

Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc.
Full Council Meeting Minutes
September 18-19, 2025

Thursday, September 18, 2025

Council Members Present: Christina Cordova; Enrique Escallon; Sarah Goldman; Elly Hagen; Eddie Hall; Dennis Hart; Yolanda Herrera; Arizona Jenkins; Carla Mercer; Lauren Modawell; Michael Sayih; Charlotte Temple; Devona Pickle (AHCA); Robert Asztalos (APD); Heather George (FCIC); Jessica Meyer (DOH); Jean Sherman (UCEDD); Peter Sleasman (DRF)

Council Members Absent: Denise Anderson; Danielle McGill; Kali Wilson; Victoria Zepp; Kelly Rogers (VR); Patricia Bodiford (DOE); Kira Houge (Elder Affairs)

Staff Present: Valerie Breen; Susan Kabot; Monica Moye; Chris Reeve; Jennifer Chung; Kristen Conlin; Jamie Mayersohn

Guests: Jim DeBeaugraine (FDDC Legislative Advisor); Personal care staff

The meeting was called to order by Chair Eddie Hall at 9:04 a.m. Roll call was taken and quorum was established.

I. Adoption of Agenda

Cordova made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented; Hart seconded. All members voted in favor; Jessica Meyer (DOH) and Devona Pickle (AHCA) abstained. The motion carried and the agenda was adopted.

I. Adoption of Minutes

Escallon made a motion to adopt the May 2025 minutes; Jenkins seconded. All members voted in favor; Jessica Meyer (DOH) and Devona Pickle (AHCA) abstained. The motion carried and the May 2025 minutes were adopted.

II. Chair/Vice-Chair Report

Hall recognized the new Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Robert Asztalos, and Jim DeBeaugraine, FDDC Legislative Advisor, both in attendance at the meeting. Hall stated that teamwork by the Council members with a common goal is essential if we are going to have an impact in Florida for our community. He encouraged everyone to come together and put any differences aside as we move forward.

Vice Chair, Escallon, reflected on the outcomes from this past year and stated that his concern is that the work of the Council is going backwards and trying to re-invent the wheel. He stated that there are

a lot of challenges in our future, which is why we should take advantage of our new five-year state plan to make a difference

III. Executive Director Report

Breen shared her presentation titled, Transitioning from year 2025 to 2026 & Planning for the Future. She presented changes in personnel, outsourcing, reducing the Tallahassee office space, DD Awareness Day, increasing outreach through multiple stakeholders and supports, and the appreciation of Council member opinion pieces depending on their subject matter expertise.

Breen reported that we notified our providers, with whom we have contractual arrangements, that our federal funding may be at risk and we would keep them notified. We informed them that until further notice, we were conducting business as usual.

Breen reported expenditures to maintain the Tallahassee office will be significantly reduced, with most staff working remote. A small space is being sought to house Tallahassee staff.

Breen recognized Hall, Sherman and Goldman for their opinion pieces on Medicaid home-and community-based funding, aging caregivers, and the ADA respectively. Breen stated that when opinions are shared by subject matter experts on the Council, they have a bigger impact.

Breen stated that Our Care Matters videos have had over 614 thousand views to date.

Breen encouraged the Council to learn from its history and decide how we want to approach our future as respected advisors to the legislature, agencies and our communities. She asked Jim DeBeaugraine to provide an historical overview of the DD movement in Florida.

DeBeaugraine provided a comprehensive review of Florida's DD movement and the Council's role(s) with advising and impacting decisions made by the legislature.

IV. Creating the Legislative Platform for 2026

Goldman stated that she is proposing for the Council to have one main legislative priority that addresses the ongoing concerns stated in the developmental disabilities community surrounding the iBudget, the Consumer Directed Plus program- both managed through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) and the managed care pilot program, that is now legislated to go statewide. She also stated that she wanted to re-structure the utilization of the public policy committee to meet the needs of the full Council as we prepare for and move through the 2026 legislative session.

Goldman presented several questions to help the Council set their main priority.

Hart stated that education is important, there are some people who do not know what APD is or what APD offers, and there are many families out there that could qualify for APD if they knew who they were and what they had to offer.

Asztalos advised that he has spent a decade fighting managed care for aging, but eventually they adopted managed care with guidelines. He recommends that advocates be cautious as the managed care pilot becomes available statewide. Right now, he stated that the adoption of managed care for all people with I/DD is still several years down the road because the legislature wants to see how it works. However, he strongly recommended that protections and guidelines must be in place. In addition, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) has been funded to establish an evaluation of the I/DD managed care program, with a report due in 2029.

