**Texas Governor’s Committee on People with Disabilities**

**QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday October 29, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

Dallas College, Cedar Valley Campus

Student Engagement Center, Building N, Room 1051

3030 North Dallas Avenue, Lancaster, TX 75134

**October 29, 2024**

1. **Call to Order/** **Roll Call/** **Introductions** – Ellen Bauman Co Chair called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

**Members present:** Kristie Orr, Emma Faye Rudkin, Kori Allen, Billy Blanchard, Eric Lindsay, Ellen Bauman, Ben Willis, Richard Martinez

**Staff present**: Ron Lucey, Norman Kieke, Matt Dickens, Rebecca Lopez, Carolyn Saathoff

**ExOfficio Representatives present:** Brock Boudreau, Lana Estevilla (for Clair Benitez), Elyse Lieberman, Marsha Godeaux, Claudia Peden

1. **Welcoming Remarks**
2. City of Lancaster, Mayor Clyde Hairston welcomed the GCPD to Lancaster. Mr. Lucey invited Mayor Hairston to work together to develop a committee at a municipal level in the Lancaster community. Mayor Hairston expressed enthusiasm and asked Mr. Lucey to follow up by email. Mayor Hairston shared his philosophy, “The Ps, Positive Partnership Produces Prosperity for us all…not just money, but services.”
3. Dallas College, Cedar Valley Campus President, Dr. Joe Seabrooks thanked the GCPD for choosing Lancaster for the Quarterly meeting. He shared his dream to help ALL people. And indicated enthusiasm for support of the GCPD in enhancing opportunities for people with disabilities.
4. **Approval of Committee Member** **Absences as Submitted**:

Neva Fairchild, Evelyn Cano, Lauren Taylor

Eric Lindsay motioned to approve these absences. Seconded by Richard Martinez. Unanimously approved.

1. **Approval of Summary Minutes for July 25-26, 2024**

Eric Lindsay motioned to approve the minutes. Seconded by Richard Martinez. Unanimously approved.

1. **Public Comment**

**Josh** **Breighner**, Wandercraft Exoskeleton Company, spoke about the need for the Physical Therapy industry to make a major shift due to the rising instances of stroke, spinal cord injuries, and other neurological disorders in the United States. Exoskeleton robots assist people with standing and walking in their rehabilitation hospital and at home, which can result in improvements in long-term mobility outcomes. Wandercraft was founded 12 years ago on the principal that everyone who wants to, should be able to walk again. Wandercraft has two key technologies. The X, the most sophisticated self-balancing robot, which is used in rehabilitation facilities. Second, is the personal exoskeleton, to help close the walkability gap between rehab and everyday life. Wandercraft believes these products are one of the biggest things in mobility since the advent of the wheelchair.

The policy proposal is to partner with wheelchair users of Texas on an economic impact study designed to show how access to self-balancing walking robots can improve outcomes, starting in the hospital, transitioning to a home setting, and help improve access to gainful employment in Texas.

The current policy intention is that the rehabilitation robot be positioned in Texas federally funded hospitals to improve access to individuals who need it, evaluate economic impact on the hospitals, and in the future, more access to the personal exoskeleton through Texas Medicaid services.

**Chenique Lewis,** Lancaster Parent Support, spoke about guardianship and thanked the GCPD for being aware, attentive, and alert about what is happening in the community.

**Lee Shiel** shared his story of becoming an incomplete Quadriplegic from a rollover truck crash. He spent seven weeks in a coma and was told he would be bed bound and have brain damage due to the spinal cord injury. His previous active work was as a U.S. Marine and medical scientist at Cal Tech Children’s Hospital. He has lived five years with his disability. Mr. Shiel shared and demonstrated a simple technology he uses to stand and take walking steps. This simple technology has allowed him to see the world from a standing perspective, which makes a difference. He thanked the GCPD for the opportunity to share ideas and facilitate programs. Ellen Bauman thanked him for his passion and hard work.

