

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

**In attendance today...CAC Members**

Jake Cruz  
Joshua Seigle  
Bobby Begley  
Tami McCain  
Meghan Ackerman  
Andrea Strassburg

Katie Looney  
Becky Barnes  
Blair Close (for Cathy Lerza)  
Bithinny McKee  
Walt Bower

**Presenters:** Teresa Bellusico, Kevin Fleming, Mykal Leslie, Carolyn Wheeler

1) Welcome & Introductions Bithinny McKee

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

2) Review and Approval of March minutes Bithinny McKee

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

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

Joshua reported on the COLA meeting held on May 11, 2026. The meeting centered on the results of a COLA member survey about the council's direction and priorities. The survey resulted in the identification of four topic areas: 1) Threats to Disability Services and Supports; 2) Funding Cuts and Budget Concerns; 3) Civil Rights and Inclusion Concerns; and 4) Misinformation and Public Education Gaps. The topic receiving the most votes was threats to disability services and supports.

The main focus of the COLA meeting became how to incorporate all four topics into a unified advocacy strategy, with Topics 1 and 2 serving as the primary foundation. Methods discussed included white papers, videos, and other presentations to higher levels of government. Everything beyond Topics 1 and 2 was tabled for a potential ad hoc follow-up meeting in June. Joshua noted he will follow up with Chase Mulvaney at COLA after this CAC meeting to get information on next steps and whether an ad hoc meeting will be scheduled.

- 4) HDI Summer Leadership Experience Camp update Teresa Belluscio  
-Input and feedback from CAC members

Teresa presented an update on the HDI Summer Leadership Experience Camp, now in its ninth year. The dates of the HDI Summer Leadership Experience are July 12–16, 2026, at the University of Kentucky campus. High school students with disabilities (typically entering junior or senior year, or recently graduated) between the ages of 16 and 21, who have an open Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case or are receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are eligible. The camp is at maximum capacity enrollment with 20 campers. Campers stay in UK residence halls for four nights, departing around noon on July 16. Teresa welcomed interested volunteers, particularly those with experience working with individuals with autism or other disabilities.

- 5) P&A / SSA Representative Payee Monitoring Team Kevin Fleming  
-Input and feedback from CAC members

Kevin Fleming presented on the work of the Representative Payee Monitoring Team. A representative payee is a person or entity (such as a nursing home, SCL agency, or psychiatric hospital) designated by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to manage Social Security benefits on behalf of a beneficiary who may not be able to manage their own funds. Funds must be used solely for the beneficiary. The team has recovered over \$371,000 for Kentuckians with disabilities since 2022, when the team began requiring repayment. Of over 550 reviews, only 47 payees (less than 10%) were found to be misusing or mismanaging funds.

State foster care is the second-largest representative payee in Kentucky after state guardianship. The Department for Juvenile Justice was found to have failed to set aside required funds for youth; they repaid over \$15,000 and subsequently withdrew from the representative payee role. Kevin expressed hope that Kentucky will adopt policies to set aside Social Security funds for youth in the foster care system so they have resources when they age out. Referrals can come from anyone in the community. To make a referral, contact the team through HDI. If SSA confirms no payee is assigned, the team may refer the matter to Adult Protective Services or other appropriate entities.

- 6) Break

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

Mykal Leslie

Mykal Leslie, presented highlights from the AUCD Leadership Summit held in Austin, Texas, and shared updates on federal disability policy. Mykal attended the summit and met with UCEDD directors and associate directors from across the country. Commissioner Becky Hines of the Administration on Disabilities was in attendance at the AUCD Leadership Summit. Mykal shared emerging information from the summit on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Historically, fetal alcohol syndrome required specific physical markers; the field is now moving toward understanding FASD as a broad spectrum. A major theme at the Austin summit was respectful storytelling — capturing and elevating the voices of people with lived experience in ways that build awareness without reinforcing negative disability stereotypes. HDI is actively working on improving how it tells these stories.

The AUCD Annual Conference is scheduled in Washington, D.C. in November 2026. It will be the only major DD network conference this year. HDI's DD network meeting was held the prior Friday. Time was taken to honor Dr. Kathy Sheppard-Jones for her decade of leadership as HDI Executive Director. Jeff Edwards (P&A) and Johnny Caleb (CCDD) have proposed that advisory councils take over the planning and agenda-setting for the annual DD network meeting. They are seeking volunteers from the CAC, P&A council, and CCDD advisory council to form a planning committee. CAC members interested in being involved should let Mykal or Walt know so their names can be forwarded to Jeff and Johnny.

- 8) Achieving a Better Life Experience – STABLE  
Account Update  
-Input and feedback from CAC members

Carolyn Wheeler

Carolyn Wheeler presented an overview of STABLE Kentucky, the state's ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) savings account program. The program is managed through the Kentucky State Treasurer's Office. Jordyn Pennington serves as the Director of STABLE Kentucky at the Kentucky State Treasury.

The age of disability onset for eligibility has expanded from age 26 to age 46. Individuals whose disability occurred before age 46 may now be eligible to open an account. As of 2026, there is no enrollment fee and no maintenance fee. The annual contribution limit is \$20,000 and an additional \$15,650 may be contributed

by employed account holders who do not participate in an employer-sponsored retirement plan. A STABLE account does not affect SSI or Medicaid eligibility. Accounts are opened online at the STABLE Kentucky website.

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

**Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities** - Jake Cruz reported that the DD Council held their council meetings last month. Current leadership is Council Chair is Amy Smith; Vice Chair is David Allgood; and Self-Advocate Representative is Ryan Guyder. Members of the Kentucky delegation attended the Disability Policy Seminar in Washington, D.C. in March. Meetings were held primarily with congressional staff, with the exception of team members who met directly with Representative Morgan McGarvey.

**Division of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities** – Walt Bower presented an update provided by Cathy Lerza. The oversight of Participant Directed Services (PDS) program is transitioning from the Department for Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) to the associated waiver operating agencies. DDID will oversee PDS for the Supports for Community Living (SCL) and Michelle P. waivers. PDS duties will begin transitioning July 1 with the full transition by January 1, 2027.

- 10) New Business and Announcements Joshua Siegle

Walt announced the Training Innovation Project (TIP) Master Class – June 24, 2026, "Setting the Record Straight About Hiring and Retaining Disabled Workers: Debunking Myths," presentation by Dr. Phil Rumrill. Walt will send the registration link to the CAC listserv. Walt recognized Meghan Ackerman for six years of outstanding service as a CAC member. Megan was thanked for her attendance and participation, and was encouraged to continue as an ambassador for HDI and the Consumer Advisory Council.

Bithinny made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jake seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned.

NEXT CAC MEETING: Monday, September 14, 2026, 10:30 AM – 1:30 PM