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Fall Council Meeting
Meeting Minutes
October 23-24, 2025

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

Melissa Barwick,
Lori Campbell,
Jessica Cowell,
Mark Crenshaw,
Ben Dell,
Martha Haythorn,
Tais Keyser,
Brook Kubik,
Lisa Newbern,
Sharifa Peart
(Thursday),
Charity Roberts,

Crystal St. Pierre-
Stackpole,
Jennifer Snyder,
Zolinda Stoneman,
Sharia Stripling-
James,
Dave Ward
Virginia Cross

COUNCIL MEMBERS

ABSENT
Dorothy Harris
Evan Nodvin
Jennifer Snyder

Leslie Kate
Thornton
Nandi Isaac
Sharifa Peart
(Friday)
Taesha Ward

GUESTS PRESENT

Jillian Grable
Devika Rao

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT

Felicia Dillon,
Ariel Edwards,
Tonya Fair,
Cathy Harmon-
Christian,
Rena Harris,
Harry Nelson,
Charlie Miller,
Fanta Mitchell,
Maria Pinkelton,
D’Arcy Robb

Call to Order

- Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities on October 23, 2026, at 9:30 am, at Marriott Macon Center City Hotel Conference Center. Council Chair Lisa Newbern called the meeting to order. Harry Nelson read the statement of place. A quorum was present.

1. Welcome and Introductions:

- Introductions were led by Mark Crenshaw. He asked all present to discuss what brings them joy.

2. Executive Committee:

- Includes: Lisa Newbern - Executive Committee Chair, Martha Haythorn - Vice Chair, Brook Kubik - At Large Member (2 spots open), and Standing Committee Chairs.



- **Working Together:** Roles and Respect - Executive Committee reviewed council roles, discussed respect and led group activity to add to Council Members' shared agreement.

3. Council Updates:

- **Committees:** Rena Harris provided the Committee updates: Public Policy, Grants Selection Committee (new), and State Plan Committee.
- **Executive Committee Nominations:** Requested nominations from the floor to fill the two open At Large Executive Committee spots. The nominees were Dayna Holbel and Jessica Cowell, Tais Keyser was added from the floor.
- **Public Policy Team** (Charles Miller and Cathy Harmon-Christian): Charlie discussed the Recent Wins and Current Situation, Key Impact, and Our Focus. The Council will vote to adjust the Public Policy Agenda 2026 to add protection of Medicaid funding and change language the IDD Commission to reflect a long-term, standing commission.
- **Budget:** Deputy Director, Harry Nelson, provided an update of the current budget status which included the current staffing changes.
- **Staffing:** D'Arcy Robb (Executive Director of GCDD) provided staffing and Council updates
 - Rena Harris and Cathy Harmon-Christian have joined the GCDD team.
 - Tianna Faulkner and Eric Foss' positions will not be refilled at this time. **23 East Group** will help cover the responsibilities of Tianna's role.
- **GCDD Policies:** D'Arcy Robb reviewed the updated travel policy which is included in the meeting packet. Upcoming Council meeting dates were reviewed and included in the meeting packet. A **plain language version** of the Attendance Policy has been developed.
- **Key Projects:** D'Arcy Robb reviewed the following key projects: Housing Project, Waiver ROI Research Project, and IPSE Audit Update.

4. 5 Year Plan Part 1:

- D'Arcy Robb reviewed questions and the feedback from the August Council Meeting. She also covered the timeline for the next 5 Year Plan.
- In response to Council feedback from the previous meeting, Ariel Edwards discussed the efforts made to hear from people of color in the focus groups and surveys. They shared the results with the group. There were no questions or comments from the audience.

5. 5 Year State Plan Part 2:

- Rena Harris reviewed Part 2 which covered the current state of the 5 Year Plan which outlined the progress of previous, current and upcoming projects in the 5 Year Plan.

6. Executive Committee Elections:

- 2 spots (nominees): Dayna Holbel, Tais Keyser and Jessica Cowell. Tais Keyser and Jessica Cowell were elected to the Executive Committee.

7. 5 Year Plan Part 3:

- The Council Members were sectioned into 3 groups to discuss the 5 Year Plan and the Council’s vision for the completion of the plan.

8. Tubman Museum:

- The Council Members traveled to the Tubman Museum to visit “Embracing Possibility: Georgia’s Disability Journey Exhibit.”

Call to Order

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities on October 24, 2026, at 9:06 am, at Marriott Macon Center City Hotel Conference Center. Council Chair Lisa Newbern called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

1. Consent Items

MOTION: Chair Lisa Newbern reviewed consent items including the minutes from the August 7 – 8 2025, Council Meeting.

MADE BY: Brook Kubik

SECOND: Lori Campbell

The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Chair Lisa Newbern- vote to adjust the Public Policy Agenda 2026.

MADE BY: Dana Lloyd

SECOND: Dave Ward

The motion passed unanimously.

