



GCDE General Membership Meeting

February 28, 2025, 10:00am-1:50pm

Purpose: *Greet new GCDE committee members and engage with partners.*

Agenda:

10:00 am - Welcome, housekeeping – Yvonne Bussler-White, GCDE Chair (5 min)

GCDE Chair Yvonne Bussler-White called the meeting to order at 10:02am, described herself, reviewed the agenda, and welcomed all members, guests, and Associates – particularly new members – Ashley Bray, Jaida Barrows, Napal Tesfai, and Angela Romeo.

Standard housekeeping items were reviewed along with inclusive meeting guidelines, and Zoom features.

She introduced her new GCDE Co-Vice Chairs, Marsha Cutting & Cullynn Foxlee.

1 agenda amendment – adding Legislative Subcommittee to afternoon report outs.

10:05 am - Roll call – Elizabeth Gordon, GCDE Executive Director (5 min)

Present (folks were asked to share a brief description, pronouns if comfortable, & what advocacy means to them in 1 word/phrase **IN BOLD**):

Staff – Elizabeth Gordon (Executive Director – **research**), Emily Heike (Staff - **empowerment**), Elaine Stefanowicz (Staff - **hope**)

Members (quorum: 13 - met) – Amy Cloud - **listen**, Angela Romeo – **self-determination**, Angie West - **encouragement**, Ashley Bray - **access**, Ivyanne Van Der Peet - **change**, Jaida Barrows - **voice**, Lyn Sowdon – **people-first**, Marsha Cutting - **visibility**, Nancy Zellers - **doing what's right**, Napal Tesfai - **support**, Steve Lewis – **awareness**, Steven McCray - **engagement**, Susan Matt - **influence**, Brit Nuckles - **support**, Daniel Ledgett - **necessary**, Lucas Doelman (joined late)

Associates – Jen Bean (CAP – **civil rights in action**), Larry Watkinson (DOL - **collaboration**), Shelby Satko (WSRC - **champion**), Tania May (OSPI - **community**)

Guests – Ashley Schweiger (DVR - **great**), Morgan Jericho (ODHH - **persistence**)

Accommodations – Connie Church (CART), Catherine Thomas (ASL), Lindsay Gerken (ASL)

10:10 am - Members at Large – *Yvonne Bussler-White, GCDE Chair (5 min)*

Yvonne shared that GCDE Members-at-Large serve on the GCDE Coordinating Committee leadership team, representing the voice of the full General Membership, please reach out to them with questions or concerns.

-2025 MAL appointments: Amy Cloud, Nancy Zellers, and Cullynn Foxlee.

10:15 am - Panel discussion: Deaf Community – *Ashley Schweiger, DVR & Morgan Jericho, ODHH (1 hour)*

Yvonne introduced presenters:

Ashley Schwieger (Ashley.schweiger@dshs.wa.gov) is a Regional Transition Consultant with Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. She will be sharing a presentation on Deaf Awareness (videos described – disregard the S-Drive slide).

-Morgan Jericho (morgan.jericho@dshs.wa.gov) is a Management Analyst with the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He will be providing an update on the Interpreter Shortage Workgroup (public opportunity to learn more at a Town Hall next week on Wednesday 3/5 at 3:30-5:30pm– recommendations still being finalized on Monday 3/3 – also a meeting within the state govt. on Tuesday 3/4 from 2-3:30pm). More info in chat and to be sent to Elizabeth via email.

11:20 am - Legislative session discussion – *Elizabeth Gordon, GCDE Executive Director, Nancy Zellers, GCDE Legislative Group Vice-Chair (30 min)*

Elizabeth and Marsha will review the latest updates on the GCDE legislative spreadsheet (to include tier 1 & 2 impacting PWD , and overall bills reviewed), particularly the short list of bills that the GCDE Legislative Subcommittee identified as priorities for 2025, and answer any questions (cutoffs happened last week and today – if certain bills have not met milestones, they don't move forward, or move to a budget proviso if there are fiscal impacts).

12:00 pm - Lunch (30 mins)

Please be back at 12:30pm (break for accommodations providers as well).

12:30 pm - Icebreaker (all) - *Elaine Stefanowicz, staff & Yvonne, Chair* (1 hour)

Members were asked to popcorn answer the icebreaker question – what is one strength you have that other members can look to you for?

