

Olmstead Consumer Taskforce – Community Access Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: October 8, 2025

Time: 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Location: Zoom

Attendees:

Joel Vander Molen (Chair), Jessica Williams, Laura Leise (Iowa HHS), Ernie Geiger, Edward Esbeck, Zach Mecham, Andy Fallon, Skylar Hoffman, Andria Pooley (Staff Support)

1. SEATS Paratransit Update – Ernie Geiger

- Ernie Geiger provided an update on SEATS paratransit and ongoing concerns about regional transportation coverage.
- Angela McConville will host a Paratransit Advisory Meeting on October 25th at 1pm; Ernie plans to attend as a member of the public. Located at the Johnson County Administration Building – 1st door to the left. Encourages others to attend.
- Ernie contacted the Mayor's Office (Mayor Teague) to urge reorganization of SEATS into a regional Johnson County system and has followed up by email and phone.
- Discussion included exploring whether drivers could express informal support for regional coordination without risking employment repercussions.
- Skylar Hoffman offered to explore a potential connection between Ernie and Mayor Teague to further the conversation.
 - Ernie agreed; Andria will facilitate the connection via email.

2. Olmstead Plan Updates – Laura Leise, Iowa HHS

- Laura Leise provided updates on the Olmstead Plan development:
 - Strong response to recent HHS outreach requesting public participation in objectives and strategy development.
 - The first objectives meeting is scheduled for Friday, October 10, followed by additional sessions on October 24, October 29, and November 10.
 - Target publication remains January–February 2026, with flexibility due to transition to a new HHS Director following Director Garcia's resignation.
 - The HHS Performance Team has been instrumental in data collection and plan development.

- Laura expressed optimism about the collaborative process and thanked participants for their continued engagement.

3. Networking and Advocacy

- Jessica Williams and Edward Esbeck encouraged members to attend the Make Your Mark Conference for networking and advocacy opportunities.
 - They noted it was a valuable experience for connecting with other advocates and learning about statewide initiatives.
 - Members are encouraged to plan to attend next year's conference in September.
 - Information about the event can be found on the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council website.
- Joel Vander Molen emphasized the importance of contacting legislators regarding Medicaid changes and other issues impacting people with disabilities.
 - He reminded members that personal stories are extremely powerful advocacy tools and can help legislators understand the real-world impacts of policy changes.

4. Discussion: Community Access and School Engagement

- Joel encouraged members to consider future topics or initiatives for the committee to explore.
- Discussion on school connections and community engagement:
 - Joel mentioned he visits schools each spring to speak about disability awareness but noted limited ongoing connection.
 - Committee discussed potential for deeper engagement or partnership with schools to promote inclusion and accessibility.

6. General Updates and Next Steps

- Members agreed to continue following up on transportation advocacy and regional coordination efforts.
- No new agenda items were proposed for the next meeting.
- Possibility of creating informational content and/or video for potential participants