



Meeting Minutes

December 4, 2025, 11:00am

Hybrid Meeting conducted In-person & via WebEx

For additional meeting information, please see the [committee website](#)

Ex-Officio Members	Name	Present	Absent
Co-Chair, Human Rights	Jim Bennett, Director	V	
<i>Designee</i>	Donna Hardy	V	
Co-Chair, Human Services	Dulce Quintero, Secretary		A
<i>Designee</i>	Steven Dennis, DRS	V	
Attorney General	Kwame Raoul		A
<i>Designee</i>	Judith Levitan		A
Central Management Services	Raven A. DeVaughn, Director		A
<i>Designee</i>	Patricia Santoyo-Marin		A
Civil Service Commission	Teresa Smith, Chairperson		A
<i>Designee</i>	Alexandra Myers		A
Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities	Kimberly Mercer-Schleider, Director		A
<i>Designee</i>	Mariel Hamer-Sinclair		A
Lt. Governor	Juliana Stratton		A
<i>Designee</i>	Eryn Jones	V	
Secretary of State	Alexi Giannoulas		A
<i>Designee</i>	Bill Bogdan	V	
State Comptroller	Susana A. Mendoza		A
<i>Designee</i>	Kevin Derrig		A
State Treasurer	Michael Frerichs		A
<i>Designee</i>	Rosemary Laudani	V	
Veterans Affairs	Terry Prince, Director		A
<i>Designee</i>	Matt Eddington	V	
Employees with Disabilities	Name	Present	Absent
Department of Human Services	Nathan Painter	V	
Department of Human Services	Rahnee Patrick	V	
Central Management Services	Glen Minks	V	
Department of Human Rights	Xavier Potts	V	
<i>Vacant</i>			
<i>Vacant</i>			
<i>Vacant</i>			
Other Attendees & Guests	Name	Present	Absent
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum	Gloria Legette	V	
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum	Mark Mahoney	V	
Central Management Services	Chris Bond	V	
Central Management Services	Teresita Gonzalez	V	
Central Management Services	Daniel Lanterman	V	

Civil Service Commission (designee for A. Myers)	Andrew Barris	V	
Department of Employment Security	Anna D'Ascenzo	V	
Department of Information Technology	Vickie Simpson	V	
Department of Human Rights	Betsy Buttell	V	
Department of Human Rights	Bryant Dunbar	V	
Department of Human Rights	Marcio Mendoza	V	
Department of Human Rights	Chet Pinski	V	
Department of Human Rights	Chris Reel	V	
Department of Human Rights	Celeste Sanchez	V	
Department of Human Rights	Dr. Chris Smith	V	
Department of Human Services	Casey Burke	V	
Department of Human Services	Caronina Grimble	V	
Department of Human Services	Kerry Obrist	V	
Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities	Gary Arnold	V	
Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission	Benro (Ogunyipe) Olives		A
Illinois Governor's Office of Equity	Alici McNeal	V	
Illinois State Board of Education	Mike Keeney		A
State Treasurer	JJ Hanley		A
State Treasurer	Stephanie Kanter	V	
Healthcare and Family Services	Brian Spencer	V	

*Present: In Person (IP) / Virtual (V) / Phone (PH)

1. Call to Order

- a. Director Bennett called the meeting to order at 11:04am on December 4, 2025

2. Roll Call

- a. Donna Hardy conducted Roll Call
- b. Quorum established

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. Director Bennett
 - i. Motion to approve minutes for 8/21/25
 1. Motion to Approve: Rahnee Patrick
 2. Motion Seconded: Chet Pinski
 3. None opposed

4. Co-Chair Remarks

- a. Director Bennett
 - i. Thanks to everyone for Annual Awards Celebration
 1. Special thanks to our keynote speaker Bill Bogdan
 2. There was good engagement from museum attendees who were unaffiliated with the committee. They helped us celebrate the awardees.
- b. Steven Dennis
 - i. Lakeland College visit – Explored ways to expand accessibility & embed it in their Strategic Plan

