

**Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council Meeting  
September 11, 2024 via Zoom  
Council Meeting Minutes**

**Present:** Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Raquel Quezada, Barbara L'Italien, Ann Lynch, Victor Hernandez, Alana Russo, Sandra Heller, Elaine Gabovitch, Chelsey Goddard, William Edes, Sarah Kelleher, Paul Lufty, Katherine Beibel, Chantal Johnson, Asha Abdullahi, Cynthia Laine,

**Excused:** Cody Rooney, Cindy Thomas

**Absent:** Annette Peele, Bridget Levandowski, Andrew Carr, Asha Abdullahi, Dusya Lyubouskaya, Priscilla Bessa, Courtney Waters, Marissa O'Donnell, Sara Scrivener, Mary Mahon McCauley, Carlyon Kain, Diane Lescinskas, Kathleen Biebel, Julia O'Leary, Emily Lauer,

**Guests:** Carol Murray, Joanna Dumas, Kamal Minhas

**Staff:** Craig Hall, Lee Larriu, Christine Joyal, Tamara Huntley, Andre Williams, Patricia Jackson, Jennifer Bertrand, Jackson Crilley, Mary Davis, Liz Fancher, Adelia DelTrecco, Kaitlin Stober

Raquel Quezada, Chairperson, convened the meeting at 6:02 pm, welcoming everyone.

**1. Acceptance of the Agenda:** Motion to accept passed unanimously.

First: Sandra Heller

Second: Paul Lufty

Voting Poll Results: Passed

**2. Approval of June Meeting Minutes:** Motion to approve passed unanimously.

First: Gyasi Burks-Abbott

Second: Sandra Heller

Voting Poll Results: Passed

**3. Updates from the Chairperson, Raquel Quezada, Chairperson**

Raquel mentioned that our Generational Leaders' Summit is taking place on September 23-25<sup>th</sup>.

On September 9<sup>th</sup> there was a Reception in Celebration of Disability Pride and the 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act to be held at The White House

Each year we celebrate Disability Pride Month to commemorate the passage the landmark civil rights law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This year we are celebrating the 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA. The law is significant because it provides comprehensive civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities. The ADA makes it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications, and government activities. It also ensures equal rights and opportunities for people with disabilities and protects disability rights as civil rights.

Deputy Director, Jennifer Bertrand, received an invitation from President Biden and Dr. Biden to attend a White House event on September 9, 2024, to celebrate Disability Pride and the 34th Anniversary of the ADA. Representing the MDDC helped our Council build key relationships with members of the Administration. Attending also allowed Jennifer to talk about our Council's valuable work. While we have advanced disability rights since the passage of the ADA, our work is not done. People with developmental and other disabilities still face many barriers to living meaningful inclusive lives. Our core mission requires us to educate and inform not only lawmakers, but also members of the Administration as they execute and enforce the laws created by Congress. Raquel congratulated and thanked Jennifer.

Raquel shared our upcoming events in collaboration with MDDC as follows:

Wednesday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at 12pm – DDS Transition Services from School to Adult Life Webinar (virtual)

Wednesday Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup> – National Disability Employment Awareness Month  
11am. State House – Great Hall of Flags

October 26<sup>th</sup> – MASS Advocates Standing Strong Self Advocacy Conference

#### **4. Committee Reports:**

##### **Executive Committee – Raquel Quezada, Chairperson.**

The Executive Committee is proposing the following FY 25 MDDC Council meeting dates: They are as follows: Wednesday, December 11, 2024; Wednesday, March 12, 2025; Wednesday, June 11, 2025; and Wednesday, September 10, 2025.

**Acceptance of the Proposed FY 25 Council Meeting Dates:** Motion to accept passed unanimously.

First: Sandra Heller

Second: Paul Lufty

Voting Poll Results: Passed

Raquel deferred the rest of the Executive Committee report to Craig Hall. Craig Hall stated that The Executive Committee met August 26th to preview the FY 25 budget and discuss the goals and objectives of the last two years of the current state plan. There was discussion about long-term planning and ideas for the next five-year state plan.

The Executive Committee met again on September 11th to be updated on the recommended FY 25 budget. The Executive Committee also re-reviewed the FY 25 Council Meeting dates. The committee discussed the Program Performance Report due to the US Administration on Children and Families and the next five-year State Plan cycle – that formal planning is anticipated to begin next Spring. There were other discussions about the December agenda and what presentations might be of interest to the full Council. The Executive Committee was also updated on a project to update the values of the Developmental Disabilities Act in plain language – that is now posted on our website. The committee

was also updated on the recent work of the Permanent Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities researching employment for people with disabilities and the upcoming National Disability Employment Awareness Month event at the State House.

