



STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL
January 28, 2026
2:30pm
Advocacy Committee Meeting
ZOOM

Members Attending: Committee Chair Andrew Harmon, Ryan Donnelly, Joshua Gehling, and Herb Carpenter.

Staff: Jennifer Beaulieu (NH SILC Assistant)

Guests: Mo Baxley (Advocacy Director, GSIL), and Deanna Johnson (Representative Payee and Employment Manager at Community Crossroads)

Committee Chair Andrew Harmon called the meeting to order at 2:32pm.

Presentation on Benefits Planning

Deanna Johnson introduced herself as the Representative Payee and Employment Manager at Community Crossroads, which is an area agency located in the Atkinson/Salem area. She mentioned that she would like to create a curriculum around benefits counseling statewide in the future.

She explained several work incentives for SSDI and SSI recipients, noting that SSDI offers more incentives. One key SSDI incentive is the Trial Work Period, which allows recipients to work for nine months without losing benefits, which is a helpful way for those with limited work history to test their ability to work. After the Trial Work Period, the Extended Period of Eligibility provides 36 months where benefits continue if earnings stay below the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level (\$1,690 or \$2,830 for blind individuals), and recipients don't need to reapply if they stop working. Another incentive is Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE), which lets recipients deduct costs for items or services needed for work, such as transportation or medical equipment, from gross earnings to stay under SGA. She was unsure if SSI recipients can also claim IRWE but noted its usefulness for those with high work-related expenses.

Another work incentive she mentioned is called subsidies and special conditions. SSI recipients can claim this work incentive. It's a work incentive that may come into play if you receive extra support that makes your work worth less than your pay. SSA may deduct this value, allowing higher gross earnings. This is one of her favorite work incentives because often their SSI recipients' earnings go up and down from month to month, but rent is still due every month.

Another work incentive is that students under the age of 22 and on SSI, may have higher earnings exclusions. They will be able to earn more than SSI recipients aged 22 and up.

The last work incentive she mentioned is called Medicaid for Employed Adults with Disabilities (MEAD). It's a program in NH that allows people with disabilities to work and still qualify for Medicaid. She noted how she has seen it morph and change. It used to be that people would need to work a lot of hours just to qualify. It wasn't cost effective and many people didn't enroll because the amount of hours you needed to work to qualify would disqualify you for other benefits. The work requirement changed so that a person would need to either be employed or self-employed and pay FICA taxes. People on MEAD can earn and save way more than other Medicaid eligibility populations.

Ryan Donnelly asked if there is anything specific to the developmental disability community that would apply specifically to that community. She mentioned that one thing to know when it comes to these benefits is reporting your earnings on a monthly basis because SSA is behind 2 to 3 months. This could lead to overpayment or underpayment. She also mentioned the importance of keeping copies of everything you send out. She also mentioned including the date and time in any notes you take when talking about these benefits. This way there is a paper trail to follow in case there is an overpayment or underpayment.

Review of Minutes from Meeting

***Ryan Donnelly moved to approve the minutes.**

Second: Joshua Gehling

Discussion: None

All in Favor: Yes **Abstaining:** None

Motion Carried

Review of SPIL Objectives

Goal 1 Objectives

Andrew Harmon mentioned that he was hoping that Jennifer Cook could attend today's meeting because he knows that Sarah Sweeney had a few issues reaching out. Andrew Harmon mentioned that we are a bit behind on these objectives. He asked if anyone has any suggestions on what organizations to reach out to, to let him know. He also asked if anyone is willing to be the main contact person for members to send their resources to. Jennifer Beaulieu mentioned the idea of using the website as a resource. Andrew Harmon mentioned that he knows a script was created to reach out to organizations, but he doesn't know the status of said script. Jennifer Beaulieu noted that Sarah Sweeney spoke with Erica Marden at the Aging and Disability Resource Center and took some notes, but she didn't send out the notes before she went on leave. Mo Baxley mentioned Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Inc. as a resource. Andrew Harmon asked about contacts for the developmental disability community. Joshua Gehling

mentioned that the area agencies and BDS would have some resources. Andrew Harmon noted that Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre shared a list of resources, he just needs to find it again. Ryan Donnelly agreed to be the contact person that members would send resources to. Andrew Harmon mentioned the idea of speaking to some of the members who represent disability-related organizations within the SILC.

