



IDDEAS ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES SUMMARY

Date: 08/26/2025

Time: 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Location: Virtual (Go to the [IDDEAS Advisory Council website](#) to see meeting recordings)

Summary:

- IAC Voting Council Member Adriana Delatorre and representatives from Advocacy Denver, El Grupo Vida, Rocky Mountain Human Services, Servicios de la Raza, and Tepeyac Community Health Center presented on the topic of services and supports for Denver residents with I/DD within the Spanish-speaking community
- There were no submissions for public comment.
- The meeting was interpreted into Spanish by Yamila Zayat with the Translation & Interpreting Center of Denver. All content originally presented in Spanish (and interpreted into English during the meeting) is not available in the audio recording posted on the IDDEAS website and is therefore described in detail within the meeting minutes. This includes presentations by IAC Voting Member Adriana Delatorre and El Grupo Vida Co-Executive Director Elisa Aucancela.

Discussion topics for next meeting:

- September:
 - Proposed revision to the IDDEAS Advisory Council bylaws (regarding the quorum and subcommittees)
 - Presentations by VOICES grantees (pending their availability)
- October
 - Presentation by Autism Community Store at the conclusion of the Sensory Friendly Denver Contract



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Attendance:

1. Brian Be
2. Michelle Dumay
3. Chris Patton
4. Alexxa Gagner
5. Stefanie Gross
6. Julissa Soto
7. Adriana Delatorre
8. Alicia Cooper
9. Seth Grove
10. Kizzly Blue (non-voting member)

DHS Staff:

- Michaela Hennig
- Lynn Kutner
- Tom Gamache
- Richard Moore
- Whitney Nettleton

Guests:

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Absent:

1. Jessica Raichle
2. Molly Mason

Guest Presenters:

1. Adriana Delatorre (IAC voting member & mother of child with Down Syndrome)
2. Pam Bisceglia (Advocacy Denver)
3. Elisa Aucancela (El Grupo Vida)
4. Abby Grinstead (Rocky Mountain Human Services [RMHS])
5. Amy Becerra (RMHS)
6. Ana Vizoso (Servicios de la Raza)
7. Dr. Pamela Valenza and Dr. Emily Johnson (Tepeyac Community Health Center)

I. Call to Order

Meeting began at 1:10 pm.

II. Approval of minutes from last meeting

Alicia motioned to approve; Michelle seconded. 7 Councilmembers approved, 1 abstained.

III. Council Updates

Due to time restraints these were skipped today

IV. Breathing in Uncertainty

Due to time restraints this agenda item was skipped today

V. Guest Presentations – Services and Supports for Spanish-Speaking Denver Residents with I/DD

Adriana Delatorre (IAC voting member & mother of child with Down Syndrome)

(Adriana presented in Spanish. Her presentation was interpreted into English by Yamila Zayat with Translation and Interpreting Center of Denver.)

Adriana is a voting member of the IDDEAS advisory council and mother of an 11-year-old son with Trisomy 21 (Down Syndrome). Adriana has dedicated herself to learning about the disability world since her son was born. Adriana likes supporting the community, especially the disability community, because she believes it is one of the most vulnerable communities. Adriana likes learning not only for herself, but also to support other families. Being informed is very important to be able to help or to provide resources to our family members or our communities. That is why she was interested in wanting to participate in this council. Adriana is here to learn and to support.

Pam Bisceglia (Advocacy Denver) - Described the history of Advocacy Denver, who they serve, their programs for advocating for individuals with disabilities, and how they serve the IDD community. They have staff who speak Spanish.

Elisa Aucancela (El Grupo Vida)

(Elisa presented in Spanish. Her presentation was interpreted into English by Yamila Zayat with Translation and Interpreting Center of Denver)

The mission of El Grupo Vida is to support the wellbeing of immigrants with disabilities and their families by elevating their voices through direct advocacy. El Grupo Vida's values are: community, opportunity, and justice. El Grupo Vida's programs include: the resource center, exchange store, food pantry, diaper donations for children and adults, trainings, support groups and conferences (virtual and in-person), community navigation, connection with systems and support for transition, and arts and gardening programs. Regarding access to services by people with disabilities that come from mixed-status families: there is a fear right now in terms of sharing information with the federal government, and what type of information the state is going to provide to the federal government. There is misunderstanding about languages, Latin families not only speak Spanish, but other languages. For example, Mayan dialects: there are about over 30 different dialects. Parents who are undocumented cannot get paid as caregivers. One of the things El Grupo