- ii. IDOT Pilot with Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility – Eliminating barriers within the state and around the country for people with disabilities & elderly individuals
 - 1. Timeline
 - a. Initial meeting in February 2025
 - b. Pilot rolled out September 2025
 - c. Roundtable held on 11/13/25
 - 2. Considering monthly / bi-monthly meetings & collaboration with the Council on Mobility out of Washington DC
 - a. **If any state agencies want to be involved, please reach out to Steven Dennis**
 - 3. Gary Arnold commented – Consultants were brought in from agencies outside of the state to lead the conversation on goals/barriers. Findings from this discussion will be applied to the pilot program which will be implemented in the lower 31 counties in Illinois with the goal of building stronger transportation capacity for underserved communities.
 - 4. Donna Hardy – requested 1 pager on the pilot, Steven Dennis will provide a flyer and any available literature

5. New Business

- a. No formal Federal Government updates – the shutdown put some things on hold
 - i. Rahnee Patrick commented – Under Title IV of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, which is where vocational rehab is housed statutorily, there is still discussion surrounding the potential dissolution of Department of Education & the resulting impact on where the Department of Rehabilitative Services Vocational Rehab program will be housed
 - 1. The Vocational Rehab program has received an award letter, which is a positive development, but uncertainty continues due to the program's federal ties
 - 2. Comment from Director Bennett: Keep IDHR updated on this issue, we are exploring our jurisdiction.
 - ii. Director Bennett – 2 EEOC Members were terminated prior to shut down, those vacancies have now been filled, meaning they have a quorum. This signals a likely shift in direction of the provided guidance.
 - iii. Anna D'Ascenzo commented – The Code of Federal Regulations is in contrast with the Executive Orders coming out. Anna is advising her team to proceed with what is written in law.
 - 1. Her concern isn't elimination of entire protected categories but changes to what groups are included in said protected categories.
 - 2. Director Bennett will reach out on changes around rule enforcement & jurisdiction.
- b. Strategic Planning
 - i. Discussion of Strategic Planning Questionnaire – Focus for 2026
 - 1. Most pressing issues in 2026
 - 2. Setting Measurable Goals
 - 3. Specific Areas / Immediate Attention to ensure Accessibility & Inclusion
 - 4. Legislative or Policy Change
 - 5. Technological Advances
 - 6. Efforts to Increase Awareness
 - 7. Changes / Improvements Needed in Agencies
 - 8. Areas of Personal Interest
 - ii. Initial Comments from Committee Members

1. Teresita Gonzalez – There are a lot of technological innovations, such as AuraCast that can assist the hard of hearing population, which this group should work to keep up with.
2. Rahnee Patrick – We should consider how Artificial Intelligence can function as an accommodation tool
- iii. Donna Hardy will send the questionnaire to all members, requesting feedback to share out at the next Committee on Employees with Disabilities Meeting in February
- iv. Donna Hardy highlighted the outstanding quality of previous year's speakers – would like to continue this for 2026. If you have any potential speakers for 2026, please reach out.
 1. Previous speakers (topics)
 - a. Steven Dennis – ADA/Disability Awareness
 - b. Department of Revenue – Disabled Workers Trainee Program (a staff member was then selected as Committee on Employees with Disabilities Employee of the Year)
 - c. Illinois Assistive Technology Program
 - d. Great Lakes (Webinar) – Overview of Reasonable Accommodations/ADA Coordinator Discussion
 - v. Website is still under construction, hoping to put more time into it in 2026
- c. Showing of Annual Celebration Highlights – Video

6. Old Business

- a. Three Committee Vacancies

7. Public Comment

- a. None

8. Future Meeting Schedule – All Meetings 11:00am-12:30pm

- a. 2/5/26
- b. 4/2/26
- c. 6/11/26
- d. 8/20/26
- e. 10/8/26 (Annual Celebration Event – Chicago, 12:00pm-1:00pm)
- f. 12/3/26

9. Adjournment

- a. Director Bennett offered motion to Adjourn
 - i. Motion to Adjourn: Bill Bogdan
 - ii. Motion Seconded: Chet Pinski
 - iii. None opposed
- b. Meeting adjourned at 12:11pm on December 4, 2025