**Noreen Gill**, Texas Association for Persons Supporting Employment First (APSE), requested better communication with state agencies regarding the Texas Employment First policy. This policy prioritizes employment in the community at fair wages for people with disabilities, rather than segregated or noncompetitive job settings. Ms. Gill expressed concern that not all state agencies, including HHSC, TWC VR, and TEA, may be fully aware of the policy’s existence or its importance. She emphasized that more work is needed to implement the policy effectively, particularly in using current funds. Ms. Gill asked the GCPD to ensure all agencies are informed about their responsibility to implement the policy. Ms. Gill advocated for the promotion of employment opportunities for people with disabilities across all state agencies and contractors. Ms. Bauman noted that the state of Michigan serves as a model employer for this policy.

**Chris McKenzie**, owner of Deaf Work Advocate, commented on behalf of the DHH community in DFW, noting issues with delays in services to deaf clients. He has clients who have been waiting for services since February. He asked GCPD to ask the state to investigate why these services have been on hold for such a long time. The issue appears to be lack of funds and costs of ASL interpreting services. Mr. Lucey suggested Disability Rights Texas could help with this type of investigation as they are federally funded and mandated to review these types of complaints. Mr. Lucey directed follow up with TWC VR ExOfficio to check into this matter. Ms. Peden confirmed she will explore this situation.

**Stephanie Oates**, DBMD Intervenor and Family Member, commented about Texans who are served under the waiver being denied hands on Intervenor day service time. Before her brother passed last year, his planned Intervenor hours were reduced due to keeping costs under the cost ceiling. Likewise, the services were suspended while he was in the hospital due to the cap rule. Losing service hours have a reciprocal effect on program providers and intervenors specially trained in the tactile communication method. Over 24 years and 12 Legislative sessions there have been zero cost ceiling increases; resulting in a decrease of specialists in this type of communication. DBMD day and residential programs are closing. Our loved ones have the right to connect with their world guided by an intervenor, to live and experience joy in the community. Ms. Oates asked the GCPD work to get an Intervenor Task Force established in Texas, adding that the job growth potential is enormous. Ms. Oates said, “when writing your policy proposal for the upcoming 89th legislative session, please consider the importance of intervenor and program services for the deaf‑blind.”

**Tabatha Alexander** provided public comment about her granddaughter with several mental health issues. Her life history includes many traumatic experiences. She has been in the programs, Home of Hope and Henry Wade. Ms. Alexander’s granddaughter received different diagnoses each time she’s been admitted to a behavioral hospital. Some opinions have been noted that what looks like addiction could be a symptom of these conditions. Ms. Bauman clarified that they are looking for long term care. Mr. Lucey asked Lana Estevilla (HHSC), to get together offline for recommendations on long term resources.

**Melanie Knapp** provided written comment about the rights of a DeafBlind person to have an intervenor. She has great concerns that HHSC does not understand Deaf-Blindness or the importance of intervenor services. She is concerned that HHSC is not following the law regarding Intervenors, which has been in place for years. Ms. Knapp asked to please stop HHSC from taking this right away. Flagged for follow up with HHSC.

**Cyril Miller** provided written comment highlighting issues with HHSC cutting or reducing Intervenor services. The lengthy administrative processes families must complete to justify the need for services is bringing severe outcomes. Families have had services denied and reduced that have been established as justifiable. Some families are having to leave their employment to ensure their loved one has the needed support the waiver was intended to provide. Texas has the second largest population of deaf-blind persons in the nation. The DBMD waiver cost gap has not been updated for over 25 years. It is essential to support individuals to have communication access and interaction with their environment. Ms. Miller asked GCPD to please help address these issues with HHSC.

**Paul Welch** provided written comment about concerns with the DBMD waiver and what HHSC has been doing to families by denying services. In some situations, they do not state the reasons for denial. The waiver was passed for individuals with three disabilities. HHSC is denying the services without ever seeing the person. The staff who are denying these services likely have no education on deaf-blindness and how life is real for them. HHSC staff need training to understand what an intervenor does. He remarked that Helen Keller’s teacher, Anne Sullivan, was her Intervenor and how impactful the bond is, emphasizing the right of people who are DeafBlind to communicate and access information. Mr. Welch asked GCPD to persuade HHSC to get the training they need for the waiver requirements.

**Tish Smith** provided written comment on the DBMD waiver. She expressed extreme concerns about cutting and denying of Intervenor services by utilization review staff. They are requiring families to justify their need for services by documenting 15-minute incremental schedules. Ms. Smith is the mother of a 19-year-old Deafblind daughter. The highly specialized skills of an Intervenor are rare, and many providers are leaving the profession, with an adverse impact. Ms. Smith indicated great concerns of the program imploding due to the actions of a few people.