Hart commented that when they went from straight Medicaid and managed Medicaid there were a lot of individuals not happy including healthcare. There are many providers that will not accept it.

Temple stated that she is concerned with the lack of support coordinators, and that it is very difficult to get individuals enrolled in the iBudget program. DeBeaugraine reminded the Council that when support coordinators were created, they were set up with individuals with a master's degree and could make a decent living as a solo coordinator. This changed with SB 82. Breen reinforced that support coordination has been the glue for individuals and families to make sure the individual is kept safe in their home and can access the services they need.

Escallon stated that he agrees with the top legislative priority, but we should pay attention to bills that have passed previously that still have room for improvement for our population as well.

Modawell stated that we should look at the benefits of the families of young adults and children that are going through school. Some go through private schools, and they do not know the benefits for continued education. She stated that it should be acknowledged during their Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings or with their support coordinators.

Escallon noted that education, early intervention, HB 1105 regarding special diploma/certificate and access to services should be monitored.

Action Taken: Modawell made a motion to adopt the Medicaid long-term services as a top priority for 2026. Temple seconded. No further discussion occurred. All Council members voted in favor. Meyer and Pickle abstained. Motion carried, and the proposed main priority was adopted.

Goldman asked Council members to consider an outreach messaging campaign that all stakeholders embrace. Discussion ensued and several options were provided, including Our Choice Matters; One Voice for Choice; What Works, Matters; One Team, One Goal; Cooperation Needs Collaboration; Pieces that Matter; My Voice Matters; My Future Matters; My Life Matters.

Goldman and Mayersohn noted that a grassroots messaging campaign from individuals with I/DD and their families can be a focus for DD Day 2026- bringing other organizations to the table to share each other's messages.

Goldman instructed staff to work with FDDC's public relations firm, RBOA, to finalize the legislative priority and develop the campaign based on FDDC's approved priority.

V. State and Sister Agency Reports

Reports were provided by the following agencies:

- Robert Asztalos from Agency for Persons with Disabilities.
- Devona Pickle from Agency for Healthcare Administration.
- Jessica Mayer from Department of Health- Children's Medical Services.
- Jean Sherman from University of Miami- Mailman Center.
- Heather George from University of South Florida- Florida Center for Inclusive Communities.
- Peter Sleasman from Disability Rights Florida.

VI. Video Creations & Program Projects

Kabot provided a presentation from the Self- Advocacy Conference that she attended. Kabot and the program team share the following videos produced through our partnerships. Discussion ensued.

The Measuring Service Quality tool for residential facilities was presented. Hart asked how the Measuring Service Quality Residential Tool is being distributed. Kabot advised that right now the tool is on FDDC's website, we have cards with a QR code and we are promoting it through FDDC's social media posts.

George asked if FDDC has a protocol for dissemination. Mayersohn advised that we can share the videos and provide the downloaded videos for others to disseminate.

Herrera asked if the residential tool was for higher functioning individual. Kabot advised that there are two manuals, one is more pictures, and the other has more text.

Hagen stated that when she went looking for a group home for her son, she had no idea what a group home looked like.

The Training First Responders videos were presented. It was noted that this training and materials are provided to law enforcement officers. Escallon asked if the Council should look at schools (i.e. Principals) as a secondary distribution/education mechanism. Kabot advised that the next provider contract would focus on integrating the training into universities or technical schools that offer criminal justice or emergency medical programs.

The last video presented was on An Organization's Guide to Implementing FDDC's Quality Case Management Tools. Mayer inquired about the competencies that were used. Kabot directed members to the Council's website where all the research is housed.

VII. Standing Committee Updates

State Plan Committee:

Sherman shared that the State Plan Committee met on Tuesday, August 26, 2025. All Council members were encouraged to attend this meeting as the draft Five-Year State Plan was presented to the Committee. The meeting was recorded so that any member unable to attend the meeting could listen to the recording. WellFlorida began the meeting with a review of how the Council provided input into the priorities that resulted from Task Force input and Council member focus groups. They were reminded of the public input process, and Council staff and agency interviews that also contributed to the identification of three priority areas including access to services, behavioral health and challenging behavior, and aging families.