Vida has observed about Supplemental Security Income (SSI), if parents are undocumented but have an ITIN number, the social security office has to enter that number manually and that makes the case last an hour or an hour and a half and they don't like that. A lot of families, the parents will have the ITIN number, the kid will have the SSN, the social security office will have a lot of 'buts' and will not process that. So how do we fix this inequality in the system? Improve the navigation and trust with community. Elisa emphasized the need for more bilingual people, linguist awareness, and the need to support families at high risk. She reported that there are families who are still living in shelters and the need to continue providing support so they can be self-sustaining and they can feel like Denver is the place they want to stay forever.

Amy Becerra (RMHS) - Described the history of RMHS (they are the Community Center Board [CCB]/Case Management Agency [CMA] for Denver County), who they serve, their goals, and their programs including those covered by Medicaid and Mill Levy funds. Amy also simplified the complex path of people becoming enrolled in RMHS programs by walking us through a flow chart.

Ana Vizoso (Servicios de la Raza) - Described the history of Servicios de la Raza, their mission, and described their eight (8) departments. Although they were designed to serve the Latino community, they do in-fact serve individuals from all backgrounds and all services are no cost.

Dr. Pamela Valenza (Tepeyac Community Health Center) - Described the history of Tepeyac Community Health Center, who they serve, and their programs. They accept all insurances and work with individuals without insurance. They are a full spectrum primary care practice where 75% of staff speak Spanish. All of their staff (including dental, medical, and behavioral health teams, front desk staff, pharmacist) have received disability competency training. Their facilities are IDD friendly, and Dr. Johnson is a disability specific physician.

VI. Break

VII. Panel Discussion / Questions and Answers

Panelists took turns providing answers to the following questions:

- **How does documentation status impact individuals' ability to receive publicly funded I/DD services and supports?**
 - Elisa Aucancela (El Grupo Vida): Undocumented adults have access to a State waiver; Medicaid for All is available to children up to ages 18 regardless of immigration status (since January 2025). RMHS provides mill-levy funded support to individuals regardless of immigration status. Over the last few months, there have been significant cuts in services to people who are undocumented
 - Pamela Bisceglia (Advocacy Denver): Public schools serve children regardless of I/DD status and provides community services including food

pantries, clothing, health care. Undocumented individuals who are residents of Denver and have I/DD can access mill levy funded services through RMHS

- Amy Becerra (RMHS): There are two paths, as depicted in RMHS' slide, depending on if individual qualifies for Medicaid or federally funded services. RMHS offers expertise in helping families navigate those paths. RMHS accepts everyone who comes through their door, regardless of their immigration status.
- Abby Grinstead (RMHS): RMHS can utilize mill levy dollars to help pay for testing needed to qualify individuals for long-term services and supports. Mill levy can help supplement different state and federally funded programs and during transitions between programs.
- **Can Servicios de La Raza and Tepeyac Community Health Center kindly share more information about the specific programs or services they offer for people with disabilities, especially those that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for Spanish speaking families?**
 - Dr. Pamela Valenza (Tepeyac Community Health Center): Tepeyac's work specifically with disability community goes back to about 2019; hearing from community that there was a need for disability-competent providers to serve the Spanish-speaking community. Submitted a grant application through Colorado Access in partnership with Laradon to start looking at disability specific-training and access of care and services within disability community. Hired Dr. Barry Martin in 2020/2021 to train providers and expand disability competent care. Started engaging organizations that serve disability community to learn about the needs of the disability community. Formed relationships with RMHS START program. Have invited about 60 clinics that serve the I/DD community into their clinic to tour and offer feedback. Working on framework to help health centers grow their culturally competent care.
 - Ana Vizoso (Servicios de la Raza): Servicios Behavioral Health Department does a great job of working with people with I/DD. Provide individualized care. Servicios does not track I/DD status. Purpose of presentation today was to ensure that everyone has access to services. Have received training and reviewed policies and procedures to ensure they are inclusive and accessible to all of the community.
- **What agencies can help with autism testing for lower income families?**
 - Pam Bisceglia (Advocacy Denver): It depends on the age of the individual. Children can get educational evaluation of autism done by the school district. It's important that the evaluation is culturally and linguistically

appropriate. Evaluations should be done in the child's primary language. For adults, RMHS might be able to utilize mill levy dollars to pay for that evaluation. For children, the family has the right to request the school complete the evaluation. Advocacy Denver has observed disproportionalities in identifies developmental disabilities among students based on race and gender.

