

**HDI Consumer Advisory Council
Monday, March 2, 2026 10:30AM – 1:30PM**

In attendance today...CAC Members

Jake Cruz	Katie Looney
Joshua Seigle	Becky Barnes
Bobby Begley	Robin Osborne
Kristen Beach	Bithinny McKee
Robin Halvorson	Walt Bower
Cathy Lerza	

Presenters: Rachel Womack, Mykal Leslie, Kathy Sheppard-Jones

1) Welcome & Introductions Joshua Seigle

Joshua opened the meeting at 10:30 AM. Members in attendance introduced themselves with brief visual descriptions.

2) Review and Approval of December minutes Joshua Seigle

Joshua made a motion to approve the minutes. Bithinny seconded the motion. The December meeting minutes were approved.

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

Joshua shared key highlights from the COLA meeting. Chase Mulvaney noted that no nominations had been received to date for the election of new co-secretaries. The co-secretary role involves supporting meeting minutes, assisting with agenda preparation and distribution, and working collaboratively with leadership on a one-year term aligned with the annual election cycle.

Chase discussed plans to synthesize the Mentimeter themes from the COLA meeting and narrow priorities to two to four focus areas, with a primary focus area to be selected at the April meeting. A one-day Disability Policy Seminar with optional field visits will be held on March 23–24, 2026, in Washington, D.C. March 23 is the informational day; March 24 is Hill Day for meetings with U.S. representatives and senators. Members were encouraged to attend the AUCD Policy Committee meetings, held on the second Tuesday of each month at 4:00 PM. The next full COLA Council meeting is May 4.

4) Election of New CAC members All

Walt opened the discussion on electing new CAC members. Walt reported that the nominating committee nominated three CAC candidates: Tami McCain, Leslie Bailey, and Joe Mason. Joshua moved to accept these three nominations for new members for the CAC. Bobby Begley seconded; Jake Cruz offered additional support. Motion carried.

5) Election of New CAC co-chairs All

Bobby nominated Joshua Seigle as co-chair. Bobby also nominated Bithinny McKee as co-chair. Jake moved to nominate Joshua Seigle and Bithinny McKee as co-chairs. Kristen Beach seconded. Motion carried.

6) HDI Academic Program updates Rachel Womack
-Input and feedback from CAC members Walt Bower

Rachel Womack, Division Director of Training and LEND Director at HDI, presented an overview of three HDI academic programs. Walt co-presented portions of the session. The Kentucky LEND Program (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Other Related Disabilities) is a federally funded program through HRSA operating on 5-year grant cycles. The LEND is open to graduate students in health-related and education disciplines, self-advocates with an intellectual or developmental disability, and family members of individuals with IDD.

The Graduate Certificate in Developmental Disabilities is offered in partnership with the UK College of Education and prepares students from a broad range of disciplines to provide services and supports for people with developmental disabilities. HDI offers an Undergraduate Certificate in Universal Design in partnership with the UK College of Design. Beginning Fall 2026, a graduate-level certificate in Universal Design will also be available. Both programs will be offered in a fully online, asynchronous format starting Fall 2026. The program covers Universal Design principles across settings including classrooms, product design, and healthcare, and includes Universal Design for Learning. This is the broadest of HDI's three academic programs and is open to all students and non-degree-seeking participants.

7) Break

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

Mykal Leslie

Mykal Leslie reported that HDI scheduled 272 individuals for listening tour meetings. Over 230 HDI employees have been met from across more than 70 sessions. Key themes from the listening tour include: Employees have a strong passion for their work and for supporting people with disabilities; HDI's culture is described as collaborative, non-competitive, and respectful of work-life balance and mental well-being; and employees desire more small-group connection opportunities and greater professional development support.

The HDI Representative Payee Program, led by Kevin Fleming, has recovered over \$300,000 in stolen or mismanaged funds for Kentuckians with disabilities over the past two years. Kentucky was among the first states nationally to include recommendations for repayment to individuals whose representative payees had mismanaged or stolen funds, with Social Security approving those recommendations. Mykal noted this achievement deserves broader recognition.