**Rhonda Eernisse** provided written comment about issues with the current support system for the deaf-blind community being inadequate in Texas. She described her journey since moving to Texas from Alaska. She was referred to vocational rehabilitation services and faced years of barriers, frequent counselor changes, and inconsistent IEPs. These experiences have adversely affected her personal life and health, stuck in a cycle with little meaningful support. Ms. Earnesse recommends hiring Deaf Blind experts and interpreters with specialized training.

**Virginia Trevino** provided written comment about the issues with the Intervenor waiver program. Ms. Trevino is a case manager, and described the numerous issues involving impractical work schedules, support supervision, documentation, and remands from the state. Another issue is cutting clients loose just because they turn 18 years old.

**Linda Litzinger**, Texas Parent2Parent, highlighted concerns about the impact of remands on service delivery and payment delays for families. When a nurse starts the assessment, remands are often imposed, causing disruptions in processing. Excessive remands, particularly requesting transportation details, contribute to delays in payments. While essential services continue, there is a payment gap due to issues with the Me Save application not being funded in a timely manner. This gap affects both families and attendant care workers, leading to staff quitting after working without pay for extended time periods. These issues are from the disconnect between Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) rules and appeal processes. Remands effect service allocations, and when case managers submit plans, the HHSC Utilization Review (UR) team dissect the plans, creating additional hurdles and delays. These delays increase the risk of losing Medicaid coverage for individuals with disabilities, their families, and attendant care workers.

**Christina PuWay**, Dallas Commission on Disabilities, commented about the HHSC caregiver crisis, funding issues, and the struggle of being able to sustain personal attendant workers.

**Laura Martinez** provided comment about her Mission to fight human trafficking and guardianship corruption. She shared a complex personal story about complications with guardianship in Texas.

**Matthew Scalatte** provided public comment about Virginia Guardianship cases.

**Dawn Moses** provided comment about her civil rights case with TWC that she filed on Friday. She has not heard from anyone at TWC since the GCPD July meeting, where she initially gave testimony. Ms. Moses noted that the investigator was influenced and then she was sent a cease-and-desist order to silence her. She remarked that we need to flush our judicial system, it is being used as a weapon against citizens. She feels her human value has been taken.

**Paul Bailey,** father of 21-year-old daughter with deaf-blindness, provided comment about the Medicaid waiver which was established to enable deaf-blind individuals to stay in their homes. He spoke on behalf of families like his who use the waiver and have gotten drastic reductions in services. He noted that the goal is achievable if qualified caretakers, earning a livable wage, are employed through the Medicaid program. Intervenors are essential bridges to the world ; by meeting communication and sensory needs of those who are Deafblind. Recent changes by HHSC have shifted services from these skilled professionals to underqualified attendants. He highlighted the stagnation of the waiver's budget, which has not kept up with rising living costs, and stressed that this is not only a fiscal issue but a disservice to a vulnerable community. He requested GCPD's support for measures ensuring deaf-blind individuals have access to qualified intervenors, fair wages for these professionals, and that the deaf-blind waiver is adjusted to reflect today’s realities.

**Vivecca Hartman** commented that their community feels this DB waiver issue is a violation of the law. She emphasized that the laws were created to ensure necessary services for people with additional disabilities like deaf-blindness, and that providers, who work closely with families, should have a say in service decisions, not distant administrators. Ms. Hartman noted the stagnant budget and the increasing costs of services, have failed to meet the needs of families. She called for HHSC to reconsider their decisions, particularly regarding the role of intervenors, which foster independence, versus attendants, who she feels make individuals more dependent. Ms. Hartman discussed her family’s initiative to create a day program for adults with deaf-blindness and efforts to train new intervenors through scholarships. She urged the community and lawmakers to help pressure HHSC to uphold the laws and provide the necessary services.

**Heidi May** commented about HHSC unfairly denying services to eligible individuals with disabilities, stating that HHSC is making reductions without valid justification, as they are not required to provide reasons according to the "Your Rights" handbook. She noted that HHSC actions are not in compliance with several laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Texas Penal Code, as they put disabled individuals at risk by leaving them without services and in potentially dangerous situations when their caregivers must leave for work. Despite filing complaints, HHSC has not been held accountable for its actions, and things have worsened after receiving inadequate responses from oversight bodies.