Responses included –

Marsha Cutting: Community organizing

Lyn Sowdon: Detail oriented and timely, ADA familiarity

Suzi Matt: Organization and legal/healthcare knowledge for advocacy, writing

Nancy Zellers: Listening and baking

Napal Tesfai: Connection to local resources, non-profit/healthcare/DV background

Steve Lewis: Software development background, technical expertise

Jaida Barrows: Legislative experience regarding the bills (particularly HB 1795) and legislative process resources (teaching)

Angela Romeo: Para education background as well as advocacy & consulting (education, accommodations in K12 & higher ed), LGBTQ knowledge

Brit Nuckles: DRW background (attorney), employment law specialization, benefits knowledge, learning perspectives, paratransit

Lucas Doelman: Advocacy – ability focused

Amy Cloud: Professional comms. background (media writing & strategy, radio, blogs, magazines, news reporting)

Angie West: Cross-county employment knowledge/connections – esp. disability (HR background)

Ashley Bray: Higher Ed background (disability services), new to WA state from DC (job coaching), ABLE Act knowledge, benefits knowledge (TA/Training) nationwide
No Ivy or Daniel or Steven.

1:30 pm - Plan for 2025 – *Elizabeth Gordon & Subcommittee Chairs* (45 min)

- **Budget cuts - Elizabeth Gordon, Executive Director (5 min)**

Elizabeth provided a quick overview and answered questions on the state budget cuts for awareness. **Hiring frozen** (open position – now a team of 3 staff supporting members – trimmed back activities due to other support work), travel frozen (no in-person events or meetings), contracted services (if not pre-existing such as statewide RA's, cannot enter into one, such as venues, catering, transport, hotels), new press release listing Gov's priorities – includes furloughs for state staff starting 1 day per month in July - still subject to legislative review (likely changes). Messaging around subsequent impacts forthcoming (we can make our own budgetary decisions, lots still unknown). We'll keep all posted.

- **Subcommittee Chairs - annual plan (40 min)**

Yvonne mentioned that the Awards program will be suspended for 2025 (to be revisited in the Fall). She will share other work we can be doing around this later (Susan and Amy had a question on this).

Chairs were asked to answer the following 3 questions:

- What have been your three top subcommittee accomplishments this past year?
 - What are three subcommittee goals for this year?
 - How can people help with this subcommittee work?
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- **Community Outreach - Marsha Cutting, Chair (10 min)**
 - **Accomplishments:** Involving locals, deciding a date and venue, and moving forward
 - **Goals:** successful event, revitalize the local ACAC, conducting GCDE outreach at other conventions to hear concerns
 - **Getting involved:** Let us know if you're involved in other local organizations and could help table with us, invite folks in Spokane to the local event in April, provide virtual assistance at the hybrid event
 - **Accessible Communities - Steve Lewis, Chair (10 min)**
 - **Accomplishments:** Coordinates with local ACAC's, funds grant applications for disability projects, established a new county ACAC
 - **Goals:** Help existing ACAC's, establish new ones, revise grant process
 - **Get involved:** Check if your county has an ACAC and reach out if not (share instructions), get involved if there is one
 - **Youth Empowerment summit – Lucas Doelman, Vice-Chair (10 min)**

- **Accomplishments:** Revised format, implement co-vice chair role, realigned focus
- **Goals:** Pivot to virtual half-day event, allow for broader reach, have a successful virtual event
- **Get involved:** Spread the word about the virtual event on 8/1/2025
- **Membership – Elaine Stefanowicz, Staff (10 min)**
- **Accomplishments:** 5 new committee members, recommended highly qualified candidates, selected a diverse group for appointment recs
- **Goals:** Orient new members, assign mentors, create rev. team for 2025
- **Get involved:** Must be on GCDE for 1 year to participate, spread the word when recruitment opens in the Fall
- **Legislative Subcommittee – Nancy Zellers, Vice-Chair (10 min)**
- **Accomplishments:** Reviewing bills and selecting priorities, conducting advocacy training, holding space for member updates on outreach with legislators
- **Goals:** additional member training on advocacy (committee wide), training on how to effectively tell your story, and continue tracking disability related bills
- **Get involved:** Let Elaine know if you'd like an invite to training

1:30 pm - Break (15 min)

Please be back at 1:45pm.

1:45 pm - New member orientation – Elizabeth & Yvonne (5 min)

New member orientation will be from 1-3:30pm on Thu. 3/13. New Members and Subcommittee Chairs have been invited. We will go more in-depth about GCDE's work, subcommittees, policies and procedures, and have time for questions.

1:50 pm – Adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at almost 2pm with a reminder of the next meeting (10am-3pm on Fri. 5/16/25). Folks can reach out to Yvonne or Elizabeth with questions. Thank you to accommodations providers and guest speakers, and all for your participation. Yvonne is looking forward to the work this year.

Employment work conversation forthcoming in the next month or so.

Next GCDE General Membership Meeting will be on Fri. May 16, 2025, from 10am-3pm