HDI is launching a digital accessibility initiative to strengthen and scale its accessibility practices internally and externally, in alignment with federal emphasis on digital accessibility. Resources are being dedicated to ensure HDI goes beyond compliance in line with its values of universal design and accessibility. Mykal expressed interest in exploring ways for CAC members to be involved in HDI internal engagement activities, such as small group meetings or interest sessions, and encouraged members to reach out with feedback or questions directly or through Walt Bower.

- 9) Training Innovation Project (TIP) Grant update
-Input and feedback from CAC members

Kathy Sheppard-Jones

Kathy Sheppard-Jones presented on the Training Innovation Project (TIP). The goal of TIP is to build the capacity of vocational rehabilitation professionals and employers to support the competitive integrated employment of people with disabilities, using a dual customer model.

Training Innovation Project activities include: A national needs assessment survey and key informant interviews with rehabilitation professionals and employers; An online professional learning series with micro-credentials and webinars; Virtual reality training in partnership with CareerViewXR; The Disability Hiring and Retention Academy, offered in partnership with the Kentucky Chamber of

Commerce; and a National Innovative Training Hub at tiptrain.com, housing training modules, resources, newsletters, and short videos.

Kathy invited CAC members to reflect on the question: What concerns do employers share about hiring individuals with disabilities? Members may send responses to tiptraining@uky.edu or directly to Kathy Sheppard-Jones. CAC members were encouraged to visit tiptrain.com and share upcoming events and resources with their networks.

10) Agency Updates (P & A, DD Council, DDID, OVR) Each Agency

Protection & Advocacy – Robin Halvorson reported that P&A attorneys have submitted comments on proposed regulations for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Juvenile Justice. The Department of Juvenile Justice accepted many of P&A’s recommended changes to their updated regulations.

Public Advocate Damon Preston, who oversees all public defenders in Kentucky, announced his retirement. Governor Andy Beshear will appoint a new Public Advocate; the appointment was pending at the time of the meeting. The PAC and PAD Advisory Councils held meetings on March 4–5 with Education Days at the Capitol Annex advocating for disability rights.

Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities – Jake Cruz shared that they had just completed their retreat on February 19-20 to update their five-year state plan. They will be sending a delegation to the Disability Policy Seminar on March 23-24 in Washington, DC. Jake also reported there will be a proclamation signing on March 12 by Governor Beshear officially declaring March Developmental Disabilities Month in Kentucky.

Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities – Cathy Lerza shared that DDID is in the process of developing tools for providers to self-assess how they are doing with providing waiver services. The intent is for providers to determine what they are doing well and what they can improve upon. So far, DDID has introduced the tool for residential services and are working on case management, day training, supported employment, and community access.

DDID will also share several other tools with providers that other entities have developed:

- Behavior Support Plan Adherence Review Instrument <https://dbhds.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/BSPARI-9.2023.xlsx>
- Community Life Engagement https://www.communityinclusion.org/files/cle-toolkit/guideposts_assessment_22.pdf
- Person-centered practices self-assessment https://ncapps.acl.gov/docs/Resources/NCAPPS%20SelfAssessment_Final_March2022%20-%20508%20Compliant.pdf

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation – Kristen Beach reported that OVR remains in an order of selection system. Individuals are encouraged to schedule appointments and apply for services in order to be added to the waitlist. OVR is evaluating fiscal matters on a weekly basis and exploring mechanisms for fiscal forecasting to determine when the agency will be able to begin removing individuals from the waitlist.

Heidi Kesterson has been named as the new Division Director of Blind Services. Heidi previously served as the Facilities Administrator at the McDowell Center in Louisville and brings extensive knowledge of blind services to the role. Michelle Cobb has been named as the East Central Regional Program Manager. Michelle has been a branch manager for approximately 10 years and a counselor for approximately 6 years, most recently based in the Florence district.

11) New Business and Announcements

Joshua Siegle

Walt announced the following two HDI events: the “Effectively Writing and Implementing an IEP” HDI seminar on March 11 and the “Demystifying Autism Diagnosis” HDI seminar on April 15. CAC members who are unable to attend live sessions are encouraged to view recordings on the HDI website and to share seminar information with their professional and personal networks. Joshua noted that word-of-mouth sharing remains a powerful tool for raising awareness about disability issues and HDI’s work beyond formal channels.

Joshua moved to adjourn the meeting. Robin seconded. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned.

NEXT CAC MEETING: Monday, June 1, 2026, 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM