

**HDI Consumer Advisory Council
Hybrid meeting
Monday, December 1, 2025 10:30AM – 1:30PM**

In attendance today...CAC Members

Jake Cruz	Cathy Lerza
Joshua Seigle	Robin Osborne
Bobby Begley	Bithinny McKee
Kristen Beach	Meghan Ackerman
Robin Halvorson	Walt Bower
Skylar Koehler	

Presenters: Derek Vincent, Lori Norton, Margaret Lopresto, Mykal Leslie

1) Welcome & Introductions Joshua Seigle

Joshua opened the meeting at 10:30 AM. The members in attendance introduced themselves.

2) Review and Approval of September minutes Joshua Seigle

Joshua made a motion to approve the minutes. Jake seconded the motion. The September meeting minutes were approved.

3) AUCD update – Council on Leadership in Advocacy (COLA) Joshua Seigle

Joshua began the COLA update by sharing that the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) did not have an annual conference in Washington, D.C. this year due to uncertain funding. Joshua reported that the previous COLA meeting, held virtually on November 3, consisted of a panel discussion. The panel discussion was moderated by Wanda Felty.

The panelists were Mark Smith, Angela Martin, and Melanie Davis. The panelists addressed two questions: (1) What advice do you have for COLA members? and (2) What are strategies to ensure all voices are heard in COLA meetings? Joshua also noted that Chase Mulvaney with AUCD can provide additional information about the leadership team roles and positions at the Council on Leadership in Advocacy (COLA).

- 4) Kentucky 1915(i) RISE Initiative
-Input and feedback from CAC members
- Derek Vincent

Derek Vincent shared an introduction to the Kentucky 1915(i) RISE Initiative. RISE stands for recovery, independence, support, and engagement. The 1915(i) RISE Initiative provides services to adults with a primary diagnosis of serious mental illness (SMI) or co-occurring SMI with substance use disorder (SUD). The 1915(i) RISE initiative is administered jointly by the Department of Medicaid Services (DMS) and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID).

1915(i) RISE reflects the initiative's focus: helping individuals RISE above their challenges through services that promote and support recovery, independence, and community engagement. 1915(i) RISE initiative participants must be Medicaid enrolled and at least eighteen years of age. 1915(i) RISE Initiative services include, but are not limited to, assistive technology, case management, and housing and tenancy supports. The 1915(i) RISE Initiative ensures services are provided in accordance with a person-centered service plan, reflecting the participant's strengths, preferences, goals, and desired outcomes.

- 5) The Autism Works Study
-Input and feedback from CAC members
- Lori Norton
Margaret Lopresto

Lori Norton and Margaret Lopresto introduced the Autism Works Study. Kentucky has been chosen as the only state in the country to take part in a new research study, Autism Works, funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research. The goal of the study is to help autistic adults find and keep good jobs. The Autism Works Study adapts and evaluates the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model for autistic adults seeking competitive integrated employment in Kentucky.

Many autistic adults want to work, but 50–75% are unemployed. Current job-training programs often take too long and don't always meet people's needs. Community Mental Health Centers taking part in the study include Four Rivers, Kentucky River, Communicare, and Pathways. Lori concluded the presentation with a poem. For more information or ways to participate, please contact Lori Norton, the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Implementation Lead at HDI.

- 6) Break (12:00)

- 7) HDI Executive Director update
-Input and feedback from CAC members

Dr. Mykal Leslie

After the Consumer Advisory Council members introduced themselves, Mykal introduced himself to the Consumer Advisory Council. Mykal described his background working as a Rehabilitation Counselor in West Virginia focusing on transition age youth and then earning a PhD degree in Counselor Education at Kent State University. As an Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Counseling, Mykal was the coordinator of the master's program in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling at Kent State University.

Mykal also worked at the Center for Disability Studies at Kent State University as a Research Associate and then Acting Executive Director. Mykal has worked at the Human Development Institute (HDI) since 2018 on the RETAIN project. Prior to serving as the Executive Director at HDI, Mykal was the Director of Data and Evaluation at HDI since 2022. There will be opportunities to discuss your experiences as a CAC member, as well as any additional ways you might like to engage with HDI and the CAC at future meetings.

- 8) Agency Updates (P & A, DD Council, DDID,
OVR)

Each Agency

Protection & Advocacy – Robin Halvorson reported out that Protection & Advocacy priorities for the 2026 fiscal year were set and will be submitted to their grantors. Robin also shared that Protection & Advocacy has planned for the significant reduction in federal funding for the Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program.

Robin announced that the PAC, PAIMI, PADD councils met and planned an education day at the Capitol during the upcoming session, tentatively scheduled for March 4. Robin also shared that P & A has filed an injunction against the Department of Juvenile Justice regarding the releasing of records and P & A Federal authority to those records when involving a foster child and probable cause for abuse or neglect.

Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities - Jake Cruz shared there was a presentation about Kentucky STABLE accounts by Jordyn Pennington at the last CCDD quarterly meeting on November 21. Jake also noted that the Council has an upcoming retreat focusing on the five-year state plan.

Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities – Cathy Lerza reported that the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities (DBHDID) distributes a report each month titled Opportunities, Activities, and Resources (OAR). The November report includes information about CLIMB 2.0 (Climb Ladders in Mental & Behavioral Health), Recovery Corps, 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, and the Kentucky Gallery of Youth Voices initiative. There are links included in the report to more information about many of the topics contained in the report.

The CHILD waiver has been approved by CMS and providers are currently being recruited. More information can be found here: <https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dms/dca/Pages/child.aspx>

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation – Kristen Beach provided an update for OVR. Kristen noted that OVR moved to an order of selection system on May 14, 2025. New participants will be added to the waitlist. OVR encourages people to apply for vocational rehabilitation services.

- 9) Election of CAC Co-Chairs and Setting of 2026 Meeting Dates All

Due to time constraints, the election of CAC co-chairs was tabled and will be revisited at the next CAC meeting. Walt noted the CAC meeting dates for the 2026 calendar year will be on March 2, June 1, September 14, and December 7.

- 10) New Business and Announcements Joshua Seigle

Walt announced the first HDI seminar in the HDI Spring Seminar Series. The title of the first HDI seminar is “Disability and Physical Activity” and will be on February 18, 2026, at 1-3pm ET. Walt also noted that he will send out the registration link and session description for this HDI seminar to the Consumer Advisory Council listserv.

Joshua made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Jake seconded. The meeting adjourned at 1:41pm.

NEXT CAC MEETING: Monday, March 2, 2026, at 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM