

# Unapproved Minutes

Newborn Hearing Screening Advisory Committee Meeting  
information:

August 12, 2025

Join Zoom Meeting

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## Committee Members Present:

Annette Stewart	Ashleigh Sorenson	Aubri Ogden	Brittany Chandler
Chris Furner	DeeDee Zaelit	Eliza Hintze	Erin Zinkan
Fara Bitter	Jeff Jackson	Karl White	Kevin Baird
Lara Waite	Sally Ormsby	Stephanie Morgan	Taunya Paxton
Taylor Enochson	Todd Huffman		

## Excused/Absent:

Adrienne Johnson	Charlene Frail-McGeever	Eric Christensen	Jenny Pedersen
Jordan Schramm	Lauri Nelson	Shelby Jimenez	

## Staff:

Holley Ezzell	Jacinda Merrill	Krysta Badger	Max Sidesinger
Shannon Wnek	Stephanie McVicar		

## Guests:

Amy Nance	Kendra Torgersen	Nicole Pilling	Amber - ASL Interpreter
Deedee - ASL Interpreter	Emma - ASL Interpreter	Jennifer - ASL Interpreter	

Minutes: Alexis Weight, Secretary

Topic	Discussion
Welcome	Ashleigh Sorenson opened the meeting at 9:02 am and welcomed the

	<p>Committee. Krysta Badger assisted in attendance.</p>												
Approval of Minutes	<p>The minutes from the May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting were reviewed. <i>DeeDee Zaelit made the motion to approve the minutes as written.</i> <i>Eliza Hintze seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.</i></p>												
Public Comment	<p>No public comments</p>												
Committee Member Changes	<p>Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nicole Pilling – DHH Individual seat</li> <li>Kendra Torgersen – Public Health Nurse</li> </ul> <p>Open Seats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Physician</li> <li>Public Health Nurse</li> </ul>												
Medicaid Review of Audiology Services	<p>Dr. Jeff Jackson reviewed the Medicaid program and how it works with regards to hearing services. Topics he covered included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History of Medicaid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1965 – Medicaid was established</li> <li>1967 – Early childhood screening</li> <li>1989 – Pediatric expansions</li> <li>1997 – CHIP created</li> </ul> </li> <li>Medicaid program structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal-State Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal Role: Sets minimum standards, provides funding match (50-83% depending on state), oversees compliance</li> <li>State Role: Determines eligibility, benefit packages, provider payments rates, program administration</li> <li>Flexibility: States can apply for waivers to modify standard program requirements</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Mandatory vs Optional services <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Mandatory Services</th><th>Optional Services (State Choice)</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Hospital inpatient/outpatient services</td><td>Prescription drug</td></tr> <tr> <td>Physician services</td><td>Dental services</td></tr> <tr> <td>Laboratory and X-ray services</td><td>Physical therapy</td></tr> <tr> <td>Nursing facility services</td><td>Hearing aids and audiology services</td></tr> <tr> <td>EPSDT for children under 21</td><td>Vision services</td></tr> </tbody> </table> </li> <li>Utah Medicaid Program Info <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>400K+ Utahns enrolled</li> <li>Full expansion implemented in 2020</li> <li>138% Federal poverty level eligibility threshold</li> </ul> </li> <li>Utah Medicaid Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditional Medicaid</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Mandatory Services	Optional Services (State Choice)	Hospital inpatient/outpatient services	Prescription drug	Physician services	Dental services	Laboratory and X-ray services	Physical therapy	Nursing facility services	Hearing aids and audiology services	EPSDT for children under 21	Vision services
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EPSDT for children under 21	Vision services												

- CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program)
- Adult Expansion Medicaid
- Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT)  
Comprehensive healthcare program for Medicaid-eligible children under 21, including:
  - Preventative Services
  - Diagnostic Services
  - Treatment Services
- The Utah Children's Hearing Aid Program (CHAP) optimizes early communication and learning potential for deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) infants and children by providing access to hearing aids to financially eligible families.
  - Audiology services
  - Hearing Aids
  - Cochlear Implants
  - Assistive Technology
- Challenges in Hearing Services
  - Access Barriers
  - Technology Costs
  - Care Coordination
  - Family Support
- Recent Innovations and Improvements
  - 2024 – Telehealth Expansion
  - 2023 – Early Intervention Focus
  - 2022 – Technology Advances
- Best Practices for Pediatric Hearing Care
  - Early Identification
  - Holistic Assessment
  - Cultural Competency
  - Interdisciplinary Collaboration
- Key Resources for Families and Providers
  - Utah Department of Health and Human Services
  - Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind
  - Utah Parent Center
  - Hands & Voices
- Future Medicaid and Hearing Services
  - 2025 – Telehealth Integration
  - Future – Technology Advancements
  - Ongoing – Quality Improvement

Dr. Jackson fielded various questions about Medicaid with regards to hearing devices, services, DHH children and whether or not he thinks coverage will continue under the new Medicaid restrictions.

When asked if it would be worth it for families and vested groups to attend public Medicaid meetings. Dr. Jackson said he thought it would be a good idea.

<p>Baby Watch Early Intervention updates</p>	<p>Eliza Hintze presented on Baby Watch Early Intervention Program (BWEIP) update. Presentation slides and a handout are available on the <a href="#">Utah Public Notice website</a>. Topics covered included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baby Watch's purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ To enhance early growth and development in infants and toddlers, who have developmental delays or disabilities, by providing individualized support and services to the child and their family</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The state agency responsible for Part C EI services in Utah</li> <li>• Contracts with 14 local EI programs</li> <li>• Services provided in <b>natural environments</b> by a team of professionals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Developmental specialists</li> <li>◦ Early childhood special educators</li> <li>◦ Registered nurses</li> <li>◦ Speech-Language pathologists</li> <li>◦ Occupational/Physical therapists</li> <li>◦ Social Workers</li> <li>◦ Hearing/vision specialists</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Early Intervention (EI) is a <b>parent coaching program</b> that teaches families how to support their infant or toddler's development</li> <li>• The Baby Watch Early Intervention program process</li> <li>• EHDI Diagnostic &amp; Referral Process</li> <li>• Family Concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Cost</li> <li>◦ Convenience</li> <li>◦ Language Barriers</li> <li>◦ Respect &amp; Control</li> <li>◦ Red Tape</li> <li>◦ Privacy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Baby Watch website - <a href="http://babywatch.utah.gov">babywatch.utah.gov</a></li> <li>• USDB PIP DHH website - <a href="http://usdb.org/deaf-school/early-childhoodbirth-to-age-3">usdb.org/deaf-school/early-childhoodbirth-to-age-3</a></li> </ul> <p>Ms. Hintze fielded various questions regarding BWEIP's involvement with Child Find, if referrals can be done online, and anticipated changes with EI programs.</p> <p>BWEIP referrals may be done online either via the email address: <a href="mailto:deafpipreferral@usdb.org">deafpipreferral@usdb.org</a>, or the online <a href="#">PIP-Deaf/Hard of Hearing Referral Form</a>. The secure website allows for the referral to be directly sent. No faxing necessary.</p>
<p>University of Utah Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program</p>	<p>Nicole Pilling presented on the University of Utah – Department of Special Education, Deaf &amp; Hard of Hearing Teacher Preparation Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why Deaf Education Preparation Matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Students who are DHH have complex linguistic, academic, and social-</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- emotional needs that demand high-intensity, specialized support
  - Highly qualified teachers for students who are DHH are essential in addressing these needs
  - National shortage: Fewer university programs -> fewer teachers -> higher caseloads and proper outcomes
- DHH Teacher Prep at the University of Utah
  - Program established in 1962
  - Training program for low-incidence disabilities are historically small
  - Eliminated in 1987 due to low enrollment
- What We Offer
  - B.S. or M.Ed. degree in Special Education
  - Teaching Licenses: Special Ed 0-5 or K-21
- Comprehensive Preparation
  - Students develop knowledge and skills to work across communication modalities
  - Preparation for diverse educational placements
  - Only 3 comprehensive programs in the Western United States
- Program Structure
  - Two years (6 semesters)
  - Hybrid model: live Zoom sessions + asynchronous online modules
  - Designed to fit the needs of working professionals statewide
- Where are our Graduates?
  - USDB, Statewide, Early Intervention, and across the country
- Progress
  - Recent curriculum updates to ensure alignment with national standards and best practices
  - Full access for distance students
  - Negotiated for in-state tuition for non-residents
  - Partnered with Boards of Education in Wyoming and Louisiana
  - Lowest tuition for educators seeking DHH license and endorsement only
- Grant Funding & Projects
  - USBE personnel preparation grants
  - Research Grant – Ed Audiology Association: studying collaboration
  - U.S. Dept. of Ed. – **Project ASSIST** \$1.2 million interdisciplinary training grant – final year
  - Much of our student recruitment is supported by competitive grants – these opportunities are shifting
- Project ASSIST
  - Joint coursework, seminars, outreach, and field studies build collaborative practice
  - Professional development and networking opportunities
  - 29 students funded over the last 4 years
- Challenges
  - Recruiting without grant funding
  - USDB creating own in-house training program.

