



Public Policy Platform 2016

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council envisions a state where all people with developmental disabilities exercise control over their lives, reach their full potential, and lead healthy, fulfilling lives with enriching relationships.

To this end, the DD Council works to advance the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation. Specifically, we:

- Provide information and analysis to policymakers about issues of importance to people with developmental disabilities and their families so they make informed decisions.
 - Work to shape public policy, change attitudes, and improve services and supports that are essential to children and adults with developmental disabilities.
 - Advocate for policies, laws and services that support people with developmental disabilities to exercise control over their lives, reach their full potential, and lead productive, meaningful lives.
 - Seek to preserve and expand funding to support essential community supports, early intervention and education services for children and adults with developmental disabilities.
 - Advocate for the elimination of barriers that create separation and segregation and limit opportunities for full inclusion and community participation.
 - Advocate for people with developmental disabilities to enjoy the same rights afforded other citizens.
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Contact the Maryland DD Council if we can provide information, perspective, ideas, or analysis about legislation as it relates to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

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Note: Developmental disabilities are disabilities that manifest during the developmental years (before age 22) and have a significant and ongoing impact on an individual's life. Examples include, but are not limited to, autism, intellectual disability, and cerebral palsy.

Early Intervention

Advocate for a coordinated, fully funded statewide system of early childhood services that supports children with and without disabilities together and prepares them all for school.

Child Care & Out of School Time Activities

Advocate for and support policies, laws, funding, training and technical assistance that result in families of children and youth with developmental disabilities having access to quality, affordable child care programs and out of school time activities that include children with and without disabilities together.

Education

Promote and support legislation, regulations, policies, and funding that result in more students with disabilities educated in the least restrictive environment with access to the general education curriculum, appropriate assessments and the services and supports needed to succeed, as required by state and federal law.

Promote and support strategies that prepare general education teachers to teach students with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Promote policies and practices that improve what schools, state agencies, service providers and others do to help students with developmental disabilities successfully transition from school to work and/or college.

Post-Secondary Education

Support the development and expansion of post-secondary education options that provide people with intellectual and developmental disabilities with meaningful access to academics and campus life.

Expanded and Improved Community Services

Advocate for additional funding for the Autism Waiver so more children and their families receive needed services. There are currently about 4400 children and their families on the Autism Waiver registry waiting.

Advocate for increased funding to reduce the Developmental Disabilities Administration's waiting list for community supports and services. Currently over 8000 people are waiting.

Advocate for an annual funding allocation for DDA to serve all new "transitioning youth" -- youth with developmental disabilities exiting the school system who need day or employment support.

Advocate for policies and provider rates necessary to ensure the provision of individualized, person centered supports and competitive wages for direct support staff.

Promote policies and supports that result in people with developmental disabilities maximizing control over their own lives.

Supporting Families

Increase the availability and quality of formal and informal supports to families of individuals with developmental disabilities across the lifespan.

Support siblings of people with developmental disabilities to access the support, information and resources they need as they play an increasingly important and active role.

Support the establishment of the MD ABLE program, which will offer people with disabilities the opportunity to open tax-exempt accounts to save for disability-related expenses, similar to how families save for college expenses.

Eliminating Reliance on Institutions

Support efforts to move the 110 residents in Maryland's two remaining institutions for people with intellectual disabilities to the community, advocating closure so Maryland can join 13 other states and D.C. that no longer finance state-operated institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. Support expansion of high quality community options.

Employment

Advocate for policies and services that support people with developmental disabilities to have jobs they want, in the community alongside their non-disabled co-workers, with living wages and benefits.

Advocate for facility-based day programs and sheltered workshops for people with developmental disabilities to be phased out so that Maryland stops using public funds to support work in segregated settings and settings that pay less than minimum wage. Concurrently, advocate for policies and services that providing meaningful alternatives that are more integrated and have adequate funding and staff support.

Support implementation of Maryland's Employment First policy so that paid employment is the first option considered for all people with developmental disabilities.

Empowerment, Leadership & Advocacy

Support people with developmental disabilities to advocate for themselves and others, develop leadership skills, exercise choice and control over their lives, and play a meaningful role in the development of public policies, programs and services that affect them.

Healthcare

Advocate to ensure state health care policies and services, including habilitative services, adequately address the needs of people with developmental disabilities.

Housing

Advocate for and support policies, programs and funding that result in more rental housing options that are accessible and affordable to people with developmental disabilities who have low incomes. Support the establishment of innovative housing options that are fully integrated in the general community.

Transportation

Advocate for policies and funding that increase the availability of reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation.

Civil Rights

Support and advocate for laws that guarantee people with developmental disabilities the same rights afforded all other Marylanders.

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council is a public policy organization established through the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The Maryland DD Council advocates and supports the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. This role includes informing policymakers about the impact of legislation and budget decisions on people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Issues are listed in random order. This document is available in alternate formats.