



# IDEA Advisory Meeting

## MINUTES

MARCH 6, 2025

9:00 AM – 11:56 A.M.

VIRTUAL MEETING

|                          |   |
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| <b>MEETING CALLED BY</b> | Christopher Larson  |
| <b>TYPE OF MEETING</b>   | IDEA Advisory Meeting   |
| <b>FACILITATOR</b>       | Christopher Larson  |
| <b>NOTE TAKER</b>        | Michelle Souther  |
| <b>ATTENDEES</b>         | Michelle Souther, Mary McCarvel-O'Connor, Nicole Reybok, Christopher Larson, Kristina Heinle, Jessica Howling Wolf, Colette Fleck, Lucy Fredericks, Penny Nygaard, Grace Larsen, Brooke Tayer, Michelle Pfaff, Jennifer Withers, Katy Barnum, Cassandra Bartelson, Aimee Easton, Michael Netzloff, Michelle Woodcox, Jacqueline Adusmilli, Danielle Sloan, Tina Degree, Fayme Stringer, Andrea Johnson, Carlotta McCleary |

### Agenda topics

#### IDEA B APPLICATION

MARY MCCARVEL-O'CONNOR

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| <b>DISCUSSION</b> | States are required to apply for Part B grants to the federal government. The only change we made there was a section that asked about policy and procedure. We don't recognize multiple disabilities developmental delay, and ND calls it NCD. We allow for two more exceptions to extended 60-day initial evaluations—limited access to professionals and weather delays. When we were monitored, we were told that we should be marking this differently. We are currently collecting the MSFS, and then it will posted to the website for public comment. |
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#### COMMITTEE WORK

CHRISTOPHER LARSON AND NICOLE REYBOK

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| <b>DISCUSSION</b> | <p>Nicole, Chris, and Mary met and wanted to make the committee more efficient. They thought of creating subcommittees to help tackle different topics and get more input on issues that affect the state. Maybe listening sessions. The issues brought up aren't going to be resolved overnight, but we want to have these sessions so the different continents know they have a voice. Listening sessions would be virtual or hybrid. There are different options for attending these listening sessions. What is the committee's opinion on these listening sessions? If we split the state by region, would we have a diverse population and participation from smaller areas? We would still meet three times a year as a committee. The subcommittees would be separate and provide a different format for the committee to get input and needs of that region. Special education directors and parents could meet, and you could bring that information back to the IDEA Advisory Committee for discussion. We are not always getting parents' voices and input from the different regions. It is hard for the IDEA Advisory Committee to advise on statewide issues since not every region is representative on the committee. The purpose of today's meeting is to gauge the committee's opinion on whether this would be a good idea. Penny and Tina think it would be beneficial. The Arc of Cass County would love to help facilitate listening sessions in rural Region 5. NW North Dakota transportation is an issue, but we could use virtual. Fayme said there is a stigma in rural communities with having a disability. I think it comes where there is early intervention in these communities before getting into the school system. Andrea Johnson said she will create an Excel spreadsheet with the resources available for teachers to give to parents. Pathfinder, the PTI, has a page dedicated to links for parents. These are probably state-level, but they may be a good starting place!</p> <p><a href="https://www.pathfinder-nd.org/resource-agency.php#HS">https://www.pathfinder-nd.org/resource-agency.php#HS</a></p> <p><a href="https://thearc.org/chapter/the-arc-of-north-dakota-inc/">https://thearc.org/chapter/the-arc-of-north-dakota-inc/</a></p> <p>The next steps are to develop a thinking group to organize everything and work out the logistics of the listening session.</p> <p>The following people volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Jacqueline Adusmilli, Kristina Heinle, Colette Fleck, Tina Degree, Cassandra Bartelson, Aimee Easton, Jeff Anderson, Fayme Stringer, Katy Barnum, Andrea Johnson.</p> |
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#### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

MARY MCCARVEL-O'CONNOR

**DISCUSSION**

Would the committee want to write a letter of support or against one of these bills?

HB 1013

- North Dakota Department of Public Instruction’s budget bill
- Appropriates \$24 million for special education grants
- Passed the House 72-17
- Senate Appropriations Committee held a committee work session yesterday (3/5)

HB 1164

- Amends the North Dakota Century Code relating to definitions of terms used for special education.
- Changes the words ‘emotional disturbance’ to ‘emotional disability’
- Changes other minor words
- Passed the House 92-1

There is much stigma tied to the word disturbance.