**J. Ruiz, Director for Heart Ministry,** commented that sheis praying for a better justice system. She asks the committee to see what they can do to help fix the guardianship problems. We need to make sure legislation follows up on the law and reinforces the law that we have. She shared her websites, JusticeforRonnie.com and lovehard.org.

1. **Listening to the Dallas Disability Community** 
   1. **REACH, Jenny Stonemeier, Executive Director,** highlighted complex issues impacting quality of life for people in the Dallas-Ft. Worth-Denton region of Texas. Accessible public transportation, employment, and accessible affordable housing are the root of these connected issues. The public transit system does not service many suburban areas, making commuting to a job in the city highly challenging. Accessible housing has barriers due to income, location causing lack of transportation to work, making it difficult to maintain independence. The wait lists for vouchers are long, lasting months to years. Without access to affordable housing, many face homelessness or institutional life, which deprives them of the ability to live independently. When people with disabilities encounter loss of housing options, many shelters have cited liability concerns so they won’t allow them to stay because of their disability. REACH is the other side of that coin. Consumers usually call REACH in crisis. They do not have funding currently for financial supplementation. Ms. Stonemeier noted the need for a comprehensive approach involving government, society, and partnerships with CILS to address these barriers and support individuals with disabilities living independently.
   2. **Dallas Commission on Disabilities****, Chair John Kalkanli**

Thanked the GCPD for allowing him the opportunity to spread the message of inclusion. The Dallas Commission works with City staff to make recommendations for best practices on inclusion, equitable employment, education, housing, transportation, and many other accessibility related areas. Ron Lucey asked if they’ve considered the volunteer parking enforcement program as other cities have done, Houston for example. Mr. Kalkanli expressed interest getting in touch with other leaders involved in other city parking programs.

1. **Reports from Invited ExOfficio Agency Representatives, includes follow up topics from previous meetings** 
   1. **Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation** - Marsha Godeaux

provided updates of items from the 88th Legislative Session. First, the administrative rules for electric vehicle charging stations program including accessibility requirements; which will be more robust. Second, the human trafficking team is expanding outreach to improve code enforcement training out in the field. Third, TDLR is making improvements to the architectural barriers program online system. They are updating the standards and adding elements like universal changing tables and outdoor developed areas.

* 1. **Texas Education Agency** – Elyse Lieberman reported policy updates including graduation requirements for students through special education and graduation plans based on mastery of general education criteria. The focus has shifted to employability skills and independent living skills of students after graduation. TEA is expanding the IEP facilitation program which is an early dispute resolution process. Forthcoming are reports on TEA’s cyclical monitoring of 1200+ Texas school districts every six years. She noted special education initiatives: special education liaisons for technical assistance, program implementation support, and an inclusion system to help develop infrastructure support.

Dr. Lieberman noted TEA is working to establish more efficient systems and gave the rising numbers of special education complaints from 2022 (543 complaints) until 2024 (1,193 complaints). These complaints included IEP implementation; IEP development, restraints/time out evaluations/eligibility, and certified personnel complaints. There was discussion about financial burdens on school districts that had to return substantial funds to the federal government. Personal care services assigned to students impacted public education. Dr. Lieberman will ask about SHARS funding and will report back to the GCPD. Due to special education funding concerns, TEA has placed a legislative exceptional item request and asked the legislature to review special education funding and make a decision that is appropriate.

