



APPROVED Minutes
Increased Advocacy for Youth with Disabilities
Council Subcommittee
April 25, 2025

Minutes of the Increased Advocacy for Youth with Disabilities Council Subcommittee meeting held on April 25, 2025, 1:00 p.m., Hybrid Meeting - Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th St., and virtually through Microsoft Teams.

Members Present:

Councilmember Berdetta Hodge – Chair
Mayor Corey Woods – Subcommittee Member

City Staff & Presenters:

Greg Ruiz, Chief Deputy City Manager
Monique Perry, ADA Accessibility Coordinator
Eric Anderson, City Attorney
Johnathan Shuffield, Government Relations Director
Robin Arredondo-Savage, President & CEO, Tempe Chamber of Commerce
Dawn Hocking, Director of Development, The Centers for Habilitation
Tanya Chavez, Chief of Staff
Mariana Peña, Mayor's Assistant
Vanessa Lopez, Council Assistant

Stakeholders:

Amanda Steele
Brenda Walsh
Genevieve Vega
Jenniffer Jarvis
Amy Pedotto

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

No public appearances.

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of the Mar. 28, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Mayor Woods motioned for approval of the March 28, 2025, subcommittee meeting minutes, seconded by Councilmember Hodge. Unanimous vote to approve.

Agenda Item 3 – Legislative Update

Johnathan provided the following update:

Division of Developmental Disabilities Funding

Emergency supplemental appropriation for FY2025 for the Division of Developmental Disabilities signed by Gov. Hobbs 4/24/25.

- It includes \$403 million from developmental disabilities Medicaid expenditure authority and \$109.2 million from the prescription drug rebate fund.
- Explosion in costs from the Parents as Paid Caregivers Program.
- Arizona received a waiver from CMS to make the Parents as Paid Caregivers Program a permanent service model option in 2024; Arizona received this authority temporarily during COVID.
- Clamps down on the Parents as Paid Caregivers program, including limiting the number of hours a parent may be paid for caregiving to 40 hours, ensuring beneficiaries have been Arizona residents for at least six months, and also forces more reporting requirements on the executive branch.

The Division participates in other key programs and initiatives, including:

- Workforce development
- Behavioral Health Initiatives to include diagnosis, support training, and best practice implementation for group homes
- Abuse/Neglect/Exploitation Prevention
- Trainings for first responders to recognize when a disabled person need them to adjust regular practices

Arizona Early Intervention Program (EIP)

- Statewide interagency system of services for families of infants and toddlers with disabilities or delays.
- Focused on early intervention that is meant to be dynamic and individualized so the child and family can get the most out of services.
- Partner agencies include AZ Dept of Education, AZ Head Start, State Schools for the Deaf and Blind, and the Dept of Health Services.

Arizona Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE)

- Allows friends, family, and others to contribute tax-free to accounts for individuals with disabilities to meet various medical and other expenses.
- Does not affect SNAP or Medicaid eligibility
- SSI benefits do not get suspended unless the account eclipses \$100k
- Owned by the individual with the disability
- Tax free earnings

Bills this session:

SB1470 (Farnsworth); Passed Senate 27-1

Authorizes an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to determine that a student may benefit from special education and services until the end of the school year in which the student turns 22 years old. Prohibits the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) from imposing a penalty or withholding monies from a school for providing special education and services to a high school student for more than four years if the IEP extends the student's graduation date beyond four years.

HB2375 (Pamela Carter); Vetoed on 4/18

Requires a home school district, if a child's parent submits a written request to the home school district between May 1 and August 15 for an evaluation in accordance with IDEA, to begin the evaluation or provide the parent written notice of refusal to conduct the requested evaluation within 15 calendar days of receiving the request.

The governor vetoed it because it did not address the need for increased staffing over the summer months to meet the bill's mandates. She also stated she believed it would negatively impact the quality of IDEA evaluations because of a lack of classroom observations.