HB 1223

- relating to the suspension and expulsion of kindergarten through grade twelve students.
- Passed the House 92-0
- Senate Education Committee yesterday (3/5) with no action taken

HB 1247

- relating to protection of a student victim of sexual assault
- Passed the House 91-0
- Heard by the Senate Education Committee yesterday (3/5) with no action taken

HB 1530

- legislative management study on the circumstances and needs of special education teachers and the related special education teacher shortage
- Passed the House 84-7
- No hearing set in the Senate Education Committee

HB 1547

- to create a committee to study special education funding during the 2025-26 interim, and to provide for a legislative management report
- Passed the House 86-5
- No hearing set in the Senate Education Committee

SB 2096

- provide an appropriation to the Department of Health and Human Services for regional acute psychiatric treatment and residential supportive housing services
- Senate passed 35-8
- House Hearing in the Human Services Committee yesterday (3/5) with no action taken

HB 1261

- relating to special education strategist credentials
- Passed the House 85-3
- Senate Education heard the bill on 2/5, do pass recommendation 5-0

SB 2112

- relating to the life skills and transition center; to provide for a legislative management report; and to provide an expiration date
- Passed the Senate 29-17
- No hearing set in House Human Services
- Your chair and vice chair **recommend a letter of do not support** for this bill.

This proposes a life skills transition center for young adults to transition from the school to workforce. This bill would allow students who don’t meet the criteria to be there. There is a limited number of beds, and if we open it up to students who don’t meet the requirements, we would be taking away from those who met the criteria. Jeff Anderson said some services are better than no services for individuals who are in crisis. The need is so great that until something better comes along, the type of services available at the transition center will be better than none. A limited number of beds with students with disabilities and kids in foster care. They hope the Dept of Health and Human Services comes up with a solution before expiration. Has anyone reached out to the Life Skills Transition Center to see if they plan to keep the vulnerable students safe and if everyone’s needs are being met? The concern is safety and the needs of students with disabilities being met. The issue is that the beds that are available will be given to students with mental health issues versus students it was intended for. It should be as a last resort only. Deinstitutionalization is important and it is for the most at need for those intensive services.

Facts. More services are needed to meet appropriate needs.

Schedule a meeting with the Life Skills Transition Center to discuss our concerns. Jeff Anderson suggested having a group from this committee to see what is happening and help provide guidance/suggestions. Jeff Anderson, Brenda Ruehl, Nicole Reybok, Grace Larsen, and Christopher Larson will go to the center, discuss what they find out, and bring back what they find out at the next meeting in September. P&A opposes this bill. Reach out to the Upper Valley Special Ed Unit to schedule a meeting with Dan Juve. If you have any questions or concerns, please email Mary or Chris.

Discussion on ESA'S (SB 2400/HB1540)

Federal Funding of Special Education

- Your Chair and Vice Chair recommend a **letter of support** to the President of the United States to request keeping of funding for special education at the federal level.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND ABSENTEEISM

CARLOTTA MCCLEARY, FEDERATION OF FAMILIES

Children's Mental Health & School Absenteeism—Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. At any given time, 1 out of 5 children has a mental health condition, and 1 out of 10 will have a serious emotional disturbances (SED). In North Dakota, that translates to over 18,000 children. Juvenile justice reform – two categories are the human service zone services – children in need of protection and children in need of services. As of August 1, 2022, law enforcement and schools should refer children and youth to the new Children in Needs of Services team, staffed by Human Service Zone professionals across the state. Please do not continue to make referrals to juvenile Court, Mental Health Reforms – 1915 (i) State Plan Amendment, System Of Care Grant, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC's).

1915(i) eligibility –

- Any Age,
- Currently enrolled in ND Medicaid or Medicaid Expansion,
- Have a household income below the 150% federal poverty level,
- WHODAS Score of 25 or above,
- Received services at home (not institution),
- Have a qualifying mental health diagnosis.

A student who is chronically absent any year between 8 and 12 is more likely to drop out.

15% of all students in the US are chronically absent, and that number is significantly higher among students in special education.

### DISCUSSION

Chronic absenteeism is widely defined as missing 10 percent or more school days in a school for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences.

15.1-20-02-1 Truacy policy

15.1-20-02 Compulsory attendance – exceptions

15.1-20-03 Compulsory attendance law – enforcement – penalty #5

What can families do at Home?

- Talk with your child
- Try to find out the reason for missing school
- Together, brainstorm some solutions.

What can families do if their child has an IEP or 5-4 Plan?