2. 5 Year Plan Part 3 Discussion

- The previous 3 discussion groups reconvened and presented their group’s discussion results to the council.

3. Agency Reports:

Lori Campbell Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD):

- **Third Waiver – New Assessment (DON-R Plus).** The Ralston Institute is helping create a new assessment with training to ensure consistent scores.

- **New Community Service Boards (CSBs)** are being formed. One CSB per region will build Developmental Disabilities (DD) services.
- Work is also underway with Sangha Unity Network (SUN) to make Individual Support Plans (ISPs) more person-centered over the next two years.

Ben Dell Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA):

- **Supported Self Employment Services** have launched as of October 1st, 2025. “Georgia Disability Benefits 101” or “Georgia DB101” has soft launched online and will have its official launch as a part of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Celebration on October 28th, 2025.

Dr. Charity Roberts Department of Education (DOE):

- Implications of government shutdown and **Office of Special Education Programs RIF**.
- **Statewide literacy initiative** for students with IEPs to align with HB307, federal statutes/regulations, state laws, and state board rules.
- **Statewide focus on GVRA referrals** for all students with IEPs to ensure that all students are connected with DBHDD and/or GVRA, if eligible.
- Discussed the following items happening at DOE:
 1. Access to assistive technology tools by Everway to support students in academic settings.
 2. LEA professional learning and technical assistance on IEP Team decision making process to determine student participation in Georgia for alternate curriculum and assessment.

Zolinda Stoneman Institute on Human Development and Disability (IHDD) and Ralton Institute Update:

- **IHDD and the Ralton Institute** are still finalizing their merger. They are hiring new staff and changing offices into smaller spaces.
- The search for a **new Director continues** — two people have visited campus, and one more will visit next week.
- Plans are also moving forward for the **Disability History Symposium** with GCDD.
- **Upcoming events:** Planning Group-Inclusive Education was held after people were let go. Dan Habib was the keynote speaker. Other events include National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), Georgia Association of People Supporting Employment First ([GAPSE](#)) and [AgrAbility](#).

Mark Crenshaw Center for Leadership and Disability (CLD):

- **Project Healthy Grandparents**, a community-based research program aimed at improving health for grandparent-led families, joined CLD earlier this fall.
- **The Georgia Association for Infant Mental Health (GA-AIMH)** Conference will be held Wednesday, November 12, 2025, in the Student Center at Georgia State University.
- **The Georgia Association for Positive Behavior Supports (GAPBS)** Conference will be held on Friday, November 14, 2024, at Gas South Arena.
- CLD will soon conduct research on parent educators' perceptions of AI tools for family support, alongside developing **COMPASS**—the Community Oriented Machine-learning Platform for Access Support and Services.

Shandria Beasley Department of Community Health (DCH):

- Submitted written form stating nothing to report

Melissa Barwick Department of Human Services (DHS):

- **SNAP Eligibility:** Changes implemented under the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA)*.
- **Office Consolidation:** DFCS and DCSS offices in Fulton County have merged.
- **Federal Shutdown:** Applications for SNAP, TANF, and medical assistance are still being accepted and processed.
- **Foster Care Transition:** Ongoing partnership with DBHDD to improve transitions for youth with I/DD.
- **New GANE App:** A tool for law enforcement and professionals responding to crimes involving vulnerable adults. [Learn more](#)
- **Name Change:** The Public Guardianship Office is now the **Adult Guardianship Program**.

Sharifa Peart Department of Public Health (DPH):

- **COVID-19 Vaccines:** As of **October 7**, GaDPH is offering COVID-19 vaccinations at health departments statewide. [More info](#)
- **GaDPH Babies Can't Wait (BCW):** Monitoring updates from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.
- **GaDPH's Regional Perinatal Center:** High-Risk Infant Follow-Up clinics are expanding in rural areas for children ages 0–2.
- **GaDPH's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI):** Partnered with Fulton County Health Department and Atlanta Birth Center to launch monthly newborn hearing follow-up clinics.

4. Spirit of Kim Award:

- The Spirit of Kim Award was awarded to Jacqueline Daniel.

5. Announcements and Updates:

- **Brook Kubik** shared personal news and thanked state agency and GCDD staff for their hard work and teamwork.
- **Jessica Cowell** enjoys in-person meetings and will give a sermon on **November 16**.
- **Cathy Harmon-Christian** introduced herself as a new member and shared her principle: *"Someday all optional services are mandatory."*
- **Martha Haythorn** thanked staff for their advocacy and noted her growth as Vice Chair.
- **Crystal St. Pierre** reflected on the council's future and legacy and shared personal news about her brother.
- **Wesley Ford** stepped down from the council.

Adjourn

MOTION: Chair Lisa Newbern called to adjourn the meeting on Friday, October 24, 2025, at 12:38 pm.

MADE BY: Martha Haythorn

SECOND: Jessica Cowell

The motion passed unanimously.

Council Chair

Date 01/23/2026