Kabot then reviewed the draft Five-Year goals, objectives, and key activities that were drafted by Council staff and the Council consultant. Council members were asked to think about what they heard during the meeting and provide their input regarding the goals and objectives to WellFlorida.

Finance Committee:

Hart reported that the Finance Committee met on September 11, 2025. Allison Herrell, the Council's outsourced Chief Financial Officer through Thomas Howell Ferguson presented on the Council's budget to actual and profit and loss statements from October 1, 2024-July 31, 2025. In addition, Harrell and Moye reviewed the updated 2026 FDDC budget based on modification and recommendations. Hart shared that the 2024 audit had been significantly delayed due to the difficulties Thomas Howell Ferguson and Law Redd both had in picking up and understanding past internal FDDC accounting practices. Hart stated that Thomas Howell Ferguson recommended to the committee that the Council engage Law Redd for our 2025 audit and then follow best practices to bid out for an auditing firm to conduct the 2026 audit.

Hart reported that the Finance Committee had two recommendations for full Council adoption.

- 1) Adopt the Budget to Actual and Profit and Loss statements.

Action Taken: Escallon made a motion to adopt the Budget to Actual and Profit and Loss statements as presented. Temple seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

- 2) Adopt the proposed 2026 budget and budget narrative as presented.

Escallon inquired if the budget followed the federal compliance requirement of 70% programs and 30% administration. Moye advised that the 70/30 rule applies to the proposed budget for the fiscal year and all available grants.

Action Taken: Escallon made a motion to adopt the 2026 amended budget and budget narrative as presented. Jenkins seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Committee:

Hall reported that the Executive Committee met on September 11, 2025, and had several recommendations to bring to the Council for full Council adoption.

- 1) Adoption of the Qualified Small Employer Health Reimbursement Arrangements (QSEHRA)- which allows small employers that do not have a group health plan to reimburse employees for health insurance premiums and other medical expenses on a tax advantaged basis.

Hall reported that the Executive Committee had been working since May 2025 with the Council's Human Resource Consultant, Danielle Towery of James Moore HR Consultants, and Compensation Resources to determine the best benefits package to recruit and retain employees. He stated that the Executive Committee highly recommends the full Council adopt QSEHRA for all employees who work over 30 hours per week to start effective January 1, 2026. The amount to purchase the platform through Take Command to implement QSEHRA and an estimated employee maximum reimbursement has been incorporated into the amended 2026 Council budget and approved by the Finance Committee.

Action Taken: Escallon made a motion to adopt and implement the Qualified Small Employer Health Reimbursement Arrangement (QSEHRA) effective January 1, 2026. Hagen seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

- 2) Adoption of the Executive Director performance review.

Hall reported that the Executive Committee established a formal evaluation process in collaboration with Towery, which was implemented by the Chair and the Executive Committee. A summary of the outcome of the evaluation was shared with the full Council.

Action Taken: Jenkins made a motion to adopt the Executive Director performance evaluation report. Hart seconded. During discussion Sherman noted that change in the process did not include input from Council members outside of the Executive Committee. Hall stated that the process can be re-evaluated with Towery and the Committee and will be shared with the full Council at the May meeting in 2026. The original motion passed unanimously.

- 3) Adoption of the renewal of the Council's employment agreement with the Executive Director for October 1, 2025- September 30, 2026, based on performance.

Action Taken: Modawell made a motion to adopt the renewal of the employment agreement with the Executive Director. Hart seconded. During discussion Escallon offered clarification that the contract renewal option will expire September 30, 2026. He also noted that this final renewal does not have any increase in salary compensation. The original motion passed unanimously.

- 4) Adoption of the processes for informing the Council of employee complaints and information the Council of personnel matters.

Hall reported that the Executive Committee worked collaboratively with Towery to establish formal processes that the Council members can follow related to employee complaints related to employee matters or employee complaints.

Action Taken: Hart made a motion to adopt both the Processes for Informing the Council of Employee Complaints and Informing the Council of Personnel Matters. Jenkins seconded. During discussion Escallon questioned whether the Council would be told about all employee issues or just the Executive Director. Hart explained that the process was to advise the Council, but it would start with the Executive Committee. The original motion was adopted and passed unanimously.

5) Adoption of the recommendations made by the Council's Bylaws Task Force

Hall stated that the Executive Committee reviewed the recommendations from the Bylaws Task Force and wishes to highlight 3 items for Council consideration. He stated that the 3 recommendations are:

- a) To establish a secretary position on the Council which would be elected by the Council and serve on the Executive Committee;
- b) Eliminate one Chair appointed position on the Executive Committee; and
- c) Include the Florida Department of Children and Families as an additional state agency.

