



# Council Meeting Minutes

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January 26, 2024

**Council Members Present:**

Shontie Brown\*  
Kezia Cox\*  
Sarah Cripps\*  
Ryan Durham\*  
Will Edwards\*  
Diamond Grigsby\*  
Alicia Hall\*  
Faith Henshaw\*  
Chrissy Hood\*  
Clancey Hopper\*  
Courtney Johnson\*  
Edward Mitchell\*  
Evelyn Roach\*  
Faith Henshaw\*  
Brigham Scallion\*  
Bliss Welch\*  
Brent Wiles\*  
Martez Williams\*  
Blake Shearer, Voc. Rehab. Services  
*(attended on behalf of Tiffany Ramsey)*  
Kendra Thomas, Dept. of Health  
Carrie Brna, Dept. of Intellectual and  
Developmental Disabilities  
Shannon Nehus, TennCare  
Bruce Keisling, UT Center on  
Developmental Disabilities (UTCDD)  
Allie Haynes, TN Rural Health Association  
Don Watt, THDA  
Julie Lounds-Taylor  
*(attended on behalf of Pablo Juarez)*

**Staff Present:**

Lauren Pearcy  
Lynette Porter  
Alicia Cone  
JoEllen Fowler  
Ashley Hill  
Cathlyn Smith  
Jolene Sharp  
Emma Garton  
Mildred Sparkman

**Guests Present:**

Dr. Robbie Faulkner  
Andrea Gutierrez  
Commissioner Brad Turner  
Cara Kumari  
Lauren Legate  
Chrissy Freeland

**Council Members Absent:**

Molly Anderson\*  
Kimberly Boyd\*  
Debbie Miller\*  
Sara Miller\*  
Rusette Marcum-Embry,  
Tenn. Commission on  
Children & Youth  
Ryan Ramsey, Tennessee  
Commission on Aging and  
Disabilities  
Alison Gauld, Dept. Special  
Education  
Lisa Primm, Disability  
Rights TN  
Stephanie Cooper, Dept.  
Mental Health & Substance  
Abuse

\* Governor appointed citizen

## **8:30 a.m. Introductions, Opening & Agenda Review**

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Council chair Ryan Durham welcomed everyone and facilitated introductions of members and staff.

Ryan then called the meeting to order after ascertaining there was a quorum at 9:05 a.m. Ryan reviewed the agenda with members.

## **9:10 a.m. Business Items**

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### **Approval of May 2023 Minutes and September Meeting Agenda**

The September 2023 Council meeting minutes were emailed to all the Council members prior to the January 26, 2024 Council meeting to give members an opportunity to review before the meeting. Ryan asked if there were any edits to the agenda or September 2023 minutes. There were none.

**Sarah Cripps moved to accept the September 15, 2023 minutes as written. Brigham Scallion seconded the motion. There was no further discussion and the motion carried.**

### **Executive Committee Report**

Ryan Durham, Council chair, provided an overview of upcoming Council member recommendations.

- **Joint Needs Assessment**

The survey continues to be developed by our partners at Vanderbilt University. Council members participated in a work session during the November Council Retreat and will review the survey this spring before it's made final.

- **Council Bylaws**

In the fall of 2023, Council staff suggested updates and edits to the Council bylaws to bring them up to date with current federal and state mandates. The Executive Committee recommended that these edits be approved by the full Council. Council members received suggested edits to the Council Bylaws via email in December 2023 for their review, prior to today's action.

**The Executive Committee moved that the Council bylaws be approved as edited, with the understanding that further edits for content will be forthcoming. A second was not needed. No discussion. The motion carried unanimously.**

- **Executive Director Evaluation**

Council members can expect to receive a survey with the annual evaluation of the Executive Director. The survey will be sent by Chair Ryan Durham by Friday, 2/2. Council members are asked to complete this evaluation by the stated deadline. The state's dept. of human resources will manage the results and saving of records so that members' responses will be anonymous.

## **Audit Committee Report**

Alicia Hall, Chair of the Audit Committee, reviewed the work of the Audit Committee since the last Council meeting. In November, the committee reviewed and approved the agency annual risk assessment process. The committee found the agency controls to be adequate and the Council submitted the report to the Comptroller of the Treasurer on time. In January, a reminder memo of the Council's fraud, waste, and abuse processes was sent to Council members and staff. This reminder will also be included in the minutes of the meeting. In April, the committee will review the agency process for staff acknowledgement of the code of conduct required for all state employees. Results of that review will be shared with the Council.

## **Budget Report**

Lynette Porter, Deputy Director, provided an overview of the Council's federal awards. The FY23 federal award has been fully obligated. Congress has not yet passed a budget for federal FY24. Congress has passed three continuing resolutions, which have allowed Councils to be level funded through March 2024. Council staff do not anticipate a change in business for the Council, as they are currently utilizing the FY23 award to cover expenses.

The agency has requested level funding from the state budget process. The Council budget goes through the legislative budget process. Our budget is set to be presented to the House Finance Ways and Means committee on March 4 at 11:30 am.