- Ask for a team meeting to discuss concerns
- Reach out to the school's special education coordinator or 504 coordinator
- Plan for an evaluation
- Updated IEP/504 Plan

Solutions

- Ask students and families why the student is absent
- Recent students found that wraparound services improved attendance
- Asset mapping – what services and supports do we have in our community

- Child find. Is this a child with a disability?

1,086 youth clients with SED received case management services in the Human Service Centers between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024.

ND Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health provides statewide parent-to-parent support for children with mental health needs and their families. Call 701-222-3310 if you are in need of support.

Mental Health of America of North Dakota helpline – 701-255-3692. Toll-Free 1-888-705-5763.  
[www.mhand.org](http://www.mhand.org)

Chronic Absenteeism Puntative charges—Parents are being charged with child neglect and the impact on the family and student—grandparents raising their grandchildren, Native American. The charge can be \$250.00 – \$500.00, and the families can’t afford this. The family ends up pulling their student from schools, the student is not receiving an education, and parents are uncomfortable about reaching out for services. Are we interested in educating these students? Parents lose their employment due to the school calling and having to pick up their students from school. They should do a child find right away when a student starts missing school. Parents don’t know how to access services, or they were wrongfully denied their wraparound support, which puts them at risk of suspension/expulsion. Building a bridge to transition those students back to school. Mobile Crisis Team or 988– you can request human services or a crisis center to de-escalate a student at school. 45-mile radius of Fargo, Grand Forks, Williston, Minot, Jamestown, Bismarck, and Dickinson. What is an alternate if they can’t get to us in time? Go to the human service centers. Mental Health issues – go to the human service centers, not the zones. The Federation of Families has a virtual parent support group that meets every other Tuesday. The next meeting is March 18 at 7:00 p.m.

SPDG – GRAD 701

.MICHELLE WOODCOX

**DISCUSSION**

Our vision is that all students will graduate choice-ready with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful. Choice ready framework. [NDDPI ND Choice Ready 241217](#) In order to graduate choice ready the student would need to complete the Essential Skills box and complete requirements within two yellow boxes (Post-Secondary Ready, Workforce Ready, and Military Ready).

Grad 701 is a grant that was received by the Office of Specially Designed Services in October 2024. The overarching goal of Grad 701 is to increase graduation rates for students with disabilities through professional development and technical assistance on implementing Early Warning Systems and Evidence-Based Practices to teachers, administrators/principals, families, and pre-service teachers.

The work of this grant is split into three areas. The first is to expand the work of Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring Systems (EWIMS). This is where schools use data to identify and support at-risk students. They look for the ABCs: attendance, behavioral referrals, and course completion (academic grades). These data points have been shown to be accurate predictors of students who may go on to drop out. This work will provide more coaches and cross-train all staff supporting schools in the state to spread this message. Each year two districts are selected to receive training and monthly coaching in this area.

Another area of work is Evidence-Based Practices. One evidence-based practice is Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR). This is a program that schools implement for three years. The focus is to build culture and community in schools while using data to support students. In addition, four evidence-based practices will be supported, and training will be offered to train them to implement with fidelity. These practices are: Behavior-specific praise, Check-in, Check-out Opportunities to Respond, Check, & Connect. Lastly, we will train future teachers at our universities in North Dakota. One of our coaches is Kim Marman at the University of Mary. She is going to make us Lesson Plans, Case Studies, Data Analysis. University of Mary is going to pilot and then the next year Mayville State University.

Where you can find Grad 701 information: [Special Education](#). You can sign up or share this family listening session link: [Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

**DISCUSSION**

| SUGGESTIONS SUMMARY   |                           |                 |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Issues and Concerns in our State:</b> No issues.   |                           |                 |
| <b>ACTION ITEMS</b>   | <b>PERSON RESPONSIBLE</b> | <b>DEADLINE</b> |
| <p>The December meeting minutes were approved. Jeff Anderson made the motion, and Andrea Johnson seconded it.</p> <p>Chris is working on getting the first listening session scheduled in the NW part of the state by the end of March. We would like to offer in-person and virtual listening sessions.</p> <p>The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m. Brenda Ruehl made the motion to adjourn, and Andrea Johnson seconded it.</p> <p><b>Public Comment:</b> No Public Comment.</p> <p>The September meeting is scheduled for September 11, 2025.</p> <p>Agenda Items for the September meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Member Training</li> <li>• ICC/IDEA Advisory Joint Meeting in the morning</li> <li>• Subcommittee Work</li> <li>• Bylaw Updates</li> <li>• Update on the Life Skills Training Center visit</li> </ul> |                           |                 |