Federal

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act are the mechanisms through which the federal government assists with education programs for the disabled.
- Trump administration laid off approximately half of the U.S. Department of Education staff.
- Department is responsible for approximately \$15 billion for special education programs.
- Administration has been vocal about shutting the entire department down and making all federal education funding a block grant.
- Funding for FY2026 remains up in the air. The president's budget request is expected in mid-May. Congress has not released appropriations bills yet.

Agenda Item 4 – Joint Presentation from Tempe Chamber of Commerce and The Centers for Habilitation (TCH)

The Tempe Chamber of Commerce and TCH provided an overview of efforts to support employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities within the local business community.

Discussion Highlights:

- **Robin Arredondo-Savage (Tempe Chamber President/CEO):**
 - Noted that despite advocacy efforts, many businesses remain unaware of how to engage with or employ individuals with disabilities.
 - The Chamber continues to promote the Career Ready program and is exploring a relaunch in partnership with the City of Tempe's Economic Development Department.

- Dawn Hocking (The Centers for Habilitation (TCH)):
 - Provided an overview of TCH's services, which include home and community-based support, day programs, employment services, and transportation for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.
 - Shared ongoing challenges related to operational costs, workforce training, transportation barriers, digital workforce demands, and issues surrounding minimum wage, work hours, and their impact on disability benefits.
 - Expressed interest in increasing collaboration with local school districts to support students and families transitioning out of high school.
- **Councilmember Hodge:**
 - Emphasized the importance of teaching public transit use in schools.
 - Shared efforts underway with Valley Metro to expand free youth transit services to students living outside Tempe.

Next Steps:

Continued discussions will explore opportunities for deeper collaboration among the Chamber, TCH, and school districts to support workforce readiness and transition planning for individuals with disabilities.

Action Item

- Councilmember Hodge requested that Jenniffer Jarvis reach out to the Tempe Chamber of Commerce and The Centers for Habilitation to explore the potential benefit of having them present at a future meeting of the Tempe Union High School District Special Education Committee once meetings resume after the new school year.

Recess was taken at 1:45 p.m., and the meeting resumed at 1:48 p.m.

Agenda Item 5 – Review Resource Guide

Stakeholders reviewed the resource guide and recommended minor edits, as well as the inclusion of additional nonprofits and community organizations. They also suggested that, in the future, it may be beneficial to incorporate personal testimonies and to develop a separate resource guide highlighting local businesses that partner in providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Agenda Item 6 – Revisit Goal-Setting Priorities

The subcommittee reviewed the “Goal Updates” document, which outlined the established goals and corresponding outcomes to date (see attached).

Agenda Item 7 – Future Agenda Items (Councilmembers Only)

Councilmember Hodge requested that Johnathan be invited to return and provide a presentation on legislative updates. She also suggested inviting representatives from local colleges and universities to present on their partnerships, services, and programming related to supporting the disabled community.

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Prepared by: Vanessa Lopez, Council Assistant, (480) 350-8597

Reviewed by: Tanya Chavez, Mayor and Council Chief of Staff, (480) 858-2215

JACOB'S SUCCESS STORY

Jacob currently works in the Barrett Dining Hall on the ASU campus as part of our employment program.

He was hired by Aramark four years ago as a dishwasher.

A couple of years later his hard work and upbeat attitude earned him a promotion to ice cream server. His new duties included setting up his station every morning by making sure all of the supplies were stocked, serving different flavors of ice cream and toppings, and most importantly greeting the students and brightening their day.

His ambition and fun-loving personality have recently won him a second promotion to the pizza station where he serves his customers with flair and a smile.

Jacob's a natural who loves customer interaction.



"I work on the world's greatest stage."



Are you ready to take the next step towards earning a paycheck?

CONTACT US TODAY!

Jim Hodges

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Renee Speltz

480-730-4139 (O) 480-797-9443 (C)
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TCH - The Centers for Habilitation
215 W. Lodge Drive, Tempe, AZ 85283

www.TCH-AZ.com

#TogetherChangeHappens



**TRYING TO FIND
THE RIGHT JOB?**

TCH can help!

