



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

Tompkins County Whole Health
201 East Green Street
Ithaca, New York 14850-5421

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Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee
April 14, 2026, 10:00 a.m. via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Minutes Approved
May 12, 2026

Present: James Beaumont; Jeffrey Boles; Sheila McEnergy; Nancy Saltzman; Allison Weiner-Heinemann; and Sally McConnell-Ginet

Excused: Wala Maharem-Horan and Khaki Wunderlich

Unexcused:

Guests Present: Tricia Tom, Aaron Brozon, Jamie Croft, RHI; Jennifer Perry, Northeast ADA Center; Nicole Nucci, OPWDD; Kristine O'Brien, Mid State Family and Community Engagement Center

Staff: Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, DCS; Shannon Alvord, TCWH; and Karan Palazzo, LGU Administrative Assistant

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The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by James. Sally moved to approve the March 2026 minutes, seconded by Nancy

Privilege of the Floor

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Announcements/Correspondence: The annual resource fair will be held at the Boynton Middle School on May 19, 2026, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. Jeff encouraged members to post the anticipated flyers when possible to spread the word and to invite agencies to table at the event. The Better Together Mental Health Fair will be held on May 9th, with the DD subcommittee attending to raise awareness about the subcommittee.

Discussions:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Presentation - Jennifer Perry from the Northeast ADA Center, a federally funded ADA resource center housed within the ILR School at Cornell University, covering one of 10 regional ADA centers in the US, responsible for NY, NJ, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands, discusses ADA compliance for camps and youth services.

Northeast ADA Center:

- Provides **confidential technical assistance** on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) via:
 - ADA phone line: **1-800-949-4232**
 - Email: northeastada@cornell.edu (preferred)
- Offers **training and education** on ADA topics (e.g., youth programming, camps, public entities, private providers).
- Helps organizations understand:
 - **Policy review and reasonable modifications** (e.g., medication administration at camps).
 - **Individualized assessments** for accommodation requests.
 - **Non-discrimination and inclusive eligibility criteria** (e.g., avoiding blanket exclusions based on IEPs).
- Explains requirements and best practices.

They are being used as a **technical and practical ADA advisor** for youth programs, camps, and more broadly for services across the lifespan. The Northeast ADA Center's role is to provide confidential technical assistance and training programs. Jennifer highlights the importance of reviewing policies related to the administration of medication for campers with disabilities. She emphasizes the need for individualized assessments and clear communication with parents about accommodation requests.

Jeff raises a question about the ADA's application to various youth programs, including basketball camps. Jennifer confirms that the ADA applies to all activities of state or local governments and private organizations offering youth programming. Jennifer shares additional resources, including fact sheets from the Department of Justice and from organizations such as Kids Included Together. She mentions a recent settlement agreement with the Boys and Girls Club of East Providence, highlighting the importance of inclusive eligibility criteria.

OPWDD Family Resources: James shared information about the YMCA programs forwarded by Joanie Groom, who could not attend. The YMCA offers sensory gym and swim programs for individuals on the autism spectrum. They will also offer adaptive equipment and private lessons, with a focus on safety and basic swimming skills. The YMCA was awarded a \$25 million grant from OPWDD to improve healthcare services for people with developmental disabilities, particularly in dentistry. A clinic in Moravia that offers dental care without cleanings; more information will be sent about these initiatives.

YMCA Programs:

- **Sensory Gym & Swim (Sundays, 2:30–5:00 pm)** at the **YMCA**, designed for individuals with **autism spectrum disorder or sensory differences**.
 - **Exclusive time** in the **pool and gym** for a quieter, more comfortable environment.
 - Activities include swimming, basketball, and other gym activities.
- **Cost & Access**
 - **No fee** when the Y has a **grant** covering the program.
 - Otherwise, it is **fee-based**, but:
 - **Scholarships** are available through the YMCA.
- **Programming Features**
 - **High staff-to-child ratio**, focused on **safety in and around pools** and **basic swimming skills**.
 - Serves **preschool through age 21**.
 - Can provide **1:1 private swim lessons** when needed.
 - Additional youth offerings:
 - **Teen fitness program** (how to use equipment and exercise effectively).
 - **Kids Club** (two-hour play group that also functions as **respite time for families**).
 - **Adaptive equipment** (e.g., for biking and games).

All details to be shared via a flyer/email to the group.

“Anybody, Everybody Fitness” offers adaptive exercise classes that modify routines to match each participant’s ability level, supporting inclusive, accessible physical activity for people with developmental disabilities.”

Rural Health Institute (RHI) Youth Services – Jaime Croft, Community Health Educator & Prevention Coordinator at RHI of NY, works in Tompkins County on youth substance-use prevention and family services. She explains that their Tompkins County work uses youth substance use prevention as an entry point to strengthen family connectedness and overall community health. She described free, virtual one-on-one parenting support where parents (including those raising children with developmental disabilities) can self-refer and receive a customized parenting plan tailored to their child’s abilities, developmental stage, and family situation. Jamie outlined the Positive Parenting Program: Level 2 seminars for ages 0–12 on positive parenting, building confidence and social skills, emotional development and stress, and screen time/AI, and Level 3 discussion groups for children and teens on disobedience, aggression, routines, family conflict, and safe decision-making. She emphasized attention to parent stress and self-care, as well as routine linkage to local resources like Racker and Family & Children’s.

Jamie also highlighted the Safe 365 (Safe365NY.org) initiative, which offers a countywide calendar of family-friendly activities, a local services directory, and parenting articles—including current and upcoming content focused on disability and prevention for teens with disabilities—and invited agencies to both refer families and add/update their own resources and events on the site.

In response to Jeff's question, Jamie approaches parenting education as personalized, strengths-based, and highly practical rather than generic. She starts by meeting parents where they are—offering free, virtual one-on-one support—to understand the child's needs, family situation, and stressors. She then develops a tailored parenting plan that can be modified based on the child's developmental stage and abilities, including those with disabilities. Her group activities, such as Positive Parenting Program seminars and discussion groups, incorporate evidence-based curricula but focus on customizing strategies to each family's unique circumstances. Jamie consistently emphasizes the importance of parent well-being and stress management, referring to it as “pockets of peace,” and she ensures smooth transitions to local resources (like Racker, Family & Children's, sensory library, etc.), so parents leave with a clear plan and actionable next steps.

OPWDD Updates – Jamie Kelly reported that New York has launched a Supported Decision-Making (SDM) initiative as a less-restrictive alternative to traditional guardianship for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. SDM allows individuals to retain their legal rights while receiving structured support to make decisions about finances, healthcare, and relationships, rather than defaulting to full guardianship, which she noted is often broader and more burdensome than necessary—sometimes even regretted by families once they understand the responsibilities. She explained that New York is the first state in the nation to fund facilitation of SDM agreements for any eligible person with ID/DD who wants one. The state has awarded this funding to AIM Services, which will coordinate the program, conduct outreach, and work with other agencies across the state to replicate the model. Jamie said she would share AIM contact information so stakeholders can connect individuals to SDM supports as the program rolls out.

Tompkins County Discrepancies in Services – Due to time constraints, Harmony's presentation could not be presented.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

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**The next Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee Meeting is
Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.**