Discussion of 4.3 and Reminder to Review Previous Recordings/PowerPoint Slides

Andrew Harmon asked the committee if they think they are in a good place to start working on the public benefits counseling session. All the members attending agreed that they have a pretty good sample size of different benefits specialists. Ryan Donnelly noted the consistency of the presentations. He mentioned how it is a good thing, because regardless of a person's disability, the guidance and requirements are the same.

Andrew Harmon asked everyone to review the materials from the past presentations and create a draft agenda of what a public benefits counseling session would look like. He also asked for everyone to brainstorm about what the public benefits counseling session would look like. Jennifer Beaulieu will send out the materials from the past presentations. Andrew Harmon mentioned that as soon as he gets the slides from today's presentation, he will send it to Jennifer Beaulieu who will send it out to the committee.

Andrew Harmon mentioned that he would like to have a presentation this year.

Goal 5 Objectives

Andrew Harmon mentioned that he talked with Brendan Goodwin at Housing NH. He is working on setting up a Teams meeting between Brendan and him. He noted that he has also started to pull things off of Google regarding different housing options for people with disabilities. He found a few good resources. The Aging and Disability Resource Center has information about different housing options and links to different housing organizations. He is going to put some of those resources together for people to look at, between today's meeting and the next meeting. Andrew Harmon mentioned that GSIL used to have a list of the housing authorities. Mo Baxley noted that she thinks that list doesn't exist anymore, but she recently looked at Portsmouth Housing which offers disability housing. She will send any resources that she comes across to Ryan Donnelly.

Andrew Harmon mentioned that the housing goal is on a bit of shaky ground. It has been hard to figure out the purpose of this goal. He thinks it's mostly about having all the information and resources in one place instead of all the resources being in many different places. Joshua Gehling mentioned that there are housing grants that are underutilized and many don't know of. It was suggested that maybe we could create a list of those grants. Ryan Donnelly raised concerns over

maintaining that list. He wouldn't want to mislead people with outdated information. Discussion ensued.

NH Legislation Update

Ryan Donnelly mentioned that he testified at a public hearing on HB 1032 last week. HB 1032 is a bill that would provide an exemption for people with disabilities and household members who are caring for someone with a disability from the quorum and physical attendance requirements of being a member of a public body. He mentioned how he thinks that this is something that would be of benefit to the NH SILC and other public bodies. He feels that the meeting went well. A couple of individuals from ABLE NH and DRC (Disability Rights Center) testified on the bill as well. There wasn't too much pushback from the committee except from one representative who had concerns over people faking a disability or faking caring for someone with a disability to qualify for the exemption. Discussion ensued.

Other Business

Andrew Harmon mentioned that at the last minute he found out that there was a public listening session that was hosted by the Office of Special Education. Members of the public were given the opportunity to provide feedback. He mentioned that he listened to it for a bit. He noted that a lot of people mentioned concerns over the office moving to another agency. He noted that they are still seeking feedback from the public, but he doesn't know how people would do that except through the office's website.

Andrew Harmon noted that the 10-year transportation plan is moving through the legislative process for its funding. It's under HB 2026. There has been a lot of interesting back and forth at the GACIT (Governor's Advisory Council for Intermodal Transportation) hearings, but he doesn't know how much of that got into the final bill. He will keep an eye on it and if anything pops up, he will let people know.

Jennifer Beaulieu mentioned that the information from the transportation survey that was done by the Commission on Aging has started to be published on the Keep NH Moving website.

Adjournment

*Andrew Harmon moved to adjourn.

Second: Ryan Donnelly

Discussion: None

All in Favor: Yes **Abstaining:** None

Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.

Minutes Recorded by Jennifer Beaulieu.