	<p>After concluding her presentation, Ms. Pilling spoke of an additional challenge. The funding that has been sustaining the consortium over the past 30 years is at risk right now. Ms. Pilling said she suspects that if their full funding is not restored, that one or both sensory impairment programs at the University of Utah will be eliminated. She doesn't have a call to action yet. She just wanted to make all aware of this issue and that the stakes are high for DHH children and families in the state of Utah.</p> <p>Ms. Pilling may be reaching out to stakeholders in the future to help in trying to preserve education for the children in Utah. She also referred to Dr. Chris Bischke, the Director of the Consortium, and said Dr. Bischke would also appreciate support. Contact information for Dr. Bischke is:  <a href="mailto:chris.bischke@utah.edu">chris.bischke@utah.edu</a>  801-585-3925</p>
EHDI* Updates	<p>Dr. McVicar reviewed EHDI updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The entire EHDI staff at the Federal level were let go, so our grant project is not being reviewed</li> <li>• We were offered one more year of funding, and just received our notice of award (through June 30<sup>th</sup> of 2026)</li> <li>• HRSA is in its 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a 5-year project. Status of future years' funding is currently unknown. In the meantime, it's business as usual.</li> </ul>
Parent Consultants' Updates	<p>Ms. Sorenson and Ms. Ogden went over parent updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ June: 66 calls</li> <li>○ July: 59 calls</li> <li>○ August: 57 calls</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Summer Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teamed up with PIP</li> <li>○ 35 activities across the state</li> <li>○ Meetups, carnivals, and field trips</li> <li>○ 682 total attendance May - July</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Active on social media pages (FB and IG: @UtahEHDI) where various information on topics like ASL, listening and spoken language, general D/HH hearing tips, spotlights to young adults and families in the D/HH community, and other resources can be found.</li> <li>• EHDI Family Newsletter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ August Newsletter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sent to parents and professionals</li> <li>▪ Next newsletter is October</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Newsletters go out at the beginning of every other month</li> <li>○ If you would like to be added to the newsletter mailing list, email:</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p><a href="mailto:ehdiparents@utah.gov">ehdiparents@utah.gov</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upcoming Fall Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-hosting with PIP</li> <li>Pumpkin patch</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
NCHAM Updates	<p>Before providing NCHAM updates, Dr. Karl White spoke briefly about federal funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Congress is on recess for the rest of August. Contact Utah representatives in early September, especially ones who are on budget committees.</li> <li>Federal government has authorized HRSA grant money through FY27, but that still must be separately appropriated.</li> <li>Received word this week at Utah State that personal prep grants that fund NCHAM's deaf education and pediatric audiology &amp; speech language pathology programs are at risk. The programs themselves won't go away, but if that goes through, they won't have money to support tuition and stipends for students. There has been a lot of pushback against the announcement. Dr. White doesn't think it's a done deal yet. Keep watching for opportunities to inform people.</li> </ul> <p>NCHAM Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National conference: 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EHDI conferences. They're planning activities to celebrate those 25 years. In spite of everything, we should take a moment to look at how far we've come.</li> <li>Submissions for abstracts are being accepted now, with a 9/29 deadline.</li> <li>Call for instructional session abstracts. There is time for about 10-15 sessions on the Sunday prior to meeting and the Wednesday following it.</li> <li>We encourage everyone to think about whether there are particular topics you'd like to see and, if so, go to the <a href="#">National EHDI Conference website</a> for instructions on submitting abstracts.</li> </ul>
Future Agenda Items	No future agenda items
Next Meeting	November 18, 2025
Adjourn	Karl White made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Taunya Paxton seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:58 am.
Minutes Approved	

*Note: These minutes are not intended to be a verbatim transcript but are to record the significant features of the business conducted in this meeting. Discussed items are not necessarily shown in the chronological order they occurred.*