

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

Date of meeting: Monday, April 27, 2026

Start time: 12:00pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Gyasi Burks-Abbott – LEND Fellowship, Boston Children's Hospital (Chair)
2	The Hon. Chair Denise Garlick
3	Senator Vanna Howard – Massachusetts Senate
4	Kathy Petkauskos – UMass Chan Medical School
5	Rachel Kaprielian – Triangle, Inc.
6	Chris White – Road to Responsibility, Inc
7	Carl Richardson – Massachusetts State House
8	Oz Mondejar – Mucho Gusto Consulting
Members Not Present	
9	Lexi Semanchik – Treasurer’s Office absent
10	Rachel Stanton – Clean Water Trust at the Treasurer’s Office

Action Items	Person Responsible
1	Follow up with State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED)
	Gyasi, Chris & Imene

Agenda

- Welcome, Roll Call, and Meeting Minutes Approval
 - Motion to approve minutes
 - Motion approved

- Inspirational Quote by Cicero, provided by Representative Lindsay Sabadosa

“It is not by muscle, speed, or physical dexterity that great things are achieved, but by reflection, force of character, and judgment.”

- Listening to Families: Insights from a Community-Led Survey About the Transition to Employment Presentation by the Lawrence Partnership for Transition to Employment (Institute for Community Inclusion and The Arc of Greater Haverhill-Newburyport)
 - Presentation highlights:

- LPTE was established in 2021 through a five-year ACL grant to improve the transition process for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Lawrence.
- LPTE’s work includes four focus areas: building cross-agency connections, offering more work experiences, preparing students for adult life, and partnering with families.
- The Partnering with Families work group created a short family survey after hearing that schools and providers were having difficulty connecting with families.
- Survey responses increased from fewer than 20 to 205 after LPTE partnered with Lawrence Public Schools’ Office of Student Support Services to send the survey by email and text.
- Families identified barriers to attending IEP meetings, including meeting times, not understanding the IEP process, language, and childcare.
- Survey results showed that many families see employment and/or higher education as part of their student’s future.
- Lawrence Public Schools shared that it has a five-person transition specialist team, bilingual transition resources, district-wide tools, and family-facing guides.
- LPS also described its “Your Partners in Planning” workshop series, which offered sessions at different times, in person and by Zoom, with interpretation, childcare, refreshments, and raffle incentives.
- Presenters noted that even with these supports, attendance was lower than expected, showing that family engagement requires ongoing outreach, relationships, and multiple ways for families to access information.
- Discussion:
 - Members discussed the importance of culturally responsive outreach and noted that, in some Latino and Asian communities, disability is not always openly discussed. Suggestions were made to help connect presenters with additional community partners and organizations working within those communities.
 - Presenters shared that while the current work is focused in Lawrence, there is interest in applying the model to other communities. Brockton was mentioned as another community engaged in similar work.
 - Discussion included sustainability planning beyond the grant period, including maintaining the consortium structure and continuing the LPTE resource hub in partnership with community organizations.
 - Members discussed the challenge of engaging families earlier in the transition process, particularly at the middle school level, where many families are not yet thinking about employment or transition planning.
 - Presenters shared that expansion of the transition team has allowed for a more proactive approach, including meeting directly with students, incorporating student input into planning, and strengthening student participation in Individualized Education Program discussions related to employment and future goals.

- Members expressed appreciation for the survey findings and asked about factors contributing to successful transitions to employment or college.
 - Discussion emphasized the importance of pre-employment transition services, college partnerships, and ensuring postsecondary opportunities are presented as accessible to all students, including students with disabilities.
 - Members discussed the importance of helping students understand how to access accommodations and supports in college settings, noting that some students with IEPs continue to face barriers navigating those systems after graduation.
 - Questions were raised about expanding access to real work experiences, including partnerships with summer youth employment, volunteer programs, community employers, and vocational/trade opportunities such as plumbing, HVAC, and other skilled trades.
 - Presenters noted that staffing limitations remain a challenge and emphasized the importance of students having meaningful, hands-on work experiences, even short-term opportunities focused on interview skills, workplace exposure, and career exploration.
 - Members also discussed the changing workforce landscape and the growing importance of preparing students for a rapidly evolving job market, particularly as entry-level positions continue to shift.
 - Additional discussion focused on the value of asking students directly about their future goals and interests early in the transition planning process to help increase engagement, self-direction, and long-term planning.
- Resources and contact information:
 - LPTE Resource Hub <https://lpte.info/>
 - Allison B. Taylor, ICI allison.taylor@umb.edu
 - Esther Kamau, ICI esther.kamau@umb.edu
 - Oliver Lyons, ICI oliver.lyons@umb.edu
 - Rowan DeAza, The Arc of GHN Rowan.DeAza@thearcofghn.org
 - Andrea Morris, The Arc of GHN andrea.morris@thearcofghn.org
 - Elizabeth Hogue, Lawrence Public Schools elizabeth.hogue@lawrence.k12.ma.us
 - Steve Michelson, NILP smichelson@nilp.org
- Adjournment

Upcoming Meeting Dates

- May 18, 2026
- August 31, 2026
- November 16, 2026