



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY ISSUES AND EMPLOYMENT**  
*Employment Security Department ■ P.O. Box 9046 ■ MS: 6000 ■ Olympia, Washington ■ 98507-9046*  
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**Youth Empowerment Program Minutes**

Friday, October 3, 2025

10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Attendees: Kristin DiBiase, Chair, Jaida Barrows, Lucas Doelman, Co-Vice Chair, Lyn Sowdon, and Nancy Zellers.

Staff: Elizabeth Gordon and Elaine Stefanowicz

Guest: Sam Fennell

1. Approve agenda and minutes. Minutes: Lyn made a motion to approve the minutes and Lucas seconded the motion. Motion passed and approved as written. Agenda: Lyn made a motion to approve the agenda, and Nancy seconded the motion. Motion passed and approved as written.
2. Guest speaker: Sam Fennell, Operations and Policy Manager, Washington State LGBTQ Commission and Coordinator for the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) program. Sam discussed the following topics:

Funding: The Youth Advisory Council is part of the Governor's budget. The Commission writes a budget request.

Recruiting Youth: They have listening sessions asking youth what they want the council to look like in partnership with youth organizations. They connected with LGBTQ youth and schools. The LGBTQ Commission is a small team of three staff. They are able to provide funds for snacks and meeting space rental. Stipends are available for the host.

Social media has been a big part of recruitment. They want to recruit in more rural and east side geographic area.

Choosing Applicants: They choose students heavily involved in student activities, running support groups at schools (GSA: gay straight alliance). They also created ways for students who have never been involved in activities to participate.

They held application parties both in person and on Zoom. Held at libraries with access to Wi-Fi. They did six months of research to start the youth council. The youth felt empowered to develop the council.

Term Limits: Youth have two- or three-year terms based on interest. They do not limit how many terms youth can serve. The capacity of the commission is also factored in.

Council Goals: They have an annual four-day summit every summer. Meetings are held at 6 pm and they have weekend events. They want to hold more events. Communicate through “Zines” (youth version pamphlet with cartoons).

Focus: Youth rights in Washington state, how to advocate on the youth level, and other ways to get engaged. They had two youth town halls: One about K-12 education in Spokane held on Oct. 18 and another in February held at the Olympia Capitol to discuss access to healthcare.

Legislation: they trained youth about legislation and how to testify. HB 1296 Parental Bill of Rights. Start writing proclamations and resolutions. They have one read bill on the floor. Youth planned an event for Trans Day of Remembrance. They sent a mass email to all collaborators and partnered with Spokane Pride. They communicated with statewide

agencies and had lots of community connections. They created a list of GSA list serv.

They included resource centers and colleges.

School Hours: They don't plan any meetings during school hours. They check in quarterly on the youth's grades to make sure they are keeping up with schoolwork.

Are there any memorable takeaways from events you attended? The joy of bringing people together. Youth run with it and grow.

Meetings: The Youth Council meet monthly for one hour. The youth didn't want hierarchy (chairs/vice chairs). They have a scheduler for meetings, east and west event leads, social media lead, note takers, and accountability partners to ensure tasks are completed.

3. Discussion of next year's event. Tabled until next meeting.

**Next Meeting: Friday, November 14, 2025, at 10:00 am**