

MINUTES
ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM
Monday, November 17, 2025
1:00 PM
Room B, MAC
Little Rock, Arkansas

Committee members present: Senator Justin Boyd, Co-Chair; Representative Denise Jones Ennett, Co-Chair

Non-legislative members present: Susie Baker, Ashley Beaston, Jennifer Brezee, Rachel Dodson, J.D. Schupp, Melissa Weatherton, Dr. Jeff Adams, Dr. Shelia Smith, Dr. Michael Taylor, Karan Burnette

Other members present: Representatives Carolyn Dalby, Jack Ladyman, Jason Nazarenko, Chad Puryear and Johnny Rye

Senator Boyd called the meeting to order.

Consideration of a Motion to Approve June 17, 2025, Meeting Minutes [Exhibit B]

Representative Ennett made a motion to adopt the minutes, seconded by Dr. Jeff Adams, and the motion carried.

2025 General Session Legislative Overview [Exhibits C1-C5]

These exhibits provided autism-related legislative information to members.

Presentation on Developmental Disability Services [Exhibit D]

Jennifer Brezee, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), Arkansas Department of Human Services, explained the overall services provided through DDS, as well as autism specific services, and asked for feedback on a flyer created to give primary care physicians and schools guidance on how to apply for these services.

Presentation of Autism Waiver Outcome Data [Exhibit E]

Karan Burnette, Director, Partners of Inclusive Communities, University of Arkansas, explained the design and outcomes of the Autism Waiver program, highlighting the progress made by the children and parent satisfaction.

Overview of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) [Exhibit F]

Dana Byrum, Deputy of Field Operations, ARS, Arkansas Workforce Connections (AWC), Department of Commerce and Amy Lamb, Associate Commissioner, Access and Accommodations, ARS, AWC, Department of Commerce presented information about their services and how to apply for assistance, including eligibility specifics, and explained community service programs providing assessment, assistive technology and scholarships.

Presentation on Perimeter Behavioral Hospital of West Memphis [Exhibits G1-G3]

Erica K. Fox, Vice President, Business Development and Contracting, Perimeter Behavioral Hospital of West Memphis, Natalie Bland, Director, Business Development, Perimeter Behavioral Hospital of West Memphis, and Renee Smith, CEO, Perimeter Behavioral Hospital of West Memphis, shared the design of their new inpatient program for neurodivergent youth and the high-level training of their staff.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

