

**Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
Disability Employment Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes**

Date of meeting: Monday, August 25, 2025

Start time: 12:00pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

| Members Participating Remotely | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Rachel Stanton – Investor Relations and Communications Graphic Designer, Clean Water Trust (Co-Chair) |
| 2 | Oz Mondejar – President, Mucho Gusto present |
| 3 | Kathy Petkauskos – Director, Work Without Limits at UMass Chan Medical School |
| 4 | Gyasi Burks-Abbott – Self Advocate Faculty, LEND Fellowship, Boston Children's Hospital (Co-Chair) |
| | Chris White – CEO, Road to Responsibility, Inc |
| Members Not Present | |
| 5 | Carl Richardson – ADA Coordinator, Massachusetts State House |
| 7 | Lexi Semanchik – HR Marketing and Communications Specialist Walks of Life: Intergenerational Employee Resource Group Chair |

| Action Items | | Person Responsible |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | MA APSE participation form | Imene |
| 2 | Bring 1-2 FY26 subcommittee goals | All Members |

Agenda

1. Welcome, Roll Call, and Meeting Minutes Approval
2. Inspirational Quote by Mary Kay Ash provided by Lexi Semanchik:

“Aerodynamically the bumblebee shouldn't be able to fly, but the bumblebee doesn't know that so it goes on flying anyway.”

3. Run The Gamut Presentation by Chief of Staff Jennifer Magnuson and Director of Community and Employment Development Elyse Forbush

Highlights:

- The program focuses on adults, ensuring that the skills taught are meaningful and directly tied to each participant’s goals.
 - o The ultimate goal is long-term employment and independence for participants.

Discussion:

- Concern about the loss of benefits at age 22 (“benefits cliff”).
- Readiness of employers to hire individuals with disabilities.
- Importance of employer education, exposure, and understanding the value of workers with disabilities.
- Building lasting relationships with employers to ensure opportunities align with program goals.
- Program Details:
 - The first class begins next Friday.
 - Eight students are currently enrolled, with rolling admissions throughout the year.
 - The program is currently private-pay and tuition-based.
 - Ongoing discussions with DDS and state agencies to secure sustainable public funding.
 - Exploring collaboration with DESE to include 18–22-year-old out-of-district students in the next school year.
 - Partnerships and Collaborations:
 - Working with [Partners for Youth with Disabilities](#) (PYD) as a student pipeline.
 - Collaborating with [JVS](#) and [ASPIRE MGB](#); all share the mission of advancing employment, independence, and confidence.
 - Partnering with universities as training spaces where occupational therapy and medical students learn to engage effectively with patients with disabilities.

4. Massachusetts Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) workshop discussion:

- Main message: The Commission has resources to share, including both employer and employee perspectives video.
- Target audience: career coaches, employment-focused transition educators, and employment advocates supporting individuals with disabilities.
- Suggestion to invite an employer recognized during NDEAM to participate in the presentation.
- Building stronger relationships and partnerships between employers and individuals with disabilities.
- Imene will distribute a response form to subcommittee members for review and approval, which will include proposed audience takeaways.

5. Discussion FY26 Goals (homework for 11/17)

- The subcommittee will review potential FY26 goals at the next meeting.
- Kathy proposed developing a veterans-focused resource or event to help share and disseminate employment-related information and supports for veterans with disabilities.

6. Adjournment

Remaining 2025 Meeting Dates

- November 17

Meeting Materials:

- [April 2025 Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Run The Gamut presentation](#)
- MA APSE outline TBD