TCH

Your Success is Our Success



SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)

Individuals who don't qualify for DDD services may be eligible to receive employment services through VR.

Job Development and Retention Services (JDR)

TCH matches job seekers with employment opportunities that fit their abilities.

Assistance with resume building, completion of job applications and interview readiness.

On the job coaching and support as needed.



**WE PROVIDE JOB SUPPORT
AT ALL LEVELS**

TCH's, Employment Services, goal is to provide a variety of meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and support them on their journey to achieving their highest level of vocational independence possible.

Our Employment Partners

Arizona Secretary of State

Medtronic

First Things First

Mama Lola's Tortilla Factory

GEODIS

Silver Streak

Circle K

Aramark

West Campus Dining Hall - ASU

Barret Dining Hall - ASU

Manzanita Dining Hall - ASU

Tooker House Dinning Hall - ASU

Hassayampa Dinning Hall - ASU

ASDD

Carolina's Mexican Food Restaurant

YWCA

AZ Fashion Source

Harkins Theatre

Fry's



SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH THE DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (DDD)

Group Supported Employment (GSE)

TCH provides on-site job coaching support for members at various community employment opportunities across the Valley.

All supported employees are paid minimum wage or more.

Individually Supported Employment (ISE)

ISE provides support for the next level of independence.

One to one coaching provided to help with on boarding and specific job skills training.

Follow along support until the supported member is independent in their employment.

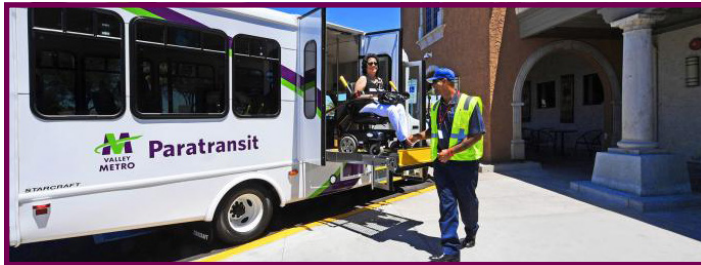
Transition to Employment (TTE)

Unpaid work exploration that includes job shadowing, internships and classroom instruction on employment related skill building.

Tempe-based Services for those with Disabilities

The City of Tempe, nonprofits and community groups offer a range of resources for all residents. Check this guide for a list of available programs and services.

City of Tempe



Transit and Paratransit Services

Tempe is committed to providing community members with safe, convenient and comfortable transit service that is accessible to and usable by all. Every transit vehicle and rail station in Tempe complies with the requirements of the ADA and are designed to be accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. And for kids ages 6 to 18, the Youth Transit Pass Program allows them to ride all bus and rail for free.

In addition, the City of Tempe is part of Valley Metro's Paratransit network, providing door-to-door and curb-to-curb service for riders who, because of a disability, are unable to use the bus and rail service for some or all of their trips. This ADA Paratransit Ride Guide describes the Valley Metro programs and services that are available to riders with disabilities.

City of Tempe Adaptive Recreation

Tempe's Adaptive Recreation program offers inclusive ways to recreate for youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Offerings include the LEAP After School Program, Special Olympics, Buddy Bowling Unified Bowling League, Adaptive Skateboarding and yoga classes, summer and school break camps, and monthly social activities like dances, bingo and community-based outings. Learn more at tempe.gov/adaptive.

CARE 7 Youth Specialists

City of Tempe Youth Specialists are available at no cost to students and their families on all Tempe Union High School District campuses and several Tempe Elementary School District campuses. These specialists provide social and emotional support to all students who may be struggling with stress, anger, depression, anxiety, conflict resolution and life skills. Youth Specialists are part of CARE 7, the city's crisis response program, and have direct access to resource coordination, long-term follow-up and basic need items. CARE 7 is a program of Tempe's Community Health and Human Services Department. Find Youth Specialists at tempe.gov/CARE7.

