



Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: June 22, 2026

Attendance:

Benchmark Staff: Jeff Coy, Theresa Rickard, Carl Lampton, Jennifer Savard

Committee Members: Nancy Kisonak, Judith Jackson, Levi Gardner, Lisa Stamatis

Absent: Mike Curtis, Mark Sokolis

Today's agenda and acceptance of previous minutes:

1. *Minutes for the 4/27/2026 meeting were accepted before today's meeting.*
2. *Theresa: Report and discussion on the Satisfaction Survey*
3. *Update on communication efforts between BHS, families, and people receiving services.*
4. *Update on Family Engagement Forums*
5. *Current Developmental Disabilities Services Division Quality Management policies and Quality Services Reviews.*
6. *Representation for this committee from the Brain Injury Program*

Minutes

- *4/27/26 minutes had been accepted verbally by all in meeting.*
- *Theresa opened the meeting by thanking Lisa for sharing information from the recent U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) who issued a memorandum, raising serious concerns about how the federal government intends to approach community integration for people with disabilities. Olmstead remains the law, and disability rights remain unchanged. However, the memorandum may signal a potential shift in how the DOJ and federal agencies may approach enforcement and policy. People receiving DS support in VT have been reassured by the State of Vermont that their rights under Olmstead will be respected regardless of the DOJ memo.*
- *Judith brought forth a concern about issues and presentations at the State Program Standing Committee (SPSC) from the DDSD and stakeholders being difficult to understand. She would like these to be presented in, "plain language." It was a consensus of this group that it would be great if these presenters can pause in between subjects, and ask if clarification is needed. Theresa said she would bring this back to the group for review, and advocate that this be done. The SPSC did a nice job at the subsequent meeting of assuring accessibility and plain language awareness.*
- *Jeff mentioned the need for a signature from Judith and Lisa so that we can identify them as Advisory Committee members on the BHS website.*

- *Theresa presented the results for our Satisfactory Survey that was done in March. She emphasized that we had only been doing things for about 6 months. This survey was conducted by a 3rd party vendor called Simply HR. Theresa identified that this survey was only completed by 193 individuals out of about 1900. We were happy to hear that at least one survey came in for each county in VT. The survey showed that families felt included, respected, and treated with dignity. We were praised for being person-centered, responsive, and genuinely caring. Communication was identified as something needing to be worked on. Overall, we did well with the limited responses and being a new program in VT. Theresa is considering asking questions differently next year.*
- *Nancy identified the need for clarity on next steps when a new SIS-A is done, and funding. Theresa explained that even though a new SIS-A has been done, a funding request may not be needed. Things that can affect this are needs and crisis. She also reminded that we will not know when the funding proposals will get reviewed after we submit them. That is not in our control.*
- *Jeff identified the need for a candidate from the BIP program still. He has asked the Division if we could use a family member or care-giver.*
- *Theresa clarified that agencies do need to be involved in ISA plans. We do have difficulty getting the agencies to sign these in a timely manner. An ISA can be authorized when an individual, or care-giver, and the CMO provide their signatures. This allows services to happen, but the ISA is not finalized until the Agencies also sign them.*

Quality Action Items Summary:

- *Name the documents reviewed today (were they accessible/are they understood?): Advisory Committee Agenda – based on conversation, the agenda was understood.*
- *Quality management action taken from member's feedback after the last meeting: Program management and operations: Increased awareness of the need for plain language during meetings of the BHS Advisory Committee and SPSC.*
- *Quality evaluations including feedback on the quality and responsiveness of services offered in the geographic area: Satisfaction Survey will inform focus on improvements going forward.*
- *Policies that pertain to or significantly influence services for the DS and/or BIP populations: We discussed that it would help members to have a presentation explaining ISAs for the August meeting. We reassured members that the SOV will not be part of a reduction in assuring community inclusion or rights based on the DD Act. The DOJ memo will have an impact on people receiving services in other states but not in Vermont as far as we can predict. Funding losses may indeed influence the quality of services.*
- *Frequency, type and resolution of complaints, grievance and appeals about case management services for the DS and BIP populations: No data offered today.*
- *Date the agenda for this meeting went out to members: The agenda for today was sent out for input on 6/15/2026.*
- *Previous meeting minutes shared with members on this date: 5/5/2026*

Date the final meeting minutes distributed and posted: 7/31/2026

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey M. Coy