Maine Developmental Services Oversight and Advisory Board - Meeting Summary

Date: July 21, 2026
Location: Zoom
Time: 10:00 a.m. – Noon

Key Topics
- Lifespan Waiver applications
- Nominations: Clerk of the Board, Quality Improvement Coalition, and Positive Support Plans Committee
- Presentation on Oversight Monitoring

Attending

Board: Cullen Ryan (Chair), Kimberly Christensen, David Cowing, Rachel Dyer, Richard Estabrook, Kim Humphrey, Barrett Littlefield, Ann-Marie Mayberry, Bernie Oster, Jennifer Putnam, Katie Qualey, Rory Robb, Fatia Waite
Staff: Valerie Landry, Interim Executive Director; Amanda King, Clerk of the Board
Presenter: Roger Deshaies

Cullen Ryan opened the meeting with a tribute to Staci Converse, a tireless champion of the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who died unexpectedly on July 8, 2026. Among many other accomplishments, Staci led the Disability Rights Maine developmental disabilities team. Board members offered individual reflections, and also condolences to fellow board member, Barrett Littlefield of DRM. A celebration of life will be held on August 2 from 4-6 p.m. at Ship Cove Platform, Fort Williams Park.

Actions
- Accepted without objection: June 16, 2026 Board Meeting Summary
  Motion made by Rory Robb; Second by Ann-Marie Mayberry
- Approved without objection: Nomination of Amanda King as Clerk of the Board
  Motion made by: Fatia Waite, Second by Rory Robb
- Approved without objection: Nominations of Rory Robb to the Positive Support Plan Committee and Richard Estabrook to the Quality Improvement Coalition, with Kim Humphrey as Alternate
  Motion made by Ann-Marie Mayberry; Second by David Cowing
- Approved without objection: Submit an OpEd outlining the board's concerns about the pending submission of Lifespan waiver applications.
  Motion made by David Cowing; second by Richard Estabrook

Discussion

1. Lifespan Waiver Applications

In its written comments to DHHS and in subsequent communication, the Board has recommended that the department refrain from submitting the Lifespan Waiver applications at this time to provide opportunity for a working group comprised of DHHS and key stakeholders, including lawmakers, to resolve major issues with the proposals. DHHS has signaled its continued intent to submit the applications. The board is continuing its effort to persuade the department to reconsider this action with the objective of initiating a process that results in success, rather than confusion, opposition, and controversy. Because no information has surfaced that suggests a willingness to refrain from submitting the applications, the board approved submission of an OpEd for the purpose of supporting broader awareness on the part of key stakeholders, including legislators, on the substantial risks of proceeding with the Lifespan proposals as written.

2. Oversight Monitoring, Roger Deshaies

Roger Deshaies has more than five decades of experience in developmental disabilities services, Medicaid policy, and human services system reform spanning state government leadership, multi-state provider executive roles, and consulting in more than sixteen states. This included leadership roles in Maine as Associate and Acting Commissioner, among other roles. Roger's presentation was designed to offer a potential framework to monitor the system of supports. Fundamentally, the key question is: Are people living good, self-directed lives—and is the system accountable for making that possible? The presentation described a structured framework of ten critical data domains with associated indicators. It also pointed out examples where conventional monitoring either misses the point or actively misleads. Roger indicated that changes and challenges are emerging that are different from those experienced in the past. Harbingers include attempts in some states to eliminate and/or reduce funding for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) because it is an "optional" service under Medicaid regulations. Roger's full presentation was distributed to all board members and will be discussed at future board meetings. Board comments and questions included:

- Similarities to I/DD services exist with the elder care workforce as chronicled in a 7/20/26 New York Times article regarding the loss of caregivers due to immigration policies. ["Millions of immigrants, eligible to work in the United States, fill positions across the elder care industry such as nurses, dietitians, fitness instructors and maintenance technicians. And countless undocumented immigrants care for seniors in their homes, part of a vast informal economy." https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/20/us/immigration-trump-senior-living-staffing.html

- Maine modeled Lifespan after a program in Tennessee. Although the model was promoted as eliminating the state's waitlist, the reduction in waitlist appears to be the result of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds rather than the program model. Roger cautioned that state comparisons can be misleading as definitions vary for the same terms. For example, one state's "sentinel indicators" might include when people get physically hurt, whereas in another state, the requirement could be to report any type of harassment. Regarding Tennessee specifically, Roger indicated that he was somewhat surprised to learn that it was the model for Lifespan, and offered to provide more information after further review, if helpful.

- What is Roger's assessment of how oversight boards are regarded by state agencies?
  Roger responded that often, oversight boards are regarded as a "necessary nuisance" – that states do not always embrace the importance of an independent set of eyes. The high turnover in state agency leadership contributes to an absence of continuity. In addition, state agencies, like other groups, can become enamored of their own approach, setting the stage for resistant to other viewpoints. Mutual trust and respect are needed.

3. New business: Items for future board meetings.

- A number of community agencies have been closed by DHHS; how many more are expected to be closed and how many individuals are affected?

- Maine dropped its participation in the National Core Indicators—a national effort to measure and improve the performance of public disability agencies through collaboration with the National Association of State Developmental Disability Services, the Human Services Research Institute, and state I/DD agencies. This action should be reviewed/discussed further by the board. https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org