

Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE)

Executive Director's Report to the General Membership

Time Frame: May 2025-October 23, 2025

Submitted by: Elizabeth Gordon, Executive Director

Executive Order 24-05: GCDE led the work on rewriting Executive Order (EO) 24-05. This executive order, "Improving Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities in State Government", focuses on making Washington state government an employer of choice for people with disabilities. This EO was written by, for, and with people with disabilities, both within and outside of state government, alongside other state agencies, and state leaders. It was a long-time project that was finally signed in December of 2024, and is in the implementation stage, with various subcommittees and workgroups at the enterprise level, as well as within various state agencies. It is exciting to note that this work was shared as a national best practice by the National Governor's Association (NGA) in partnership with the State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED). Here are a few bodies of work related to the executive order that GCDE is involved with:

- Employment Focused Disability Consortium
- Training coordination, outcomes, and learning objectives subcommittees
- Sponsors steering committee
- Consultation with various state agencies on internal training, safety planning, and other activities related to disability inclusion.

Digital Equity Forum (DEF): Washington State Office of Equity and Washington State Broadband Office convene the DEF to work on the state's goal "to provide all residents access to high-speed broadband". The larger group meets monthly, with subcommittee meetings at least monthly, or more often based on work. Elizabeth chairs the Broadband Accessibility and Services Subcommittee, whose primary goal is to identify gaps in the system and make recommendations for solutions. Digital Equity and access were identified by GCDE members as a key issue, which is why we have a seat at this council. The Accessibility and Services subcommittee met weekly to identify recommendations for the report, which is submitted to the Governor's office and the legislature. Recommendations were submitted in August for a report that is due in December. Long turnaround times are needed for multiple layers of review. Our group made the following four recommendations:

1. Build state and local capacity to convene underserved populations. Centralize a directory or inventory of digital access and accessibility support programs, tools, and resources.
2. Tailor solutions to the area being served by partnering with local decision makers to develop broadband action teams, or other models of engagement across regions.

3. Increase in-home access to devices that allow individuals to access community, education, jobs, healthcare, and reduce affordability barriers. Increase person-centered support for digital literacy.
4. Integrate digital accessibility training and services into digital literacy and navigation programs and resources to meet the disability community needs, including state workers.

These recommendations focus on making sure everyone has what they need to get online and use digital tools. It calls for the state to help local groups to build capacity and bring underserved communities together to ensure they have what they need. They call for working closely with local leaders and tribal nations while keeping a centralized resource hub up to date, getting affordable devices into homes, and helping people learn how to use technology that accesses community, education, jobs, and healthcare. They also stress the need for accessibility training for digital navigators and as a part of digital skills training, so all communities have the resources and decision-making power to improve their own digital infrastructure. You can find further information in the linked document, which explains barriers that were identified and an explanation of the recommendations.. XX [ADD LINK]

Executive Order 25-09: Governor Ferguson ordered the Office of Equity to convene a subcabinet to focus on coordination of services and supports for the immigrant community through Executive Order 25-09 “Reaffirming Washington’s Commitment to Protecting the Rights and Interests of Immigrant Communities,” linked here: [25-09 - Protecting Immigrant Communities \(tmp\).pdf](#). Equity asked GCDE and Department of Services for the Blind to convene immigrants with disabilities, as well as those who serve that population, to ensure that disability voice is represented in this work. We will be reaching out to various communities to ensure that we have people with lived experience represented in this work.

Office of Equity Commission meetings: Representatives from the various Commissions and Committees meet monthly with the Office of Equity in a roundtable discussion of the work happening at each agency, and to have collaborative working space. Agencies represented include: Commission on African American Affairs, Department of Veteran’s Affairs, Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs, Women’s Commission, Commission of Hispanic Affairs, LGBTQ Commission, and Commission on Asian Pacific Affairs.

Governor’s Interagency Council on Health Disparities: Elizabeth attends their quarterly meetings. Legislation that would seat GCDE to the health disparities council that did not pass last session will be reintroduced this session. GCDE members identified the need to have a voice to address disparities that people with disabilities encounter in the healthcare setting. This is an important way for GCDE to have a voice to talk about health equity from a disability perspective. Visit their website to learn more: [Home | Health Equity](#).

Additionally, Elizabeth participates with the Disability Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) Collaborative Workgroup hosted by Department of Health (DOH), which focuses on emergency preparedness and education, as well as the Community Collaborative (also hosted by Department of Health). The Community Collaborative shares DOH information, practices, and policies for decision making to reduce health inequities.

Cross Disability Action Network (CDAN): This is a group that supports legislative action by and for people with disabilities. It is an independent space for people with disabilities. This group was formerly hosted by Disability Rights Washington (DRW). This year, GCDE will provide some administrative support in partnership with DRW. We encourage everyone to check out this important group. Please stay tuned for more information.

Statewide Transition Council: GCDE was added to this group, which was developed to better serve students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Washington.

Governor's Subcabinet on Federal Funding and Policy: This is a meeting of state agencies with the Governor's office to discuss funding issues and policy issues that are impacting Washington state. It meets every other week for larger meetings, and bi-weekly for short updates.

Other Activities

- **Directors' meetings:** Directors of Washington State Rehabilitation Council, Developmental Disabilities Council, Washington State Independent Living Council, Washington School to Work Coordination Board, and Arc of Washington meet monthly to learn about and support one another's work.
- **Community Summit:** This event brings together self-advocates, families, friends, partners, and allies to collaborate on building more inclusive communities. Imani Barbarin was a featured speaker.
- **Sign Language Interpreter Shortage:** GCDE has been involved in a few different meetings to identify ways to increase access to sign language interpreters. This is a national crisis. Current work is around how to have sign language interpreters on staff in certain agencies given some of the administrative hurdles, and looking at contracting pathways. This is ongoing work shared here for visibility.
- **Enhancing and strengthening the behavioral health workforce:** This was one of several meetings we attended on this critical topic. Washington has invested money in strengthening the behavioral health system and workforce shortages impact the ability to implement these plans. This is also shared for visibility of the membership.
- **Statewide Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council, now known as The Collaborative:** Elizabeth attends the council meetings to represent people with disabilities, and workers with disabilities employed by the state. The group meets monthly. For more information, visit the website: [OFM State HR DEI Council](#).
- **Supporting Parents with IDD Cohort:** This group meets periodically to discuss any emerging issues for parenting people with DD/ID (intellectual and developmental disabilities). It consists of parents with DD/ID, people from developmental disabilities Community Services, legal representatives and advocates.
- **State Opioid and Overdose Response Plan community meeting:** Elizabeth attended to give input and stay apprised of this work.

- **Telebuprenorphine Hotline update:** Elizabeth attended to give input and stay apprised of this work.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury Council:** Elizabeth attended to stay apprised of the council's work and share information while partnering where possible.
- **Washington State Independent Living Council:** Elizabeth attended to stay apprised of the council's work and share information while partnering where possible.
- **Washington State Rehabilitation Council:** Elizabeth attended to stay apprised of the council's work and share information while partnering where possible.
- **Washington Supreme Court Disability Justice Task Force-2025 Supreme Court Symposium**
- **Future of Equal Opportunity**
- **Secretary of State's Disability Advisory Committee**
- **DeafBlind Services Consortium**
- **Recovery Academy**