

# Disabilities and Access Functional Needs (D-AFN) Workgroup April 21, 2025 meeting minutes

Meeting called to order at 4:30 p.m.

In attendance:

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS:

Nilofer Ahsan, Ariele Belo, Kristine Camper, Cara Elzie, Aeries Franklin, Elizabeth GCDE, Jesse Gilpatrick (CFI), Todd Holloway (co-host, CFI), Jim House, Barbara Merchant, David Poland (Deaf Rep.), Tiara Ranson, Amy Lynn Roark, Dean Sydnor (RARET Program Supervisor, Hopelink), Phinthatang Yeang.

## DOH:

Liz Clement (co-host), Alyssa Weaver (co-host), Melissa West (host), Tara Bostock, Javier Ruiz, Francesco Somaini (co-host), ASL interpreter Ashley (NWI), ASL interpreter Daniel (NWI).

DOH staff provided updates on uncertainty surrounding status of federal grants canceled and impact on D-AFN in terms of resources available for meetings and other activities and on WA budget reductions under consideration by the legislature.

DOH staff reiterated the importance of D-AFN space and the agency's commitment to preserving the space in the context of budgetary challenges.

DOH staff asked the D-AFN community to engage with the agency in the context of the onboarding of the new secretary of health when the new secretary is appointed, and to keep engaging with them and DOH, so that the community can help inform the decisions of the new leadership:

- What should the new secretary think about in the context of the D-AFN's work?
- What should the new secretary know about the community and its needs?
- Whom should the new secretary talk to?
- What role might the D-AFN community be willing to play to support the new secretary?

Community members stressed they do not want decisions to be made for them and want to be included in the decision-making process. Points addressed by community members:

- Check biases about D-AFN community.
- Mutual support between community and DOH secretary/agency.
- Really listen to what community says, needs, and wants.
- If resources and connections are available, share them with the community.
- Pursue progress and provide the community with regular updates on that progress such as the activities and implementation strategies of DOH that pertain to the D-AFN community.
- Involve D-AFN community in decision-making process and in interactions between DOH and lawmakers.
- Develop awareness of and sensitivity to the fact that the D-AFN community is very diverse and that even certain groups within the D-AFN community, such as that of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, are very diverse and comprised of people with multiple cultures and identities.
- Be willing to be educated about the needs of the different communities within the D-AFN community, and to interact with many representatives of those communities.
- The community should ask for an opportunity to have a briefing with the new secretary to talk about why the D-AFN group is important and what role the group wants to play in ongoing work in DOH.

DOH staff informed the community that the Center for Community Relations and Equity is moving to the Executive Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation, which may offer opportunities for a different kind of interaction with the D-AFN community connected to policy compliance.

Asked about the future of the D-AFN meetings, DOH staff informed the D-AFN community that as of April 21, 2025, there was no clear line of sight about availability of funding to compensate D-AFN community members' participation in the activities of the group starting with Fiscal Year 2026 on July 1, 2025. DOH leadership expressed prioritizing DOH staff deployment to keep supporting the group's activity.

Conversation about alternative spaces for D-AFN community members to participate and engage in public health work.

KAI coordinator has been keeping notes that may be useful to the group and will share them.

Conversation about how D-AFN community members can remain in touch should the group be unable to keep meeting. DOH staff will share via the Gaggle online platform a link

to a list created to exchange contact information similar to that of general DOH Community Collaborative.

Conversation about challenges experienced by other community collaboratives and workgroups in the State of Washington and elsewhere in the country.

Conversation on project to create short videos to highlight the experiences of the D-AFN community members and the role of access and accessibility in those experiences.

Public expression of gratitude to Alyssa Weaver and Nilofer Ahsan for all their work for D-AFN.

Plan is to hold next monthly meeting on May 19, 2025. DOH will investigate issue of compensation of community members' attendance/participation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m.