



COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES JUNE 9, 2025

The Commission for Persons with Disabilities convened virtually on Monday, June 9, 2025. Members and attendees joined the virtual meeting with video conference and conference call.

Commissioners Present:

Deb Falk-Palec, *Chair*
Anne Kearney, *Vice Chair*
Marcia Perkins, *Secretary*
Willie Johnson Jr., *County Supervisor*
Shaneika Baldwin
Felicia Clayborne
John Haupt
Barbara Leigh
Sherry Mickelson
Rose Onama
Leon Todd

Staff Present:

Jacqueline Formanek, *DHHS*
Jessica Kowalski, *DHHS*
Julie Lara, *DHHS*

Attendees from the Public:

Kathy Acevedo, *Independence First*
Christopher Fox, *MCTS*
Gerald Hay, *Independence First*
Samantha Hudson, *Independence First*

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair, Deb Falk-Palec called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. Julie Lara, Office Support Assistant II took roll. A quorum was present at the start of the meeting.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE MAY 12, 2025, COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To accept the May 12, 2025, Commission for Persons with Disabilities meeting minutes

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Leigh Moved, Todd Second)

III. SPECIAL REPORTS

- a. **Informational Item, Independence First:** Kathy Acevedo, Chief Operating Officer, described Independence First as a social services organization serving the Milwaukee area since 1980, provides services and supports to individuals with disabilities and service 72 counties within

Wisconsin. The organization offers over forty programs, workshops, and services, including classes focused on disability awareness, independent living skills, and recreation. It also works with families to provide resources to assist those who live independently in the community.

Their mission is to assist people with disabilities as consumer-controlled services that are community-based across disabilities. The organization provides an array of independent living services and independent living centers, funded and supported through the Title VII of the Rehab Act of 1973. The presentation concluded with questions, and the organization's mission is to enable people with disabilities to live independently and fully participate in their communities.

The aging in place projects is in partnership with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, which has a budget to provide consumers with devices and training for safe living and home modification assessments. These programs can be done for free but may not cover full bathroom, memorials, or other significant projects. The PSC Wi-Fi program is an accessible efficiency pilot that offers free light bulb replacements, shower heads, air purifiers, and programmable thermostats. These can be done via voice or phone and can be done via voice or phone. The program is free and takes about an hour or two to complete. The PSC Wi-Fi program can help people get discounts on cable, Wi-Fi, and telephone bills, supplementing services for those who might not have their federal cell phone. This helps people stay connected to others and find discounts on their rates. Lastly, the telecommunications Equipment purchase program is a voucher program that helps people receive the necessary equipment for basic telephone services or telecommunication services. The categories of vouchers vary, with options ranging from \$100 to \$7200 for deaf/blind individuals. The copay is \$100, and the cost can range from \$100 to \$7200 for deaf/blind individuals. These programs are designed to help people, especially those who acquire disabilities or are in between the replacement costs, defray some of these costs. If you have any questions or know of anyone in need, please contact Independence First. Mr. Hay emphasizes the importance of providing funding assistance to those in need, particularly those who may not have the funds to do so themselves.

- b. Informational Item, ADS, Tina Anderson, Administrator:** Interim Director for the Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), Jacqueline Formanek announced her acceptance of the role of Director. Ms. Formanek updated the Commission on housing contract-developments; The availability of 17 contracted developments, with two specifically set aside for individuals with disabilities. The Woodland Crossings in Brown Deer plan to have 56 accessible units, while Crocus in Franklin will have

12 units. All new construction projects will be designed to be fully accessible, and funding is available to assist with accommodations.

Community Access and Legislative Policy Analyst, Rebecca Rabatin from Independence First, questions about the housing in Brown Deer, stating that dispersion among the units, as multi-dwelling unit buildings are often only placed in one-bedroom units, which is not in line with the ADA's requirement for dispersion in 1-2- and three-bedroom units or studios. Director Formanek is unsure about the layout and plans for the affordable housing program with the rehab of existing buildings. The discussion highlighted the importance of addressing housing accessibility and the need for more inclusive and accessible housing options for individuals with disabilities.

The Commission again requested that a housing department representative attends an OPD meeting for addressing unanswered questions.

c. Transit Plus Report, Chris Fox, Paratransit Compliance Audit

Manager: Mr. Fox discussed the monthly updates on ridership and performance. Ridership increased by 89% from pre-COVID levels, but on time performance dropped slightly to 92.57%, below the baseline goal of 93%. Transit Plus continues to work with their attorney and Transdev's corporate staff to ensure they are fulfilling their contractual obligations.

Transit Plus same-day pilot program was discussed, which saw ridership rise by 272 trips with 327 passengers in May. The service now has a cap on Service, which riders can take six trips or six one-way trips a month. To ensure capacity for increased demand, the service is monitored to avoid running out of funds.

Fran Musci, the Director of Transit Plus, is preparing a report for the July 2025, Transportation and Transit Committee board meeting. Chair Falk-Palec asked about potential expansion or continuation of the program and suggested discussing the proposed budget for next year. The board agreed that it would be beneficial to discuss the budget proposal for next year.

d. Informational Item, Recreation Update, Jacqueline Formanek, Director for the Office for Persons with Disabilities: Ms. Formanek provided a recreation update. Recreation summer respite camp starts June 23, 2025, and runs through August 1, 2025, at Underwood and Grant parks.

Easter Seals is conducting staff training for camp counselors and team leads at both locations. Excursion camp, designed for campers 15 years and older, starts August 4, 2025, and runs for two weeks at Underwood. Participants will participate in activities off-site, including brewer games, beach outings, and the Blue Lotus Excursion.

Free Friday sailing is full, and a wait list has been established. All dates and slots are full, making the sailing program exciting.

IV. ACTION / DISCUSSION / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- a. **Action Item, Planning July Meeting:** Chair Falk-Palec discussed the planning for the July 14, 2025, meeting, which Mr. Fox suggested coming in July to discuss MOVE2025 changes and potentially give updates on the same-day pilot. However, there are no scheduled meetings currently.

Commissioner Onama shared an idea having a resource table at upcoming events. Chair Falk-Palec informed Ms. Onama that the county already has resource booths but suggested Ms. Formanek can filter upcoming festivals through staff within the county.

Commission requested inviting somebody for the Clerk for Circuit Court office to attend a future OPD meeting.

Ms. Formanek stated Vision Forward requested to do a presentation at the next meeting. Commission discussed Vision Forward to attend a future meeting and Housing attends the July 14, 2025, meeting.

Ms. Formanek will look into hosting a hybrid meeting at Independence First for the July 14, 2025, meeting.

- b. **Discussion Item, Public Comments:** No discussion.

V. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Todd moved, Perkins second)

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM

NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

Monday, July 14, 2025, AT 1 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Lara, Office Support Assistant II