* 1. Texas Workforce Commission – Claudia Peden provided updates that the Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services is retiring October 31st. Scott McKune will fill as interim acting director. Ms. Peden noted legislative updates to HB1 and rider 49 which is apprenticeship opportunities for people with disabilities. She reported on TWC’s partnership with DFPS and improving education, independent living, and employment outcomes for foster youth. Ron Lucey mentioned he had heard about a potential specialized caseload for foster youth. Ms. Peden reported they had a foster youth conference which focused educating the VR staff to improve services and exploring the idea of a special caseload. She noted the Tri Agency virtual conference coming up for training agency staff. This conference is a collaboration between TWC VR, HHSC, and TEA. She followed up from the July meeting and reported about implementing rate increases based on projected funding for VR contractors and field staff members. In response to GCPD’s request from July, TWC has received $30.4 million in reallotment funding on September 10th, 2024. This is allocated for the fiscal year 2025 client service budget. Ron Lucey asked about how they are planning for managing the money. Ms. Peden said TWC is reviewing service authorizations and holding office hours to discuss budgets and working with the field staff.
  2. Addressing Issues Related to Adaptive Driving and Vehicle Modifications - Kori Allen asked about adaptive driving and vehicle modifications. She will email specific questions to Ms. Peden and connect with TWC’s VR subject matter expert.
  3. Health and Human Services Commission – Lana Estevilla provided highlights on the HHSC report on behalf of Clair Benitez. She covered the 2024 Preadmission screening and resident review virtual conference on November 7th; the theme is Empowering Collaboration into Community. The Medicaid case review for the elderly and people with disabilities has been extended by one year. She gave an update on the Blindness Education Screening and Treatment (BEST) Program with a focus on needs of adults 55 and older facing vision loss. HHSC is requesting an item to the legislative session to expand mental health funding for children with special healthcare needs. The Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services is hosting seminars covering the topics of patient perspectives, ASL skills, and program offerings.

Ron Lucey asked about the issues raised in public comment today about HHSC reducing services. Can HHSC give a reason why there appears to be a sudden denial or reduction of DBMD waiver services? The DBMD population is suffering from the system changing from a steady state to unsteady. Ms. Estevilla made notes from the public comment and will take the question back to leadership. These customers’ needs have not changed, but the services have been reduced or denied. Ellen Bauman commented that there are over 170,000 names on the Medicaid Waiver interest/wait list and with an excess in Texas funding, and that it is troubling that HHSC’s budget request for 2025 is for less money.

* 1. Department of Family and Protective Services, Brock Boudreau, thanked Claudia Peden of TWC VR for their work with foster youth aging out of care and transitioning to the VR programs. The youth population is dropping a little. He reported on CPS and DFPS teams that are developmental disability specialists noting how to support to a single source contractor continuum. He talked about the Bench Book, a cheat sheet of services available to youth with special needs with emphasis of person-centered language, making sure needs are identified correctly. He gave an update on the DHH point of contact FTE that GCPD requested last year. The job audit and job description have been drafted. They are working to figure out to which team the position will be assigned. The task is nearly ready to complete with a plan to hire in early 2025. Ron asked if foster youth are eligible for free college tuition. Mr. Boudreau confirmed yes, with qualifiers. ACTION: Find out more about the youth who age out of foster care and how soon they must apply for college to get all their benefits.

1. **Policy Recommendation Development based on the Committee’s Issue Areas** (Access, Communications, Criminal Justice, Education, Employment, Emergency Preparedness, Health, Housing, Transportation, and Veterans)
2. **AIRA Policy Proposal** **–** Ron Luceyreviewed the past discussion among GCPD members regarding the AIRA proposal that was introduced at the Amarillo Quarterly Meeting. He noted that two items on the list of proposals from AIRA would be easiest to implement. The two would be making AIRA available in State agency buildings and online and adding a rider for the OIB program. These two proposals would yield great benefits . The service for state agencies could be managed and delivered through gated Wi-Fi networks. Marsha Godeaux confirmed that this would be in addition to construction accessibility TAS requirements.

Richard Martinez indicated concern if the state used a sole source for this service. Mr. Lucey said there are similar applications but this is the only one that provides a live human visual interpreter. Another concern from the committee was if AIRA’s recommendations were appropriate for government. This is a complex challenging recommendation because of diverse funding requirements and potential agency budget sources. Mr. Lucey said this is a good resource for university students who are blind, and for Older Individuals who are Blind to maintain independent living skills. Mr. Lucey suggested the Committee make a recommendation to support a pilot program with a reference to the legislature to fund this Aira pilot to ensure that all state buildings and facilities provide this service. It should be administered with cooperation of information resource managers and each state agency and there be a rider to add funding. The OIB program is funded at a lower level than VR in terms of how much it gets from the federal government, but it has a huge need. Mr. Lucey said, “I wouldn't recommend that TWC OIB provide AIRA service s services to all its customers without additional funding from the Legislature.” Ms. Rudkin made a motion to adopt plans to work on a pilot program which was seconded by Mr. Lindsay.