## **Executive Director Report**

Lauren Percy, Executive Director, provided a brief staff update to the Council.

- The Council has not yet hired for its open staff position. Council staff will resume recruitment later in the year.
- Disability Day on the Hill is February 27-28, 2024. Council members are encouraged to attend.

Lauren provided an overview of special presentations on the Council's January meeting agenda:

- Commissioner Brad Turner will share about a proposed new Department of Disability and Aging. Council members are encouraged to engage in the discussion during this presentation.
- Council member Courtney Johnson, representing the First Tennessee Development District, will present about modes and culture of communication, specific to Augmentative and Alternate Communication users. Courtney's work can also be accessed by visiting <https://justkeepstimming.com/>.
- Council member Sarah Miller, representing the Memphis-Delta Development District, was unable to attend the meeting, but will present in a future session. Members are encouraged to review her work by visiting <https://languagepriority.com/>.

## **10:00 a.m. Special Presentation – Commissioner Turner**

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Commissioner Brad Turner provided an overview of proposed changes to state government. Governor Lee is proposing legislation to merge the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) and the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability (TCAD) under the same organizational

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structure to create the Tennessee Department of Disability and Aging Services. Key points

Commissioner Turner shared included:

- Tennessee is one of two states that does not house its “state unit on aging” within a cabinet-level agency.
- Elevating TCAD to a cabinet-level agency will strengthen bridges across the state’s disability and aging networks to advance shared goals.
- The Council on Developmental Disabilities will be more important than ever in providing expertise about I/DD in local communities and within the state government.
- Disability and Aging Act of 2024 is the legislation proposed to create this new department, filed this week.

Q&A with Council members included:

- Confirmation that the new department would focus on all types of disabilities -- not just intellectual/developmental disabilities and aging.
- Much is yet to be determined about staffing and resourcing the new department. Changes to licensing is an example of an area that has not yet been determined.
- The department is aware of, and wants to address, issues that Council members raised including: affordable and accessible housing; better wages for direct support professionals; better access to assessments and getting a diagnosis; and supporting family caregivers.
- Council members recommended hiring people with lived experience in high positions within the new department structure.

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**10:30 a.m. Break**

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**11:00 a.m. Committees**

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**12:00 p.m. Lunch**

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**12:45 p.m. Committee Report Out**

**Leadership & Development Committee**

**Goal 1 – Developing Engaged Leaders**

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Alicia Hall, representing the Leadership and Development Committee, listed the following themes present during the committee’s discussion:

- The Leadership Academy for Excellence in Disability Services (LAEDS) was a success this year.
- Youth leadership trainings will occur with DIDD’s expertise and their spring technology conference.
- Approximately half of the Partners in Policymaking® graduates are signed up to receive the electronic newsletter that is designed for the group. Chair Hall asked for the

members of the Council that are graduates to please make sure they are receiving electronically if they wish to receive it.

### **Public Policy Committee**

#### **Goal 2 – Impacting Policy & Practice**

Sarah Cripps, Public Policy Committee Chair listed the following themes present during the committee’s discussion:

- The committee will review Goal 2 report metrics before the next State Plan cycle.
- Bills we are watching in Public Policy: see the Council’s newsletters for up-to-date information throughout session. For anyone who wants more in depth discussion about disability legislation, contact us and we will connect you with The Arc Tennessee’s weekly legislative calls.

### **Communications Committee**

#### **Goal 3 – Informing the Public**

Edward Mitchell, Communications Committee Chair listed the following themes present during the committee’s discussion:

- All goals are on track with many outputs completed already.
- One area lagging behind include individual website views.
- “What comes next” when a person applies for services is going to be the storytelling theme for future articles in Council communication materials. This is in response to hearing from families that one of the most difficult parts of navigating the service system is not knowing what to expect from the process.

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### **1:15 p.m. Special Presentation – Communication Modalities & Culture**

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Courtney Johnson, Council member representing the First Tennessee Development District, presented on Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Her presentation is included at the end of the minutes.

### **2:15 p.m. Wrap Up**

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Ryan Durham reminded members to complete the evaluation and travel forms before leaving today, which are in member folders. The next Council meeting will take place on Friday, April 26, 2024 at the Embassy Suites Nashville Airport.

### **2:20 p.m. Public Comment**

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Visitors to the Council meeting were invited to make public comment. Visitors shared admiration for the work the Council and its members do and the impact the Council has on the daily lives of Tennesseans impacted by disability.

### **2:00 p.m. Adjournment**

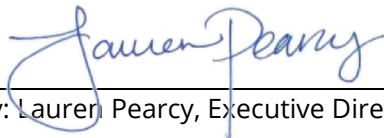
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**A motion for adjournment was made by Edward Mitchell and seconded by Shontie Brown. The motion carried and the Council meeting was adjourned at 2:14 p.m.**



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Prepared by: Ashley Edwards, Assistant to the Executive Director



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Approved by: Lauren Percy, Executive Director