- Resources posted in chat:
 - Brian Be: "Where I work, JFK Partners / Children's Hospital, there are also Spanish Autism evaluations available."
 - Elisa Aucancela:
 - "Currently, we have 4 bilingual (Spanish) psychologists in the area of Denver who provide developmental evaluations or Autism evaluation"
 - <https://www.horizonsbegin.com/about>
 - Dr. Valenza: "Tepeyac has compiled a list of providers/partners that can provide diagnostic evaluations and will facilitate evaluations to different groups based on language, insurance (if available), access, and geographic location. When patients come in for a visit with a medical provider at Tepeyac, we can facilitate the referral process and support along the way."

- **Is RMHS having success hiring and retaining adequate numbers of Spanish speaking case managers? Are there incentives to do this and for new hires that are bilingual, such as wages paid at higher pay scale?**
 - Amy Becerra (RMHS): We are always hiring for bilingual case managers. RMHS offers a small stipend on an annual basis. RMHS would love to explore different avenues to increase recruitment and retention of bilingual case managers. In addition to bi-lingual Spanish, speaking staff, have staff that speak other languages, including Russian.
 - Seth Grove (IAC voting member): asked if it was in the council's purview to subsidize a wage at RMHS for bilingual case manager.

- **Would Tepeyac Community Health Center be open to increasing number of individuals with I/DD that are served by their clinic (currently at 2.5% of total patient population):**
 - Dr. Valenza responded via chat: "We are absolutely looking to increase our I/DD patient population and have appointment access availability! That is one of the reasons we have hired Dr. Emily Johnson and have been doing a lot of work in the IDD space. For documentation, we have presented at the Alliance Conference in Aug 2024 and additional local/regional conferences



about our work and will be presenting at the upcoming Public Health in the Rockies conference. We are also in process of a publication on our work in the IDD community.”

- **What languages do Advocacy Denver navigators speak?**
 - Pamela Bisceglia (Advocacy Denver): Advocacy Denver employs a bilingual resource navigator who speaks English and Spanish.

- Adriana suggested to limit presenters to 2-3 speakers to have sufficient time to answer questions and make comments. Adriana said it would be good to plan and schedule for two speakers for meeting. Adriana said she would like to invite RMHS back to speak. Adriana stated that there are a lot of questions and doubts about the waivers. It is information that has been handled very hermetically, so we don't completely understand how we can access this resource. There are no clear guides or directories; all the information is very scrambled. It's not clear why there is such a long wait. It's not clear what they are taking into account whether it's the need or the condition, so I just have to think it is a lack of staff and if that is the case then we need to inject the resources that we have into human staff.

VIII. Planning for Next Meeting

Michaela requested that for the September meeting, the council consider and vote on proposed changes to the by-laws related to:

- Increasing the size of the quorum
- Adding language related to sub-committees (proposed sub-committees include housing and immigration)

For the October meeting – DHS staff requests having Autism Community Store present to the Council the results of their 5-year contract

Potential topics for future meetings are:

- Presentations by some of the VOICES mini-grant partners
- Additional time to discuss things pertaining to today's discussed, and potentially making related recommendations

IX. Public Comment

There were no public comment submissions for this meeting.

X. Adjournment



The meeting was adjourned at 3:09 pm. Motioned by Brian and Michelle seconded. 4 yes votes for adjournment.

IDDEAS Advisory Council sessions are recorded; recordings are usually available upon request. Please contact DHS's IDDEAS program with any clarifying questions related to these minutes by emailing IDDEAS@Denvergov.org. Recordings and other information can be found at the [IDDEAS webpage](#).