



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**Minutes of virtual meeting**  
**September 17, 2024**

**Call Meeting to Order**

President, Paul Palmer, called the meeting to order at 8:34 am and asked if an officer could chair the meeting. Tom Landry, Immediate Past President, volunteered to chair the meeting, and it was noted there was not a quorum.

**Attendance**

**Present:** Amanda Bouwman, Jacqueline Cuevas, Hansen Clarke, Tom Landry, Paul Palmer

**Absent:** Daniel Bartz, Brian Calley, Amanda Davis-Scott, Teddy Dorsette III, Davin Hemmila, Chris Land, Malkia Newman, Vincent Pinti, Jane Shank

**Staff present:** Michelle Roberts, Michele Brand, Theresa Diebolt, Rachel Huddleston, Elham Jahshan, Kris Keranen, Sara Koroniotis, Mark McWilliams, Sarah Palacios, Kyle Williams, Simon Zagata

**Guests:** Emily Henderson, McCall Hamilton, Interpreters Alyssa and Brook, Sue Franklin and Mora Wilkevicz, PAIMI Advisory Council members

**Executive Director and Staff Reports**

Michelle Roberts, Executive Director, reported on staffing changes since the last meeting sharing the CAIR Team hired an advocate/investigator, Zaina Holcomb, the Rep Payee Team hired a reviewer, Brandye Croley, and the Employment Team hired an advocate, Marisa Spain. DRM received a no-cost extension, and the vaccine project is coming to an end by the end of December. Sarah Healy and Dana Dixon will both be done on September 30, Kristen Milefchik will be part time with DRM and part time on a one-year contract with MI Disabilities Institute at Wayne State University, and Tami Phillips will continue with DRM until the program ends.

The Disability Justice Alliance, a coalition of 12 organizations, one of which is DRM, is working to strengthen the disability justice movement in Michigan. They were seeking a coalition coordinator to organize and plan activities and initiatives. Rachel Huddleston will be leading a committee for communications and media and is working on another sub-committee. Rachel Prevatt will take on the role of

the Coalition Coordinator which will include some outreach and proactive activities on behalf of the coalition including DRM. DRM will be receiving funds from the Disability Justice Alliance for these roles. A new part-time position with DRM has been created that will be specific for proactive outreach and relationship building for DRM. This position will start in January.

Mark McWilliams will be wrapping up the vaccine project and will be officially retiring January 31, 2025. Sarah Palacios will be stepping into the Director of Advocacy position and will supervise managers of the Employment, CAIR and Education Teams on February 1, 2025.

Michelle gave an update on the site review she participated in at the Alabama Protection & Advocacy in July. She met with reviewers, examined records, interviewed staff and members of the public. She also gave an update on her experience at the Oregon Protection & Advocacy office where she trained staff on investigations and monitoring. Further discussion was held regarding the need for this training on a national level.

Michelle shared there were three requests for grievance packets since our last meeting, one under CAP (client assistance program) and two under PAIR (individual rights). One grievance was submitted by a client who felt DRM violated their constitutional rights to due process and a fair trial. Simon Zagata responded to that grievance, and we have not received anything more regarding that grievance.

Additionally, all annual performance reviews have been completed for all managers.

Mark McWilliams gave an update on the Vaccine Team reporting in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 98 vaccinations and 36 flu shots were given, and we are expecting those vaccination numbers to rise in the fall. We did get a no-cost extension from the State to keep the program operating through the end of December depending on available funds. We also got a no-cost extension from USAging to pair up COVID and flu shots and that came with an extra \$9,000 which will help with staff time. Our partner, DocGo, decided to get out of the business of doing vaccinations leaving us to scramble to find people to administer shots. We are now partnering with local health departments and have found another provider who bills insurance, so DRM has not been paying them.

In summary, a media group wrote eight articles about advocacy and vaccinations and DRM activities. It focused on how vaccination activities protected homeless or unhoused people, at home vaccinations, data collection, our transportation website, mobile clinics, addressing cultural and language barriers and sensory spaces. Those articles reached approximately 773,000 people.

Rachel Huddleston gave an update on communications and voting activities in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter stating they have been very busy and had 17 print mentions and 5 tv mentions. Rachel participated in the annual conference at NDRN and gave a presentation on our litigation tracker and shared ways that the Communications Team and the Legal Team work together to benefit our clients. Rachel continues to participate in the Michigan legislature's Disability Caucus meetings. Both Rachel Huddleston and Rachel Prevatt are part of the Disability Justice Alliance that has been keeping them busy as well. With it being an election year, they have also been very active with voting activities.

Sara Koroniotis stated her team conducted 54 representative payee reviews and 817 beneficiaries were affected. Out of those reviews, they made 55 referrals of which 37 went to DRM. Most of the referrals were regarding housing, and some were regarding guardianship. Sara shared some of the issues her team sees during reviews.

Kris Keranen highlighted some of the work the Education Team has been doing during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter including the ongoing litigation against the Michigan Department of Education regarding their failure to correct non-compliance over a period of many years in a local district.

Kris mentioned the dispute between the US Department of Education and the Michigan Department of Education sharing some of the issues and will keep us informed.

She also mentioned the school shooting in Georgia, and said they are receiving more calls regarding threats or perceived threats.

Simon Zagata stated the CAIR Team has recently monitored Stonecrest, Pontiac General, and Harbor Oaks for the voluntary treatment project. People are being involuntarily transferred from emergency rooms and other facilities to one of the three hospitals and held against their will without petitions being filed.

