

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**BOARD OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES**  
**February 5, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Board of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) was held February 5, 2025 at Conway Human Development Center. The meeting convened at 10:30 a.m. pursuant to the call of the Board Chair.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Suzann McCommon, Randy Lavery, and David Rosegrant with Linda Patterson and Michelle Loe in attendance via Zoom.

STAFF PRESENT: Medicaid Specialty Populations Director Melissa Weatherton, DDS Director Jennifer Brezée, Jeff Gonyea, Sarah Murphy, Kerry Gambill, Diane Keith, Mark Wargo, Avis Lane, Tammy Benbrook, Amanda Cox, Victor Eackles, Kathleen Hoskins, Karen Byers, and Caren Moore.

OTHERS PRESENT: Deborah Rainwater, Reagan Stanford and MacKenzie Bell of Disability Rights Arkansas, Kimberly Dodd, Attorney General Representative Sarah DeBusk-Griffith, and Katrina Robertson.

Ms. McCommon called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone in attendance.

Ms. McCommon called for a motion to approve the minutes from the November 6, 2024, regular meeting of the DDS Board. Mr. Rosegrant made a motion that the minutes be approved. Ms. Loe seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The Physical Management Subcommittee met at 10:00 on this date to discuss the ARDOT contract proposal (attachment 1) involving the bridge on Colony Drive at Jonesboro Human Development Center. The Subcommittee moved to accept the ARDOT proposal which covers 80% of the cost to replace the bridge leaving DDS responsible for \$190,000. Mr. Rosegrant seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

The Administrative Services Subcommittee met at 10:00 on this date to discuss the Behavioral Consultation Committee which was formed in 2018 to review restraint practices in the human development centers. The Subcommittee moved to approve the charter to formalize the committee and committee members which will include a Board member at its quarterly meetings. Mr. Lavery seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. McCommon introduced Attorney General Representative Sarah DeBusk-Griffith and thanked her for attending.

The Superintendents of the human development centers shared items of interest regarding campus activities, hiring efforts, construction updates, and challenges faced during the recent snowstorm. Conway HDC Superintendent Sarah Murphy announced the campus received nine inches of snow and the maintenance department organized a ride service for staff. Ms. Murphy and Assistant

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Superintendent Raven Fuller delivered pizza to staff who remained on campus overnight. CHDC is in the process of transitioning two additional 24-hour nursing residences. Staff will participate in the Polar Plunge to raise funds for Special Olympics.

Jonesboro HDC Superintendent Diane Keith highlighted the team effort displayed following the eight inches of snow received on campus. Some staff remained overnight and the maintenance department provided transportation for other staff members. Clients are scheduled to participate in the Spring Special Olympics and preparations are underway for the annual Spring Gala. Construction will begin soon on the wellness center.

Booneville HDC Superintendent Jeff Gonyea advised the campus received 14 inches of snow and they were able to utilize snowplows to keep entrances and sidewalks clear. Repairs to roof damage cause by the storm is underway. The Wellbeing Pillar sponsored food trucks for staff. The BHDC psychology examiner along with the therapy dog recently retired. A Night To Shine client event is scheduled for February 7<sup>th</sup> in Fort Smith.

Arkadelphia HDC Superintendent Kerry Gambill praised staff for arriving to work equipped to stay overnight as they prepared for 8 inches of snow. The maintenance crew provided transportation for staff who needed it. Ms. Gambill shared information regarding the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk-a-thon, multiple holiday parties, and the beginning of work on the final bathroom renovations.

Superintendent Mark Wargo advised staff reported to work with overnight bags. Maintenance pre-salted the sidewalks in preparation for the storm. The campus received sleet instead of snow. Mr. Wargo provided construction updates for buildings 17 and 18 in addition to progress on the replacement of kitchen cabinets in each residence. He also shared information regarding client activities including SEAHDC caroling at nursing homes during the holidays.

Ms. Brezée welcomed participants to join her and DHS staff to form a Central Arkansas Polar Plunge team. March is Developmental Disabilities Month. To commemorate this month, DHS will post banners outside central office on Main Street and conduct interview with clients. She also shared information regarding her participation in the Phase class at Conway HDC, the return of Dale Woodall to DDS part time, the submission of the WeHeart report to the Legislature, and that Let's Talk DDS meetings have resumed quarterly. OSAM has been awarded a grant focused on the forensic population. The pilot has been approved for Adult Day Programs through an ARP grant with Arkansas State University.

The Blue Umbrella's 6<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration along with a silent auction is scheduled for February 19<sup>th</sup>.

Conway HDC parent Deborah Rainwater thanked the staff for the care provided to her son. She made note of how proud she was to see him wearing a tuxedo to the prom.

Booneville HDC parent Katrina Robertson provided information regarding a bill proposed by Representative Ladyman for Jonesboro HDC Phase II construction and construction at Arkadelphia and Conway HDCs. Ms. Weatherton clarified this is an appropriation bill.


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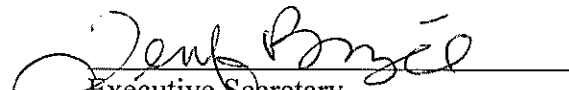
Arkadelphia HDC parent and secretary for Families and Friends of Care Facility Residents Kimberly Dodd voiced her appreciation for the community setting provided to her son.

Reagan Stanford of Disability Rights Arkansas requested an update on cameral installation at Conway HDC. Superintendent Sarah Murphy advised cameras are operational in all homes and Ms. Brezée noted a small amount of fiber work needs to be completed.

With no further business, Ms. McCommon called for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Mr. Lavery made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Rosegrant seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

ATTEST:

  
Suzann McCommon  
Chair, Board of DDS

  
Executive Secretary