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

Minutes of the Regular Session Meeting
Developmental Disability Advocates Board of Directors
March 23, 2026 - 6:30 PM

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

Attendance

Board Members Present: Dr. Marsha Mertens, Chairperson; Amie Merz, Vice-Chairperson; Tony Sokolic, Director; Elizabeth Spaugh, Director; Cara Pellerin, Director; Danielle Moskop, Director; Jon Casey, Director (virtual)
Board Members Absent: Randy Starkey, Secretary; Scott Brothers, Treasurer
DDA Administration Present: Stacey Ismail, Executive Director; David Weiler, Director of Administration; Dawn Warner, Executive Assistant; Emily Brouk, Director of Service Coordination; Jeff Niehaus, Asst. Director of Service Coordination, Nathan Patton, Director of Information Technology; Donna Pulliam, Intake and Community Specialist
Public Present: In person – Kevin Wendel, Scott Shelton, Stacey Elster, and Vicky James, Lafayette Jeffco; Virtual attendees – Heather Lang-Portell, Pony Bird; Kayla Schmelze, Sunnyhill; Christine Kennett, FACT; Liz Cottrel, Pathways to Independence

Call to Order & Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Dr. Marsha Mertens, Board Chair. Board members present in person and virtually were introduced. Agency leadership and invited community partners were also introduced, including representatives from Sunnyhill, Pony Bird, F.A.C.T., and Lafayette Jeffco. David Weiler, Director of Administration, was recognized for 30 years of dedicated service to the organization.

Mission Statement

The mission statement was read by Tony Sokolic:
We create opportunities for people with developmental disabilities in Jefferson County to live fulfilling lives, by investing in services and building connections.

Mission Moment

Donna Pulliam shared a mission moment highlighting successful internal collaboration to secure an appropriate medical personal assistant for an individual with significant medical and communication needs. The discussion emphasized dignity of risk, individualized choice, and positive outcomes achieved through creative problem-solving and community relationships.

Approval of Minutes

Motion: To approve the Open Session Minutes from January 26, 2026.
Moved by: Cara Pellerin
Seconded by: Tony Sokolic
Vote: Open Session Minutes from January 26, 2026, approved by voice vote; no opposition noted.

Reports

Financial Report (February 2026)

Key highlights of the February financial report were reviewed:

- Revenues and expenditures continue to track closely with the approved budget.
- County tax levy revenues reached 100% of the annual budgeted amount by February and are projected to exceed budget by approximately 2–3% by fiscal year end.
- Office expenses are temporarily tracking above budget due to planned annual IT equipment replacement purchases.
- Jefferson County Community Partnership (JCCP) expenditures are trending higher than budgeted due to increased client volume and service needs.
- Total expenditures through February are approximately 65% of budget, favorable for two-thirds of the fiscal year.
- Agency reserve funds were restructured from Treasury Bills into Certificates of Deposit to maximize interest earnings.

Motion: To approve the February 2026 Financial Report.
Moved by: Amie Merz
Seconded by: Tony Sokolic
Vote: February 2026 Financial Report approved by voice vote; no opposition noted.

Service Coordination Report

The Service Coordination report was presented, including:

- New client intakes totaled 13 in January and 11 in February.
- February reflected a net decrease (-1) in active clients due to relocations, deaths, and inability to contact. We keep data on all the reasons why someone is discharged.
- The service coordination team is fully staffed; newly hired coordinators will assume full caseloads effective April 1, 2026.
- One staff separation of the Administrative Assistant since the last meeting. Interviews are scheduled for this week.

- Logging expectation is 75% and to achieve the incentive amount it is 78%. The January monthly team average was 76.5% and YTD average was 76.3%.
- Audit, ISP review, and Level of Care data exceeded statewide performance averages.
- Health Information Network (HIN) Fact Sheet was included in packet. These are being sent to all families served along with a letter explaining if they do not want to participate, they must "opt-out".
- A system issue related to the Health Risk Screening Plan (HRSP) attestation was identified by DMH and a corrective workflow adjustment was implemented. DMH is hopeful this data can be corrected in time for review by the Centers for Medicaid Services.
- New AI-supported documentation tools were implemented March 1 to improve billing accuracy and efficiency.

Executive Director Report

The Executive Director provided updates including:

- Legislative developments related to Missouri tax policy, potential reductions in property tax growth, and associated funding risks. Closely watching SB3, which is Question 1 on the Jefferson County ballot for April 7. If SB3 passes and is not overturned due to a pending lawsuit, it would mean approximately $500,000 in loss of growth to the tax levy beginning 2028. HB3467, if passed would allow DDA to put forth a ballot measure for up to a half cent sales tax to offset the property tax reduction.
- If personal property taxes are eliminated, it would result in a $900,000+ reduction in tax levy dollars.
- Department of Mental Health budget status – the House Appropriations Committee re-funded the rates for Day Program and SDS Personal Assistant but eliminated all new waiver slots for the upcoming fiscal year. Now the proposed House budget goes to the Senate Appropriations Committee for review. Budgets have to be finalized by May 8.
- Continued advocacy efforts at the state level through regional and statewide coalitions.
- The Eastern Region Alliance (ERA) is receiving recognition through Focus St. Louis' "What's Right with the Region" award in the category of improving equity and inclusion. The awards ceremony is Thursday, May 7 from 5:00 – 8:00 pm at Touhill Performing Arts Center at UMSL. Stacey and Dave will be attending on behalf of DDA, and if any members of the board would like to attend, please notify Stacey or Dawn.
- There is ongoing due diligence by Mo Mentor regarding potential disposition of the Plass campus property.
- Continued evaluation of HRIS and payroll system options to address security, compliance, and cost-effectiveness.

Lafayette Jeffco Quarterly Report

Leadership from Lafayette Jeffco provided a quarterly update highlighting:

- Substantial operational and cultural improvements since acquisition.
- Workforce stabilization and growth, including a reported 96% employee satisfaction rate.
- Financial performance exceeding projections, with sales tracking ahead of internal targets.

- Expansion of community outreach, fundraising, and employee engagement initiatives.
- Strong performance outcomes from the Jefferson County Step Up program, including high rates of skill attainment and employment upon completion.

New Business

Board Self-Assessment Review

The Board reviewed prior-year self-assessment results and discussed survey question clarity, particularly regarding board training and in-service expectations. Consensus was reached to support ongoing board education at monthly meetings and through materials housed in the new board portal as opposed to a once-a-year formal retreat.

Additional FY26 Funding Requests

Jefferson County Community Partnership (JCCP)

Staff presented a request for additional FY26 funding due to increased demand for parent training services.
Motion: To approve an additional $10,000 in FY26 funding for Jefferson County Community Partnership.
Moved by: Amie Merz
Seconded by: Elizabeth Spaugh
Vote: $10,000 additional FY26 funding request to JCCP was approved by voice vote; no opposition noted.

Sunnyhill ISLA Services

Staff presented a request for short-term supplemental funding to provide crisis-driven Independent Supported Living Assistance (ISLA) services for one individual through the end of the fiscal year.
Motion: To approve $5,740 in supplemental FY26 funding for Sunnyhill ISLA services through July 1, 2026.
Moved by: Amie Merz
Seconded by: Danielle Moskop
Vote: $5,740 in supplemental FY26 funding for Sunnyhill ISLA services approved by voice vote; no opposition noted.

Finance Committee Meeting

The Board discussed scheduling a Finance Committee meeting for late April or early May. Staff will distribute a Doodle poll to confirm availability.

Sunshine Law Annual Review

The Board received the annual Missouri Sunshine Law review. Members were directed to the most current Sunshine Law Handbook (updated September 2025). Training materials will be stored in the Board SharePoint portal.

Ethical Code of Conduct (CARF Requirement)

Annual Ethical Code of Conduct declaration forms were distributed to Board members for review and signature. Members were instructed to return signed forms or submit proposed revisions.

SharePoint Board Portal Demo

A demonstration of the new SharePoint-based Board portal was provided, outlining its use for agendas, minutes, board packets, governance documents, and training resources. A phased transition away from email-based document distribution was discussed. The Board has also been assigned agency email addresses which will be used in conjunction with personal emails until the May Board meeting.

Old Business

None.

Requisition – April & May 2026

Motion: To approve the requisition for planned expenditures for April and May 2026.
Moved by: Cara Pellerin
Seconded by: Tony Sokolic
Vote: The Requisition for April and May 2026 was approved by voice vote; no opposition noted.

Public Comments

None.

Board Comments

Board members expressed positive remarks regarding organizational performance, partnership outcomes, and progress at Lafayette Jeffco.

Closed Session

The Board entered closed session pursuant to Missouri Sunshine Law RSMo 610.021(3)(13) for personnel matters.
Motion: To enter into closed session pursuant to Missouri Sunshine Law RSMo 610.021 (3)(13) Personnel
Moved by: Amie Merz
Seconded by: Tony Sokolic
Vote: Dr. Mertens called for a roll-call vote to enter closed session; Amie Merz, yes; Scott Brothers, absent; Randy Starkey, absent; Tony Sokolic, yes; Elizabeth Spaugh, yes; Cara Pellerin, yes; Danielle Moskop, yes; Jon Casey, yes; Dr. Marsha Mertens, yes. Motion carried.

Adjournment

The open session of the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m. following completion of agenda items.

Respectfully submitted,

Marsha K Mertens

Dr. Marsha Mertens, Board Chairperson