Hall stated that the formal modification of the bylaws would be up for adoption in the January 2026 meeting. Hall also noted that Breen would need to work with the appointment office to include the state agency as an additional appointment approved by the Governor.

Action Taken: Goldman made a motion to adopt the recommendations from the Bylaws Task Force; Escallon seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Public Comment

Hall asked if there was any public comment from the floor. None was offered.

Hall adjourned the meeting at 4:39 p.m.

Friday, September 19, 2025

Council Members Present: Christina Cordova; Enrique Escallon; Sarah Goldman; Elly Hagen; Eddie Hall; Dennis Hart; Yolanda Herrera; Arizona Jenkins; Carla Mercer; Lauren Modawell; Michael Sayih; Charlotte Temple; Devona Pickle (AHCA); Peter Sleasman (DRF); Heather George; Jessica Meyer (DOH); Jean Sherman (UCEDD)

Council Members Absent: Denise Anderson; Danielle McGill; Kali Wilson; Victoria Zepp; Kelly Rogers (VR); Patricia Bodiford (DOE); Kira Houge (Elder Affairs); Robert Asztalos

Staff Present: Valerie Breen; Susan Kabot; Monica Moye; Chris Reeve; Jennifer Chung; Kristen Conlin; Jamie Mayersohn

Guests Present: Jim DeBeaugrine (FDDC Legislative Advisor); Personal care staff; WellFlorida staff: Lindsey Redding, Jeff Feller

Hall called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., roll call was taken and quorum was established.

I. Adoption of Agenda

Escallon made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Modawell seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

II. Adoption of the proposed new Five-Year State Plan Goals and Objectives

Jeff Feller of WellFlorida Council, Inc. served as the facilitator for Council discussion and adoption of the proposed new 5-year state plan goals and objectives for FY 2027-2031. A copy had been provided to all Council members. Kabot provided a Power Point presentation outlining the proposed Goals and Objectives and Key Activities in combination with Council questions and comments provided since the August 26, 2025, State Plan committee meeting. It was noted that only the Goals and Objectives will go out for a 45-day public comment period once the Council agrees to move them forward.

Kabot noted that the five current goals recommended are: Access to Services, Behavioral Health, Aging Families, Self-Advocacy Leadership (which is a standard federal required goal) and Emergency Response/Emerging Issues (which is a standard federal required goal).

Kabot reviewed each Goal, Objective and Key Activities with Council members and Feller facilitated discussion. Feller and Kabot provided clarification and answered questions initiated by Council members.

Goal 1: Access to Services- Increase knowledge of the expanded access to comprehensive community resources across the lifespan

Objective 1.1: Establish a web-based information and resource system

Key Activity 1.1.1: Develop Web Tool

- Identify and update or develop an interactive web-based platform of key community resources and tools for families

Key Activity 1.1.2: Training

- Plan and conduct online or onsite training for family members, waiver support coordinators, case managers, and service providers on the online system
- Key Activity 1.1.3: Develop and implement collaboration, dissemination, sustainability, monitoring, communication, new resources and/or updates to existing resources, and advocacy activities in conjunction with Florida's self-advocates, family members, and

other key stakeholders to address systems change efforts that improve access to services for individuals with I/DD and their families.

- Objective 1.2: Increase access to trained and qualified service providers who are adequately compensated across Florida, especially in rural and underserved communities
 - Key Activity 1.2.1: Develop and implement a direct support provider training program in high schools, Florida's technical colleges, state colleges, and/or university settings
- Objective 1.3: Improve provision of quality services through increased use of evidence-based tools for assessing effectiveness and fit of services
 - Key Activity 1.3.1: Develop and implement capacity building activities designed to increase the use of Best Practices in Case Management tools
 - Key Activity 1.3.2: Develop and implement capacity building activities to increase the use of Measuring Service Quality tools

Action Taken: Hart made a motion to adopt Goal 1, Objectives and Key Activities. Escallon seconded. Motion passed with 16 yes and 1 no.

Goal 2: Behavioral Health and Challenging Behaviors- Increase availability of services and supports to manage their behaviors and allow them to maintain a safe quality of life in home community settings.