College Connect

Few things are more important - or more overwhelming - than navigating the process of college and post-secondary education opportunities. Tempe's College Connect program makes it easy, with free resources that provide everything students, families and caregivers need to build an achievable plan. Get answers about school options, career paths, financial aid and more through virtual workshops and programming. College Connect is a program of Tempe's Community Health and Human Services Department. Learn more at tempe.gov/CollegeConnect.

Arizona@Work

ARIZONA@WORK and the City of Tempe partner to serve job seekers of all backgrounds, all skill levels and all ages. Young adults can access workforce services that include resume assistance, access to job leads, career exploration, assistance with resources and more. Workforce development services are offered through Tempe's Community Health and Human Services Department. Learn more at tempe.gov/employment.

Tempe schools

Kyrene School District

The Exceptional Student Services department commits to improving outcomes for students with and without disabilities by providing systems of support, ensuring inclusive classroom environments, and promoting student independence. The district offers a continuum of services to students, along with a variety of service delivery options. Teams begin discussions with the belief and expectation that students receive services in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible.



Tempe Elementary School District

Tempe Elementary District Special Education supports the overall function of special education and related services through the Tempe Elementary District. Tempe Elementary Early Child Find supports children age 3-5 suspected of having a disability. Families can sign up for a developmental screening. Scan the QR code to learn more.



Tempe Union High School District

The Student Services Department/Special Education supports students with disabilities who are eligible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Section 504 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Student Services Department provides an array of individualized and collective supports, services, and

resources to students, families, and school personnel to help all students achieve readiness in career, college, and life. Find special education parent resources by scanning the QR code.



Scan for social and emotional wellness resources.

Nonprofit community

TCC Threadz Teen Clothes Closet

Free resource for middle and high school students who live in or attend school in Tempe. All three locations offer clothing, personal hygiene products, and school supplies free of charge. Learn more at tempecommunitycouncil.org/threadz

Tempe Community Council

Tempe Community Council (TCC) administers a grants program for nonprofits each year with City of Tempe funding. The program has supported many local nonprofits serving youth with disabilities and their families. See a list below of helpful nonprofit resources and learn more about TCC at tempecommunitycouncil.org.

Ability360

This program offers persons with all types of disabilities (physical, cognitive, and sensory) opportunities to meet new people, reduce depression and isolation, and enhance community involvement. Each person is assisted in developing healthy relationships and interpersonal skills, gaining self-confidence, reducing stress, improving social and communication skills. ability360.org

Advocacy31nine

Educational Support for Foster Youth with Disabilities. Advocate for children in foster care through training caregivers, educational advocacy, and system change. advocacy31nine.org

Best Buddies International

Provides opportunities for friendship and leadership development for students with and without intellectual/developmental disabilities (IDD). bestbuddies.org



Civitan Foundation

To provide our communities an accessible, safe, and affordable environment while delivering superior life experiences to enhance the quality of life of children and adults with developmental disabilities. Providing media, the arts, technology, culinary & catering, and sports/health education and activities. civitanfoundationaz.com

Higher Octave

Provide music therapy classes to empower caregivers to understand their child's developmental stages and promote social and literacy development. Provide music therapy classes to empower caregivers to understand their child's developmental stages and promote social and literacy



development. higheroctave.com

Raising Special Kids

Offer Family Support Specialists to families of children with disabilities to support them in navigating the complex education and health care systems to secure the resources they need. raisingspecialkids.org

TCH

People with developmental disabilities are provided the opportunity to learn employment skills and earn a paycheck. We have also funded the Music Therapy day program that is designed to meet everyone's unique needs while promoting independence, socialization, and participation in group work. tch-az.com



The ARC of Tempe

Participants will have the opportunity to learn in-person or adapt to the virtual world of learning and socializing through this program which includes social skills, cooking classes, modified Zumba, healthy mental health classes and virtual dance parties. thearcoftempe.org

Other resources:

Arizona Division of Developmental Disabilities

Families can apply for services and support outside of school through the Division of Developmental Disabilities. des.az.gov/ddd.

Arizona Early Intervention Program

Arizona's statewide interagency system of support for families of infants and toddlers, birth-2 years of age with developmental disabilities. des.az.gov/azeip