

**Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
Workforce Supports Subcommittee Meeting
Meeting Minutes**

Date of Meeting: Thursday, August 28, 2025

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Virtual

This is a meeting of the **Workforce Supports Subcommittee** of the permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This subcommittee will collect data and analyze initiatives that address the workforce crisis for people who provide services to individuals with disabilities.

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Andrew Levrault (Chair) – Deputy General Counsel, Disabled Persons Protection Commission
2	Representative Vanna Howard – House of Representatives
3	Leo Sarkissian – The Arc of Massachusetts
Members Not Present	
4	Angela Ortiz – Executive Director, MA Health Council
5	Chris White – CEO & President, Road to Responsibility, Inc

Action items		Person responsible
1	Invite Amy Doyle from Health Policy Commission	Imene
2	Lurie Disability Center nationwide direct care workers survey results and findings (spring 2026)	Imene
3	Reengage with Human Services Research Institute Valerie Bradley or Lindsay Dubois (Employment for people with IDD research including employment goals in service plans)	Andrew & Imene

1. Welcome and Roll Call
 - Postponed to November meeting, no quorum.
2. Workforce Development Updates from the Executive Office of Health & Human Services Workforce Development Manager Gina Frey
- Highlights and Key Updates:
 - The Health and Human Services sector continues to face significant workforce shortages and retention challenges.
 - Over the past two years, EOHHS has launched several major cross-secretariat initiatives, with new projects expected in the coming year.

- Priority workforce groups include nursing, behavioral health, primary care, and home- and community-based service providers—fields facing the most acute workforce needs.
- Massachusetts remains a national leader in supporting the transition from institutional to community-based care, with a focus on accessibility, quality, and workforce stability.
- Funding and Program Initiatives:
 - A \$46 million grant program is supporting training, recruitment, and retention in home- and community-based services through ARPA funding.
 - The MA Repay Program alleviates educational debt for health professionals in primary and behavioral health care who commit to service in high-need areas. Over the past two years, \$182 million has supported student loan repayment for these workers.
 - Workforce investments also include:
 - Free community college and grants supporting career pathways in healthcare.
 - Expansion of nursing and pre-nursing associate degree programs.
 - Agreements between colleges allowing students to seamlessly advance from associate to bachelor's degrees in social work.
 - Workforce Investment and Impact:
 - 82 grantees received ARPA funding, 60 of which are direct support providers.
 - 51% support individuals with mental health needs.
 - 39% serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).
 - 32% serve older adults and families.
 - Targeted professions include case workers, social workers, therapists, and nursing staff.
 - Emphasis on recruiting a diverse workforce that reflects the linguistic and cultural diversity of those served.
 - Creation of apprenticeship and internship pipelines, resulting in more than 2,000 new certifications.
 - Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) now have mobility across care settings, including home- and community-based care and long-term care facilities.
 - A state-sponsored online CNA program is being developed to expand access.
 - Behavioral Health Workforce Efforts:
 - Continued \$78 million investment to reduce barriers to training and licensure.
 - Licensing fees were waived for 10,000 behavioral health workers last year, with an additional 10,000 to benefit this year.
 - A \$50 million initiative provides stipends for behavioral health students.

- Over 2,500 individuals have benefited so far, with participation expected to double.
 - The [Health Policy Commission](#) will conduct further analysis to evaluate outcomes and develop recommendations.
 - EOHHS current workforce initiatives can be accessed here: [EOHSS Workforce Initiatives](#).
- Ongoing Priorities:
 - Continued collaboration with the Workforce Skills Cabinet and Health Policy Commission to evaluate progress and policy impacts.
 - Key questions include:
 1. Are we training enough nurses to meet demand?
 2. Are we successfully diversifying the workforce?
 3. What changes have improved workforce retention?
 - EOHHS emphasized the need for continued input from industry partners and collaboration to address ongoing challenges.
- Q&A Highlights:
 - Concern was raised about workforce losses due to recent immigration policy changes. Some providers reported losing trained staff after investing in English language and job readiness programs. Gina noted that EOHHS is closely monitoring this issue and understands its impact on the sector.
 - Discussion included the need for greater data transparency, with a request for a list of agencies that received ARPA funding.
 - Members expressed interest in holding an event or policy panel focused on the impact of immigration on the human services workforce, possibly involving representatives from multiple states and political perspectives.
 - Other topics raised included:
 1. The importance of comparative compensation studies for DSPs, PCAs, and healthcare educators.
 2. Continued support for job coaching, transportation, and wraparound services.
 3. Strengthening pipelines through early education initiatives.
 4. Collaboration opportunities with the Health Policy Commission and CHIA.
 5. Reference shared: Massachusetts Health Policy Commission [Workforce Page](#)
 6. Suggestion to facilitate introductions between Amy Doyle and Gina Frey for future collaboration and information exchange.
- FY26 Goals Discussion
 - Deferred to the November meeting for full discussion.

4. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn.
- Motion approved.

Next meeting dates:

- November 13