- Objective 2.1: Increase trained behavioral health professionals and behavioral services.
 - Key Activity 2.1.1: Implement competency-based training and internships for BCBAs and supervisory behavior therapists state-wide
- Objective 2.2: Increase use of effective practices to decrease unnecessary interventions and placement in restrictive settings.
 - Key Activity 2.2.1: Increase state-wide use of Council's dual diagnosis training that was previously developed
 - Key Activity 2.2.2: Increase state-wide use of the Council's first responder training that was previously developed

Sleasman made a recommendation to change Goal 2 to include "across all settings" and include "family home".

Action Taken: Modawell made a motion to adopt Goal2, Objectives and Key Activities with recommended modifications to use "family home" in the goal.. Escallon seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Goal 3: Aging Families- Increase availability of services and supports needed by an aging population that allows them to maintain quality lives in their communities.

- Objective 3.1: Increase access to future planning resources and tools that meet the needs of an aging population
 - Key Activity 3.1.1: Identify and/or develop person-centered future planning tools for families
 - Key Activity 3.1.2: Develop tool kits and a navigation map
 - Key Activity 3.1.3: Conduct an educational retreat or conference for aging families
- Objective 3.2: Increase knowledge of innovative, enabling technology and models to support housing needs
 - Key Activity 3.2.1: Environmental scan to provide recommendations for using innovative, enabling technology to address housing needs
 - Key Activity 3.2.2: Conduct state-wide training for families and caregivers on innovative, enabling technology
 - Key Activity 3.2.3: Develop three case study demonstration homes using assistive technology experts and enabling technology strategies to allow aging individuals to remain in their homes

Action Taken: Jenkins made a motion to adopt Goal 3, Objectives and Key Activities with the inclusion of human interaction in the Goal. Hagen seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Goal 4: Self-Advocacy Leadership (Required)- Increase the number of individuals with I/DD trained as leaders, providing leadership training to others with I/DD, and engaging in cross-disability leadership coalitions

- Objective 4.1: Increase the number of leaders trained, providing leadership training, and engaging in cross-disability coalitions in the state self-advocacy organization (FL SAN'D)
 - Key Activity 4.1.1: Support up to 20 state self-advocacy organization leaders to build their capacity to deliver leadership training to other self-advocates
 - Key Activity 4.1.2: Provide support for trained state self-advocacy organization leaders to deliver information and training to other self-advocates
 - Key Activity 4.1.3: Provide support for increasing or expanding opportunities for participation of individuals with I/DD in cross disability and leadership coalitions
 - Key Activity 4.1.4: Develop an annual, end-of-year state self-advocacy organization report

- Objective 4.2: Increase knowledge and impact within public policy and cross disability leadership organization through Partners in Policymaking (PIP)
 - Key Activity 4.2.1: Utilize PIP to educate individuals with I/DD and family members on self-determination, disability systems, and public policy
- Objective 4.3: Increase knowledge and provide evidence of their impact within public policy and cross disability coalitions of PIP Alumni
 - Key Activity 4.3.1: Support PIP Alumni to increase their knowledge, support advocacy actions, and assess post-program outcomes
- Objective 4.4: Individuals with moderate–severe functional levels will increase their knowledge and participation in public policy activities and/or cross disability leadership coalitions through the use of PIP Plus
 - Key Activity 4.4.1: Implement PIP curriculum strand for individuals with I/DD

Action Taken: Jenkins made a motion to adopt Goal 4, Objectives and Activities with modification to include youth in transition. Hall seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Goal 5- Community inclusion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be maintained/improved through systemic changes and/or provision of essential services provide essential services and supports at the state, regional , or local level.

- Objective 5.1: One or more emerging/emergency needs will have been addressed through one or more systemic changes and/or provision of essential services and supports at the state, regional, or local level.
 - Key Activity 5.1.1: Develop and implement collaboration, dissemination, sustainability, monitoring, communication, new resources and/or updates to existing resources, and advocacy activities.
 - Key Activity 5.1.2: Provide essential services and supports at the state, regional, or local level to maintain/improve safe community inclusion of individuals with I/DD during emerging or emergency situations (e.g., natural or manmade disasters).

Action Taken: Mercer made a motion to adopt Goal 5, Objectives and Key Activities. Herrera seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Action Taken: Sayih made a motion to adopt all 5 goals, objectives and activities Council member recommended modifications. Cordova seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment/Meeting Adjourned

Hall asked if there was any public comment from the floor. None was provided.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:24 p.m.