**Membership – Adelia DelTrecco for Cody Rooney, Vice Chairperson-Committee Chairperson**

Adelia stated per our by-laws our members serve till they are replaced. We have several re-appointments and potential new members that have been up at the Governor's appointments office for a while. They are beginning to work on those now. Once we begin to see new appointments/reappointments come in, then we will begin recruiting for our next round of vacancies.

**Public Policy Committee – Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Committee Chairperson**

The MDDC Policy Committee met in August & September 2024. Gyasi Burks-Abbott shared that Jennifer Bertrand, MDDC Deputy Director and Kaitlin Stober, Disability Policy Assistant provided state legislative and budget updates (see meeting minutes and supporting documentation for details).

In September, the Policy Committee reviewed a working draft of a plain language resource for people with IDD. This resource is a partner collaboration and meant to be an introductory resource on physician assisted suicide (PAS) and ableism in healthcare.

Gyasi shared a link to RevUP, which has valuable voting rights information as well as voting resources. The General Election will take place on Nov. 5, 2024.

[Bill of Voting Rights - REV UP! \(revupma.org\)](https://revupma.org)

The Paul W. Spooner Generational Leadership Summit will take place on Sept 23-25<sup>th</sup> at the Best Western in Marlborough, MA.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee – Cynthia Liane**

Cynthia stated that the DEI members and herself wanted to thank Fatima for filling the role in my absence and we are very excited to welcome Andre who will work along with us. Over the summer DEI members and Sawubona members were able to attend the Black Autism Coalition family day event. The members were Craig Hall, Raquel Quezada, Asha Abudhalli, and Oahn Bui. Other community members were also present as well. The next DEI meeting will be on October 12, 2024, and Sawubona meeting on November 12, 2024. We look forward to seeing everyone.

**State Plan Committee Update – Raquel Quezada, Chairperson**

Raquel deferred to Craig for the update. Craig stated that the State Plan Committee met August 12th to review the FY 25 and FY 26 Annual Work Plans. The staff recommended some minor wording changes. The State Plan Committee was offered a Zoom meeting, and some members were provided one-on-one presentation of the information. The committee endorsed the work plans, and they were submitted to the US Administration on Children and Families. A note or reminder, the annual work plans are an opportunity to refine the overall five-year state plan submitted to the US Administration on Children and Families that began in FY 22 (and ends in FY 26). The important work is ahead of us.

This spring Raquel will be reconvening the State Plan Committee and members to begin thinking about the next five-year State Plan, which will begin in FY 27 – FY 31.

### **5. NACDD Conference Highlights – Jennifer Bertrand**

Jennifer Bertrand, MDDC Deputy Director shared some highlights about the Annual NACDD Conference. MDDC members Cody Rooney & Gyasi Burks Abbott partnered with NCIL members for a March & Rally on Capitol Hill in support of the 5 for 5 Campaign (500 million for 5 Core Services). MDDC members Raquel Quezada, Cody Rooney, Asha Abdullahi, Cynthia Liane, and Gyasi Burks-Abbott toured the People's House also known as the White House, which is an iconic symbol of democracy, the Presidency, the United States government, and the American people - where we hope all Americans feel a sense of inclusion and belonging.

The conference Showcase was a powerful opportunity to share our work and inspire other Councils. We were also inspired and energized to learn about the valuable work of other state Councils.

Gyasi Burks-Abbott and Cody Rooney received national recognition for their outstanding leadership and advocacy and were inducted into the national Self-Advocate Leadership Circle.

Raquel Quezada, Cynthia Liane, & Asha Abdullahi also represented the MDDC and presented a conference session titled, "A Mother's Perspective: The Special Education Challenge for Immigrant Families and the Power of Diverse Leadership.

### **6. Grants Update – Liz Fancher**

Liz Fancher gave a grants update on four projects that ended in the summer. Grants to Conexiones Latinx-MA, MassFamilies, and the Circle of Vietnamese Parents/Vòng Tay Cha Mẹ Việt were renewed for \$15,000 each. They will continue their work with underserved communities through June 2025. The Center for Public Representation (CPR) completed a project to address diversity, equity and inclusion for supported decision-making (SDM) training. CPR created training models to promote engagement with diverse communities. CPR wrote a final report with recommendations. The report and other grant products are available online in English and Spanish at <https://supporteddecisions.org/resources-on-sdm/sdm-diversity-equity-and-inclusion/>.

