

MINUTES March 2, 2026

Present: Heidi Showstead, Christian Hernandez, Lourdes Lopez, Sophia Diaz, Marjorie Pavao, Alma Flores, Ariel Nava, Elizabeth Estevez, Eric Carter, Suzanne Saporita, David Moran, Victor Vega, Leslie Schubert, Kyra King, Sue Babin, Janice Musco, Michael Ventura, Meredith Morry, Jeff Christie, Michael Matraccia, Thelma Mendez,

1. Welcome



Tanja welcomed everyone to today's meeting.



2. Mission Statement/Minutes



Deanne read the Mission Statement of the Coalition.

“The Coalition is for individuals with all disabilities to connect and talk about what is important in our lives and what we can do together to improve quality for all people! It is also an opportunity to become familiar with different services available from agencies in Rhode Island and learn what these agencies can do to support and meet the needs of individuals.”



Deanne read the October 2025 Minutes



3. Presentation: “Dating 101” Presentation Presented By: Tanja, Deanne and Christina from the RI Cross Disability Coalition

Tanja began the meeting by asking everyone to go around the room and introduce themselves. Christina read the Mission Statement and Deanne briefly went over the October 2025 Minutes.

Claudia Lowe from the RI Self-Directed Coalition talked to the group about events coming up at Red, White and Brew Coffeehouse. Each event has a specific theme or topic. The time of the events are being held between 3-5pm. Claudia encouraged the group to share any resources. She also talked about the “Brew Crew” and their first newsletter and asked the Coalition to sign-up for the newsletter by leaving their email with the RI Cross Disability Coalition Sign-In sheet.

Deanne, Tanja, and Christina introduced the RI Cross Disability Coalition’s new presentation “Dating 101”. Before Starting Christina mentioned that if this presentation went well, there could be another event about speed-dating.

Christina started the presentation by asking Where they meet NEW people? Some responses were the:

- Market/Grocery Store
- School
- Library



Christina mentioned:

- Community Events



- Religious Events/Church
- Festivals/Fairs
- Friends/Family
- Work
- Dating Websites/Apps
- Online

Deanne talked about the qualities you look for in a partner, such as:

- Being Respectful
- Funny
- Honest
- Communication

Some responses from the group were:

- Have similar interests
- Agree with each other
- Look presentable
- Go with your gut feeling
- Trust
- Balancing each other out

Tanja then talked about different types of relationships, for example:

Long-distance relationship – the person might live out of state, in another city, or country

Casual - hang out 2-3 times a month – nothing serious – a person to do fun things with – like each other, but NOT in a romantic sense

Long –term relationship – is someone that you have been with for a number of years

One response was that they hope to start in a causal relationship and grow into a long-term relationship.

Christina spoke about boundaries-rules and guides on how you want to be treated.

- Boundaries are rules and guides that you set on how you want to be treated
- Types of boundaries can be: physical, emotional, material/financial, and time boundaries.

Deanne talked about how to set boundaries in relationships. She spoke about identifying your emotional needs, what makes you comfortable and uncomfortable, what you want people to know about your relationship.

Remember to share your specific NEEDS!

Deanne talked about setting a plan and being prepared for consequences if they are violated. You need to have clear communication and be respectful.

- Identify your needs and limits by reflecting on what makes you feel uncomfortable or resentful
- Clearly and calmly communicate these boundaries to your partner using "I" statements to avoid blame, and be specific about what you need.

- Enforce your boundaries by following through with a pre-determined, calm consequence if they are violated, and be prepared to listen to and respect your partner's boundaries as well.



Tanja talked about the Do's and Don'ts before the first date.

- If you are meeting in person, meet in a public place and let someone know where you are
- Don't overshare information. For example, your address, financial information, etc.
- Do not stay with someone that makes you feel not respected

Christina spoke about different ideas for a first date:

- Coffee Shop – so you talk to each other and get to know each other
- Going on a walk
- Casual dinner
- Keeping the first date short
- Activity – go bowling or photography class

Some other responses were:

- Go to an Art class

- Museum



- Beach
- Go to a function together



Deanne talked about Dating Websites!!

- Match.com
- Eharmony
- Tinder
- Dating my own age
- Dateability
- Elite singles

Deanne discussed that they do not need to disclose that they have a disability; it is UP TO YOU!! Some of the Apps and websites have different levels which require payment to access. Remember to be authentic but share within your comfort level.

Christina asked the group for feedback on the Dating 101 presentation. Overall, the feedback was very positive. Heidi recommended putting videos into the presentation of real dating experiences of good, bad, and humorous.



See you in September 2026!

5. Motion to Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at about 3 pm.

NEXT MEETING

Date: MONDAY, September 14, 2026

Location: Warwick Public Library

Time: 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm



Minutes submitted by Tanja Blicher-Ucran