Simon met with Senator Webber and staff from the office of the Auditor General regarding the investigation of the recipient rights system in the State Psychiatric hospitals to share issues they have seen as well as changes they would like to see made going forward.

Elham Jahshan shared the Employment Team is concentrating more on systemic issues related to vocational rehab services. They have been reviewing policies of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) ensuring they align with the Rehabilitation Act and the Administrative Rules.

They continue to assist clients in the most effective way and are attending MRS hearings as they can be very challenging and difficult for clients to understand.

**Sarah Palacios** stated the Information, Referral and Data Team received more 1,100 calls in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with the top issues being education, institutional rights and employment.

**Kyle Williams** shared an update reporting Nick Gable, DRM Senior Attorney, settled a case and then had to file another lawsuit because the client had the same issue right after the first case was resolved. That case has since been settled. Kyle shared his experience in the courtroom in that he saw shame and embarrassment from the Defendant being held accountable for their actions.

As a result of the Waskul litigation, which was settled back in December, it will result in a \$31 minimum fee schedule for community living supports (CLS) for individuals who participate in self-determination. This case has nationwide impact in terms of ways to address the direct care workforce and ways to have more access for folks who are unable to get the services through ordinary means and agency providers. We will go to court in December in hopes that settlement will be approved which will result in \$22 million a year going directly into the hands of people with disabilities and families of people with disabilities who care for them.

They are still negotiating settlement on the children's class action case with progress being made, and MDHHS produces a newsletter that provides information on a quarterly basis on the MI Kids Now program. We have already seen assessment tools being implemented which will assist in alleviating some of the issues seen at the onset of this lawsuit.

The Legal Team settled a case out of court involving getting modifications made to a vehicle that was \$11,000 more than an arbitrary cap that was placed on vehicle modifications.

### **President's report**

Landry asked board members to watch for an email from Theresa and to please complete and return their annual forms as soon as possible.

Landry referred to an email sent to board members on September 16, 2024, with a public comment attached and asked board members to acknowledge receipt of it.

### **PAIMI Advisory Council update**

Michelle Roberts reported the August PAIMI Advisory Council meeting had been cancelled due to low attendance and not having a quorum. The Proposed Focus

Areas and Objectives for FY2025 were emailed to council members to approve as well as the minutes from the April 23, 2024, meeting. We did receive a few comments regarding the focus areas and objectives that were noted. Approved minutes from the April 23, 2024, PAIMI Advisory Council meeting were provided with materials for this meeting. Since the last council meeting, two members termed out and by February, three additional members will be terming out. Also, we have received three applications for new council members.

The Chair and Vice Chair did not attend this meeting, and no further updates were provided.

### **Proposed Focus Areas and Objectives for FY2025**

Michelle Roberts explained a few minor changes and referred to the Proposed Focus Areas and Objectives for FY2025 that were emailed prior to this meeting and have been approved by PAIMI Advisory Council members.

Hansen Clarke MOVED to approve the Proposed Focus Areas and Objectives for FY2025, and Amanda Bouwman seconded.

A vote was taken.

AYES: Landry, Clarke, Bouwman, Palmer

Emails: Calley, Cuevas, Newman

NAYS: none

Motion carried.

### **Committee reports**

#### **Board Development/Nominating Committee**

A new member application will be submitted to the board for vote by the full board. Landry encouraged board members to make recommendations for additional members. Committee assignments were included with this meeting's materials. Officers were selected last September to serve a two-year term so there were no elections at this meeting.

#### **Budget & Finance Committee**

Hansen Clarke thanked board members for attending the meeting and noted Jacqueline Cuevas is attending from a hospital bed which is very inspiring and leaves very few excuses for board members not to attend meetings. He also thanked DRM for their success over the last four years and shared how impressed he is with the organization.

Clarke reported we are nearly 2% under budget. Michele Brand referred to her narrative and the financial documents giving a brief explanation and asked for questions.

Michele presented and explained the division of grants for the proposed budget for FY2025.

A Resolution was provided and briefly discussed regarding a need to change the signer on an old bank account so it can be closed.

Tom Landry MOVED to approve the budget and finance report, as well as the Resolution and Amanda Bouwman seconded.

A vote was taken.

AYES: Landry, Clarke, Bouwman, Palmer

Emails: Calley, Cuevas, Newman

NAYS: none

Motion carried.

#### Public Policy Committee

Emily Henderson reminded everyone that in the State of Michigan, our budget runs October 1<sup>st</sup> until July 1<sup>st</sup> statutorily to pass the budget to get it to the Governor's desk so she has the summer to sign the bills. She discussed the election, lame duck, and the possibilities of what outcomes could be in the House and Senate as we await the results of the election.

#### Public comment

A public comment was received by fax at DRM on September 16, 2024, and was emailed to board members prior to the meeting.

#### Approval of Consent Agenda

Tom Landry asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

Tom Landry MOVED to approve the consent agenda and Amanda Bouwman seconded.

A vote was taken.

AYES: Landry, Clarke, Bouwman, Palmer

By email: Calley, Cuevas, Newman

NAYS: none

Motion carried.

#### Old Business

There was no old business.

#### New Business

There was no new business.

## Adjourn

Landry adjourned the meeting at 10:48 am.

Minutes prepared by:



Theresa Diebolt, Executive Assistant



Minutes approved by:

Daniel Bartz, Secretary