

Meeting Minutes:

Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council

Date: April 17, 2026

Minutes prepared by: DHS Community Relations Staff

Location: Webex and International Institute of Minnesota (Hybrid)

Attendance

- **CECLC Members:** Alex Abraha, Julie Churcher, Lolita Davis-Carter, Makram El-Amin, Angela Fields, Chris Green, Chris Guy, Dr. Richard Oni, Dr. Joanna Rosa, Shawn Sorrell, Nina Vongpheth, Philip Gaye-Bai
- **State Agency Staff:** Adrien Carretero, De Anna Conover, Shelly Diaz, Helen Ghebre, Jewelly Lee, Lola Muhammad, Ahmed Mussa (DPS), Ashley Oolman, Wayne Somes, Andrea Steen, Jill Sweiven, Josh Syrjamaki, Shavana Talbert, Mor Vue, Rebecca Melang, Haile Tegegne, Steven Wilson
- **Public Attendees:** Dr. Almi, Katy Armendariz, Osman Baar, Remi Banjolo, Rose Say, Pa Chua Vang, Jo Dee

Agenda:

- 12:00 **Lunch & Community Networking / WebEx Opens**
- 1:00 **Open Public Meeting and Land Acknowledgement**
- 1:05 **Introductions, Welcome & Check-in Activity [Breakout Sessions]**
 - Introduce new community members and guests
 - How have you lived one of the Guiding Principles this week?
- 1:20 **Review and Approve Meeting Agenda and Minutes**
- 1:25 **Community Celebrations & Shout Outs**
- 1:30 **MN Revalidate 2026**
- 2:00 **Break**
- 2:15 **Workgroup Updates and Priorities**
 - **Topics and Issues Workgroup**
 - Community Engagement (Community Listening Sessions)
 - Desired Outcome #3
 - **Legislative and Policy Workgroup**
 - Reflection: Legislative Meet & Greet
 - Desired Outcome #3
 - **Equitable Outcomes Workgroup**
 - Desired Outcome #1
 - Desired Outcome #2
 - Reflection: EOB (Flyer) Discussion
- 3:30 **Legislative Update**

4:00

Adjourn Full Council Meeting

Welcome, Land Acknowledgement, and Introductions

Angela Fields called the meeting to order. Julie Churcher read a land acknowledgement.

Alex Abraha led meeting participants in introductions and initiated breakout sessions. Participants shared discussion points from their breakout sessions.

Decisions Made

Review and approve March minutes and April meeting agenda:

- Motion to approve meeting agenda and March minutes: Angela Fields
- Second: Philip Gaye-Bai
- The motion passed

Community Celebrations and Shoutouts

Angela Fields opened the floor for members to share.

- [The 18th Annual Community Empowerment Through Black Men Healing Conference](#) will take place on June 25 and 26 at St. Paul College, and information will be shared with CECLC members about complimentary registration for this conference.
- Council members can receive complimentary registration for upcoming [Tribal State Relations Training](#) sessions and are encouraged to attend (11 current CECLC members have attended previously).
- Registration is open for the 4th annual [Minnesota Medicaid Equity Forum](#) sessions (April 21 – Metro area, May 4 – virtual, May 7 – Duluth).
 - Forums are open to Medicaid members and patient groups, Community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, managed care organizations, health care providers, Tribal Nations, urban American Indian organizations, Minnesota county partners, and DHS staff.
 - Goals and outcomes:
 - Elevating community-led, community-centered guidance and solutions to improve Minnesota's Medicaid program, called Medical Assistance, and MinnesotaCare
 - Fostering cross-sector connection and partnerships
 - Committing to actionable items for sustaining statewide collective health equity efforts with a focus on protecting access as federal Medicaid changes are implemented.
- Olivia Olson is no longer with DHS Community Relations; Steven Wilson has joined the team.
- April is Autism Awareness Month, Celebrate Diversity Month, Testicular Cancer Awareness Month, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Counseling Awareness Month, and Easter.

MN Revalidate 2026

Jill Sweiven gave a presentation on DHS's efforts to revalidate providers in designated high-risk programs.

- CMS is requiring DHS to revalidate providers in the 13 high risk treatment categories by May 31, 2026.
- If this work and other CMS requirements are not completed on this timeline, the state will lose \$2 billion in Medicaid funding.
- DHS welcomes input from all community members on how to fight weaponization of Medicaid and has begun engaging with national partners on this topic.
- In late January, DHS sent letters to communicate revalidation requirements to all 5,800 statewide providers in these categories.
- Some providers who changed from moderate- to high-risk have not previously completed revalidation at that level.
- Program integrity and continuity of care are the guiding principles for this process.
- It is important not to over-correct, which may result in the loss of good providers.
- Due to the compressed timeline, DHS created an incident command team and increased available staff and onsite screeners to revalidate providers by the deadline.
- DHS is partnering with community to improve the revalidation process going forward.
- A second letter was sent in February to providers who did not respond to the initial letter.
- The information submitted by providers is confirmed by onsite screeners and sent to the Office of Inspector General.
- Onsite screeners were given state credentials that providers can verify to ensure the providers feel safe when screeners come to their locations for unscheduled visits.
 - Information is posted on DHS's website and has been shared at provider roundtables to encourage providers to call the Provider Resource Center if they are uncertain about an onsite screener's credentials.
- Background checks and fingerprinting are completed for anyone who owns at least 5% of a provider.
- Providers may receive disenrollment notifications based on a determination by the DHS Office of Inspector General or if they do not submit information.
 - There is a right to appeal these decisions, and providers have 60 days from the date of the disenrollment letter to address the reason for disenrollment.
 - Payments to disenrolled providers are suspended on the date of the disenrollment notice.
- DHS has provided resources for providers in the form weekly provider roundtables and videos and FAQs on the DHS website.
- Providers may call the Provider Resource Center if they need training or technical assistance.
 - Several Council members expressed difficulty getting information from the Provider Resource Center, having been transferred from person to person and asked to repeatedly provide the same information due to a lack of knowledgeable staff.
- The Provider Resource Center called every provider who did not respond to either letter to ensure they are aware of revalidation requirements (70% success rate in outreach).
- There are several equity forums scheduled to offer additional support to providers to complete revalidation, and DHS is creating flyers with information to distribute through community organizations.