1. **Jessica Burke and Tim Birdsong, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department**

Ms. Burke introduced the topic of adapted fishing as it originated with the Adaptive Sports and Recreation Subcommittee. Tim Birdsong gave an overview of how TPWD is making outdoor recreation more accessible with modification or removal of physical barriers. He outlined the importance of conserving freshwater resources in Texas and noted fishing is big business here. Texas has 1100 major reservoirs and 11.1 million dollars in fishing revenue every year. TPWD requested 140 million dollars in appropriations for accessible projects such as docks, piers, and fishing pads along the shoreline, and they asked for authority to support those projects. Mr. Birdsong exhibited the yoyo fishing tool and how it became illegal in the 1980s in Texas. It was due to abandoned yoyos, which produced numerous dead fish. There was discussion of how to use a yoyo legally in a specific way by a person with a disability. When the yoyo is attached to a pole, it is legal because it is “attended” by the person fishing. Unattended yoyos and poles are not legal. Mr. Lindsay and Mr. Birdsong will collaborate on the definition of adaptive gear and it’s use in fishing by people with disabilities and, Mr. Birdsong will write a white paper to bring to the legal department of TPWD.

* 1. Audra Ritchie described the **Nurse Pay for Medically Dependent Children Policy Proposal.** This proposal is in response to the national nursing shortage that resulted from Covid starting in 2020. The shortage was a result of Baby-Boomer nurses retiring, inadequate staffing, and nurses shifting to travel nurse roles, earning above the $35.00 per hour market rate. Home health nursing has struggles to meet the needs of families of vulnerable dependent children with disabilities. This crisis has created conflicts in care with hospital/MCO threatening to take over parental rights. A scenario relating to this is two parents are sick simultaneously and the child is placed in a hospital, it is called “loss of care giver,” then the parents can be called in to CPS. ExOfficio Brock Boudreau made note of this and will check into this issue with the investigations department at CPS. Ms. Ritchie commented on issues with wage discrepancies between MDCP nursing wages and the competitive rate. The reliability of quality consistent nursing care for fragile children who have frequent hospital stays has severely declined. She commented that her son has been in the hospital since March and they cannot secure nursing care to bring him home. Her proposed solution is to recruit and replace the national nurse shortage deficit by giving competitive pay for the highly skilled nurses to provide 24-hour care to medically dependent children and the HCBS waivers that provide PDM nursing services.

She proposed raising the wage from $21.00 per hour to $35.00 per hour. This can result in parents that care for their child to have reliable nursing support so they can maintain steady employment to raise their child in their home. The proposal will require a change in HHSC’s budget and a rider would be needed. Overall, increasing fair market pay to nurses will abolish the shortage and improve home healthcare by allowing the fragile medically dependent child to live at home.

**Vision Loss in Older Adults Summit Report and Recommendations** Ron Lucey and Rebecca Lopez gave a summary. The Summit was held at Criss Cole Rehabilitation center in July. It was a moderated all‑day conversation with breakout groups to talk about how we can better serve this population. The breakout groups that we had were identification, referral, assistive technology, transportation, orientation, and mobility. Participants were challenged to think out of the box and see what in addition to identifying what are the bottleneck challenges and better serving those estimated 300,000 older Texans with significant vision loss, how can we innovate. A full report on the Vision Loss in Older Adults Summit will be presented at a future meeting.

**Best Practices and Policy Recommendations for Texas Mental Health Diversion Courts** The Honorable Judge Donna King, Williamson County, shared insights about a felony mental health docket program she oversees, which aims to address mental health issues in the justice system. The docket focuses on individuals with felony charges, particularly those with mental health challenges like Major Depression, Schizophrenia, and Bipolar Disorder, and aims to provide alternatives to incarceration, particularly for individuals with non-violent offenses. The program's goals include reducing recidivism, increasing public safety, and improving the quality of life for participants. Judge King emphasized the importance of individualized success and the need for collaboration between various stakeholders such as law enforcement, courts, defense, and mental health providers. She noted that most participants had never been part of such a program or consistent treatment before, and the program's collaborative approach fosters participant engagement. This provides value and builds confidence in completing the program. Overall, this reduces criminal justice system cycles. Judge King ended the presentation with recommendations of investing the money saved earlier in the process, for example, a crisis intervention team for law enforcement.

