconded. Dr. Marsha Mertens called for a roll call vote. Amie Merz, yes; Scott Brothers, yes; Randy Starkey, yes; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, yes; Cara Pellerin, absent; Danielle Moskop, yes; Jon Casey, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. Motion carried.

e. **Strategic Plan Review** – The Board agreed to review the Strategic Plan quarterly to keep the goals and outcomes in front of everyone. All the goals are still very relevant; however, priorities might have changed due to changes in our operating environments.

    i. Goal #1- Expand to serve all eligible individuals in the county. This is in process with some steps completed and others pending as we wait for decisions to be made by DMH.

    ii. Goal #2 – Divestment of real estate holdings. The Pommes have been donated to Pony Bird but the others are in process. Tomorrow we are meeting with MO Mentor to tour the Plass Campus. Lafayette Jeffco requested a delay with the transition of the property due to an inspection of the roof indicating that the older sections need replacement which will likely be $200,000 - $300,000. They asked for time to fundraise for this and submit a Jefferson Foundation request. The goal is to transfer the property by June 30th. There is a flyer in the packet for a trivia night fundraiser "Raise the Roof" at Sunnyhill Camp in Dittmer to raise funds for this project. The property on A road is the 3rd priority.

    iii. Goal #3 - Proactive, strategic funding policies and establishing funding priorities. The only board in the ERA that issued a funding priorities message was DDR in the City. They identified some unspent funds which they are prioritizing towards new funding applications. The PLB has entered into a 3 year $9M project to spend down reserves. The DDRB in St. Charles is in a decrease spending mode due to concerns about SB3. Stacey and Dave discussed this funding cycle and feel DDA needs to be conservative this year. The Senior tax freeze amounts to a $29,000 <u>growth</u> reduction for FY26 and SB3 has our county in the zero growth category if passed in April. The priority of the Board to decrease capital expenditures to fund more direct services has been communicated and seems like an appropriate step this year.

    iv. Goal #4 – Increased transportation efficiency. There does need to be conversation with Oats regarding the perceived inefficiencies of their fixed routes and demand response. Once the budget is completed, Dave will shift his focus to working with Oats on this.

VII. **OLD BUSINESS –**

a. **Directors and Officers Insurance Policy -** It is best practice to provide the members of the Board a copy of Directors and Officers Insurance coverage. There are two separate policies which cover D&O - a Flexi Plus5 and Fiduciary Private Company Protection. There is $3M in coverage. Both are through Philadelphia. This renewed January 1st.

VIII. **APPROVAL OF REQUISITION** – The Requisition for February and March 2026 was presented for approval. Two months were presented since there is not a Board meeting in February. This requisition is based upon the FY26 budget. Randy Starkey made a motion to approve the February/March 2026 requisition as presented. Elizabeth Spaugh seconded. Dr. Marsha Mertens called for a roll call vote. Amie Merz, yes; Scott Brothers, yes; Randy Starkey, yes; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, yes; Cara Pellerin, absent; Danielle Moskop, yes; Jon Casey, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. 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. **ADJOURN** – Being no further business, Amie Merz made a motion to adjourn the regular session at 8:02 pm. Jon Casey seconded. Dr. Marsha Mertens called for a roll call vote. Amie Merz, yes; Scott Brothers, yes; Randy Starkey, yes; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, yes; Cara Pellerin, absent; Danielle Moskop, yes; Jon Casey, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Starkey, Secretary

Randy Starkey