- Community and provider organizations are encouraged to share information about revalidation with members through social media and other channels.
- Council members are invited to suggest additional forms of communication that could help DHS contact all providers, employing different strategies if needed to better serve different communities, to ensure no one is disenrolled because they were unaware of the revalidation requirement.
- A Council member suggested sending DHS staff to hold office hours in different parts of the state (potentially in coordination with community-based organizations that can provide trusted spaces) and informing providers when staff will be available to help them through the revalidation process.
- A Council member suggested working through people who are established within different communities and are familiar with those communities' needs.
- A Council member highlighted the need to truly engage and repair relationships with communities of color, while protecting their emotional, physical and spiritual safety through this process due to trauma from the federal government's recent actions and rhetoric against these communities.
- A Council member noted that different engagement strategies may be needed to reach people in rural areas vs. the metro area.
- A guest stated the importance of making sure people conducting outreach on behalf of DHS have correct information and do not send callers from person to person.
 - The guest explained that providers led by people of color have experienced resistance or lack of knowledge from DHS representatives when they ask questions about this process, and they believe DHS is disenrolling them for no reason.
 - The guest said DHS has ignored credible allegations of fraud in other organizations for years.
- A Council member asked how DHS will communicate findings from the revalidation process to providers.
 - DHS will create an AAR (after action report) to assess where DHS fell short and develop a corrective action plan for this process.
 - This should be done with feedback from providers about how to work together on solutions.
 - Technology upgrades will also be needed to improve processes.
- A Council member said DHS must be accountable and acknowledge the harm this process is causing to providers and communities by cutting off access to care.
 - The Council member added that DHS should engage in restorative practices and develop trauma informed procedures to manage this process in the future.
 - The Council member suggested different rules are applied to providers led by people of color.
 - The Council member stated the need to know that feedback being provided will actually be considered to ensure this harm does not recur in the future.
 - The Council member added that DHS needs to find more ways to communicate directly with providers to ensure they have all the information they need for revalidation.
- A Council member suggested DHS could provide services in person in locations where the Department of Revenue provides free tax information services.
- A Council member asked if in the future DHS could consider mechanisms like community benefits agreements in order to facilitate true partnerships with community and providers.
 - The Council member said due to the urgency of the current crisis and need to avoid potential significant funding loss, community organizations could help by engaging in direct outreach to revalidate providers by the May 31 deadline.

- The Council member suggested DHS could partner with external organizations by assigning them to contact lists of providers and document the result of their efforts to narrow down the list of providers to revalidate.
- The Council member stated that several community organizations would be willing to start assisting in this process within the next week.
- The Council member added that it would be necessary to quickly develop a work plan and provide resources to community organizations.
- DHS staff agreed to begin working on a potential action plan for outreach by community organizations and reconnect with Council members in the coming days.

Workgroup Updates and Priorities

Topics and Issues Workgroup

- There will be a community engagement and listening session on April 28 from 2-5pm at NorthPoint Conference Center in Minneapolis.
 - The session is a provider-focused in person engagement session in partnership with the CECLC.
 - This will be an information and listening session specifically focused on the revalidation process for smaller providers at all stages of this process.
 - The purpose of the session is to provide a clearer understanding of expectations, walk through the process, offer practical guidance, and create space for questions and answers with subject matter experts.
 - DHS Community Relations is working to share information about the listening session with providers and would welcome assistance from CECLC members in publicizing the session.
- The workgroup is on track to meet its 30-, 60- and 90-day milestones for desired outcome 3.

Legislative and Policy Workgroup

- The CECLC Legislative Meet and Greet was held on April 9.
 - Senator Hoffman attended and shared remarks on the importance of the community knowing the legislators who represent them, and the importance of community members sharing their knowledge and views with legislators to impact legislation.
 - No other legislators attended the session.
 - A goal for next year is to strengthen relationships between legislators and the CECLC early on, so that there may be better attendance at the meet and greet and more opportunities for engagement and input.
 - The CECLC will develop a communication strategy in advance of the 2027 meet and greet with the goal of increasing attendance and establishing connections with legislators.
 - Senator Hoffman offered assistance in connecting the CECLC with other legislators.
 - Senator Hoffman expressed support for the CECLC and invited members to reach out to him.
 - Another attendee joined the session to advocate for support to keep HCMC open.

- Several CECLC members expressed appreciation for the opportunity to gather with other CECLC members.

Equitable Outcomes Workgroup

- Desired outcome 1 is about creating an accountability structure and is on track for the 30-, 60-, and 90-day milestones.
- For desired outcome 2, the work is in tandem with equity directors.
 - CECLC Co-Chairs are meeting with equity directors to ensure there is alignment and that the equity directors have input on the desired outcome.
 - Equity directors have been attending Equitable Outcomes Workgroup meetings.
 - There was a discussion regarding Medicaid fraud flyers and how the community will perceive that communication.
 - Workgroup members provided feedback on how to improve the flyers and communication with the community.

Legislative Update

- There was no discussion on this item.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 PM