1. **Leading the Way: Putting Vision into Action** – Dylan Rafaty shared a one pager about North Texas Disability Chamber. He talked about Disability Inclusion and Showing up and showing out in the community to improve awareness and involvement. Mr. Rafaty recognized GCPD member Kori Allen, congratulating her on receiving the Self-Advocacy Award from North Texas Regional Chamber. Kori has been instrumental in our committee as a leader who also serves with us on a newly inclusion and accessibility committee established by the DFW airport.
2. **Executive Director Report and Staff Updates** – tabled.
3. **Committee Member Reports** - tabled.

Dates and location for the next quarterly meeting were discussed.

Ron Lucey suggested Houston for a location as related to Hurricane Beryl’s impact on policy. Emma Faye Rudkin suggested that we try to schedule the year. Ron Lucey said we can explore scheduling out a full year at a time.

Meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

**Meeting Follow-up and Action Items**

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| **Issue** | **Action** | **Person Responsible** |
| Exoskeleton policy proposal. | Stay in contact with Josh at Wandercraft | Ron Lucey |
| Services being cut from HHSC DBMD Waiver . | Find out what communication is happening internally at HHSC with respect to administrative actions causing the change in DBMD Waiver Services . | Lana Estevilla and Clair Benetiz |
| Noreen Gill, APSE addressed the lack of state agencies implementing employment first. State of Texas can be a model employer. | Provide ongoing consistent information to all state agencies about employment first policies. GCPD lead by example by placing the employment first policy on the Governor’s Internet homepage . | GCPD staff and members to prepare the policy recommendation. Lead by example. |
| Deaf and Hard of Hearing community – clients having issues with long delays in receiving services from TWC VR. | Ask TWC ExOfficio to check into the Dallas Region as to the reasons why job placement services are not being provided. Claudia Peden made a note and will investigate it and report at next meeting. | Claudia Peden, ExOfficio at TWC Vocational Rehabilitation |
| Audra Ritchie’s policy proposal to address Nursing shortage. RNs are leaving the profession or becoming travel nurses for higher pay. This trend has resulted in fragile dependent children suffering from this loss of nursing care. | Grow the nurse profession and raise the wage from $21.00 per hour to $35.00 per hour.  Ms. Rudkin commented that a Medicaid subcommittee is needed to get this before the representatives. | GCPD members and staff |
| Tabatha Alexander needing assistance for granddaughter for long term care resolution. | Ron Lucey asked Lana Estevilla, HHSC to get together offline for recommendations for long term solutions.  UPDATE: Kaitlin Berg confirmed HHSC staff talked with Tabatha on 11/20/24 and referred her to LIDDA, CRCG, CIL, Navigate Life Texas, and other housing resources for her granddaughter. | Kaitlin Berg followed up with Carolyn Saathoff on 11/14/2024 for Tabatha Alexander’s contact information. |
| Intervenor services are being cut or denied to long-time recipients | GCPD met with HHSC leadership to understand any specific cause for the change in services HHSC will provide a response at the January meeting. | Clair Benitez  Ron Lucey  Rebecca Lopez |
| Need for quality training at HHSC for deaf-blind services. | Mr. Welch asked GCPD to please get HHSC staff to obtain the training they need on DeafBlindness and Intervenors and what the waiver requires. | GCPD staff and stakeholders may develop a policy proposal |
| Youth aging out of foster care receiving benefits as applying for college. | Find out more about the youth who age out of foster care and how soon they must apply for college to get all their benefits. | Brock Boudreau  Claudia Peden |
| Developing a local volunteer parking enforcement program for Dallas Commission on Disabilities. | Share contact information of Houston Volunteer Parking Enforcement Program with John Kalkanli, Dallas Commission on Disabilities | Ron Lucey |
|  | Ask Brock Boudreau to check on CPS reporting parents of medically fragile children for “loss of care” (when both parents become ill and take their child to the hospital). | Brock Boudreau, DFPS |
| Adaptive fishing gear definition clarity. | Eric Lindsay will work with Tim Birdsong on a definition of attended fishing using a list of adaptive gear. They will work with the legal department to make this accessible and workable within the law. | Eric Lindsay and Tim Birdsong |
| AIRA Policy Proposal | Revise the proposal to an on-demand program pilot program within state agencies with legislative support. | Ron Lucey |