### **7. Grantee Presentation – Partners for Youth with Disabilities – Carol Murray**

Carol Murray from Partners for Youth with Disabilities (PYD) presented highlights from summer youth leadership trainings. Carol thanked the MDDC and other funders for their financial support. The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) took place at Emerson College in Boston over 5 days in June. Young Leaders Rising (YLR), leadership training that was created during the pandemic, took place mostly online over 8 weeks. These programs included team building, project-based learning, recreation and social opportunities, workshops, guest speakers and an advocacy event at the State House.

### **8. DPH Presentation – Elaine Gabovitch**

Elaine Gabovitch gave an overview of DPH's Title V Program; Title V Division for Children & Youth with Special Health Needs; Core Concepts of Maternal Child Health Title V and their priorities up to 2025.

## **9. Public Health Outreach Update – Liz Fancher for Fatima Baptista**

Liz Fancher gave the update in Fatima's absence. Liz spoke about the events and celebrations since our last Council meeting which are as follows: Massachusetts Cultural Council Partnership; W.I.S.E.; Juneteenth Freedom Day Celebration; Community Economic Development Center; Reggae on West Beach; Council on Aging; and Red Cross Blood Drive in Quincy.

## **10. Training Team Update – Lee Larriu and Staff**

The MDDC Training Team ran a total of 3 Self-Esteem training series between June – August, graduating a total of 26 participants. They also held a Legislative Training workshop with 8 participants from Delta projects, Minute Man ARC and Viability; the Self-Esteem Series: ran in June, July and August with our newest partner being Plymouth Cape Arc. Others included were from WOC-Westfield, South Shore Launch program, Viability, Sunshine Village.

The MDDC also Sponsored the Western Mass Self-Advocacy 20<sup>th</sup> annual conference at the Platinum level of \$750. The event celebrated advocates in Western Mass involved in 8 advocacy groups throughout 5 western mass counties. Sandy Houghton, the MDDC first Gopen fellow and retired MDDC employee and her husband Dan Houghton, former MDDC Vice-Chair, were honored with the Legacy recognition Award by the Western Mass Self-Advocacy group for their years of leadership and advocacy serving the disability community.

Other Events the Training team took part in included the annual Easter Seals Event held at Bridgewater State University where MDDC trainer, Tamara Huntley, ran a Self-Esteem workshop for the THRIVE group where participants crafted a collage that represented things they like about themselves, the things that they're proud of and things that make them happy. Thirty participants 18-26 years of age took part in activities all about empowering women in the disability world, and honoring their accomplishments. Other Workshops included creating art, murals, learning about disabled authors, and self-care activities all celebrating women.

The training team provided a 45-minute presentation to Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission on the work and opportunities offered by the Mass DD council to over 80 participants to include a broad variety of agency representatives and family members. The Team also ran a virtual employment workshop for Partners for Youth with Disabilities/ Youth leadership Rising program, 14 participants engaged in activities to explore potential employment opportunities and to learn about building their network.

In August, the MDDC was present at the Lawrence Partnership for Transition to Employment held at Northern Essex Community College. The LPTE is working to increase and enhance collaborations across existing local systems to maximize a seamless experience and outcome of youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) as they transition from school to employment.

The next Employment series kicks off October 7<sup>th</sup> on Mondays and Wednesday and on October 8 Tuesdays and Thursdays. Applications are currently being accepted.

## **11. Election of Officers**

Raquel began by stating we are electing for the next two-year term, Vice Chairperson and Secretary for the Council. We have received 2 nominations which are Cody Rooney for Vice Chairperson and Alana Russo for Secretary. We asked members to vote. Voting passed for both Cody Rooney as Vice Chairperson and Alana Russo as Secretary. Congratulations to both.

Voting Poll Results: Passed

#### **12. FY25 Budget Plan – Craig Hall**

The FY 25 budget was prepared by Craig Hall and Chrissy Joyal. The presentation was made by Craig Hall. The slides were presented, and explanation of projections, assumptions and planning was offered. The budget was presented with line-item listing of categories.

**Acceptance of the Proposed FY 25 Budget Plan:** Motion to accept passed unanimously.

First: Sandra Heller

Second: Gyasi Burks-Abbott

Voting Poll Results: Passed

**13. Other Business** – Victor Hernandez stated that Commissioner Jane Ryder has retired, and Sarah Peterson is Acting Commissioner. DDS will be conducting a national search soon for a new Commissioner.

#### **14. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.

First: Alana Russo

Second: Sandra Heller

Voting Poll Results: Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19pm.

Alana Russo\_\_\_\_\_

Review/ Approved

Alana Russo, Secretary

Date: 10 -5 -2024

Craig Hall /s/

Review/Approved

Craig Hall, Deputy Director

Date: