



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

**2027-2031
State Plan Overview**



Who We Are

The **Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council** (Council) has been creating change to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities since 1971. We focus on children, family, and adult issues.

Our Vision: People with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together.

Our Mission: Create change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need.

The Council is located within state government, but we are independent. People with developmental disabilities and family members of people with developmental disabilities lead our work.

The Council's funding comes from the federal government. We use our funding on the activities outlined in our State Plan. Council staff, members, and grantees complete our work.



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

5-Year State Plan

Every 5 years the Council develops a plan that guides our work. This is called our State Plan. The Council's State Plan includes our most important goals and how we will accomplish them.

Our work is guided by a federal law called the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. This law is better known as the DD Act.

To identify the most important issues and what needs to change, the Council:

- Gets input from a lot of different people. This includes people with developmental disabilities, family members, state agencies, advocates, service providers, community members, and others. We do this through surveys, meetings, and focus groups.
- Gathers information and data from reports and other sources.
- Thinks about all the information to decide where change needs to happen and where the Council can make a difference.
- Decides how to use our staff time.
- Decides what activities we will fund for other organizations and groups to carry out.

The Council sets goals for the next 5 years after reviewing all of the public input and research. Our State Plan also includes the activities we will work on to reach our goals. The State Plan is like a roadmap we follow to get where we want to be. It shows how we will create change that improves people's lives.

This State Plan covers October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2031.

State Plan Goals

The Council's goals for the 2027-2031 State Plan are:

Goal 1

Children with developmental disabilities and their families have access to early supports, quality education, and services that prepare them for success in school and adulthood.

Goal 2

Adults with developmental disabilities have employment, housing, and transportation options so they can live, work, and be a part of their communities.

Goal 3

People with developmental disabilities have the services, supports, and opportunities they need to live well in their communities.

Goal 4

People with developmental disabilities and families are leaders, advocates, and informed decision-makers.

These goals support the Council's vision and mission.

The chart on the following pages outlines the goals, objectives, and activities the Council will work on.

- **Goals:** The big picture of what the Council wants to accomplish over time.
- **Objectives:** Clear steps that help the Council reach each goal. They show progress along the way.
- **Activities:** The actions the Council takes to meet each objective. These are the "to-dos."
- **Outcomes:** The changes or results that happen because of the Council's work. They show the real-world impact.



Goal 1

Children with developmental disabilities and their families have access to early supports, quality education, and services that prepare them for success in school and adulthood.

Objectives

Strategies

1.1 Increase the number of families who understand and use early intervention services and community supports that help children with disabilities take part in everyday activities with other children.

- a. Fund organizations to provide information, resources, and training to families about the benefits of early intervention, inclusion, and high expectations, and where to find support.
- b. Fund and support organizations to educate healthcare professionals on recognizing developmental delays early and referring families to supports and services.

1.2 Improve access to early care and education for children with developmental disabilities, including those in rural areas.

- a. Improve the ability of families, child care programs, and other community programs to support children with disabilities by providing information, training, and resources.
- b. Advocate for incentives to increase access to child care, early childhood education, and out-of-school time programs in rural areas.*
** Incentives are policies, funding, and other supports that help programs start, stay open, and meet the needs of children with developmental disabilities.*
- c. Advocate for full-day, publicly funded pre-K programs where children with and without disabilities learn together.

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- d. Fund technical assistance for licensed child care providers, out-of-school time programs, and pre-K teachers to help them better support children with disabilities. Advocate for the MSDE to use more funds to do the same.
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1.3 Improve how students with developmental disabilities are educated and prepared for life after high school.

- a. Advocate for statewide teacher preparation and professional development requirements that support inclusive education.*
** Inclusive education means all students learn together, with the support they need to succeed.*
- b. Support training for teachers and school staff that improves their ability to teach and support students with disabilities in general education classrooms.
- c. Advocate for and support improvements to policies and programs that prepare students with disabilities for life after high school.
- d. Partner with schools and agencies to provide information and training to students with developmental disabilities and their families about options after high school.
- e. Support efforts to expand inclusive higher education opportunities at more colleges and universities across Maryland.

Result: Families understand their options and can find and use early supports. Schools and related programs are better prepared to meet students' needs. Children with developmental disabilities get the support and education they need to succeed and leave high school with clear paths to work, higher education, and adult life.

Goal 2

Adults with developmental disabilities have employment, housing, and transportation options so they can live, work, and be a part of their communities.

Objectives

2.1 Increase employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

Strategies

- a. Partner with organizations to help businesses change their policies and practices so more people with disabilities get and keep jobs.
- b. Support training and outreach to help businesses understand the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, and how to customize employment and address challenges.*
** Customized employment means shaping a job around a person's strengths and the needs of the employer.*
- c. Help people with disabilities find and keep jobs or start and grow their own businesses by providing training, mentoring, and information about new tools.
- d. Provide information to families, educators, service coordinators, and providers to increase awareness and understanding of employment options where people with and without disabilities work together.
- e. Fund training on how to keep needed public benefits while working.
- f. Help state agencies improve how they work together so people with developmental disabilities and their families get early, accurate information about employment.

2.2 Increase access to affordable, accessible housing and transportation.

- a. Work with state and local agencies to make sure their policies and practices address the needs of people with disabilities.
- b. Advocate for policies and incentives that encourage developers to build affordable, accessible housing where people with and without disabilities live together.*
** Incentives lower costs and make it easier to build this kind of housing.*
- c. Share information and support training for people with developmental disabilities, families, coordinators of community services, and others about housing options.
- d. Advocate for policies that expand transportation options statewide and address transportation gaps for people with developmental disabilities, especially in rural areas.

Result: Adults with developmental disabilities get and keep good jobs, affordable housing that meets their needs, and reliable transportation so they can participate fully in their communities.

Goal 3

People with developmental disabilities have the services, supports, and opportunities they need to live well in their communities.

Objectives

Strategies

3.1 Increase the number of children and adults with developmental disabilities who receive the home and community supports they need and want.

- a. Advocate for funding and policy changes that reduce waitlists for the Developmental Disabilities and Autism Waivers.
- b. Advocate for policy, practice, and program changes that support people with DD to live the lives they want with the support they need.
- c. Provide information to people with developmental disabilities and their families about local and state services and programs.
- d. Fund projects that help people with disabilities get and keep technology so they can work, use telehealth, and rely less on support services.

3.2 Increase the availability and quality of community-based supports for people with developmental disabilities by strengthening the direct support workforce.

- a. Work with partners to fund and support training for direct support professionals (DSPs) and coordinators of community services (CCSs).
- b. Advocate for incentives to increase the number of DSPs in rural communities.*
** Incentives are things like higher pay, bonuses, or other supports to encourage more DSPs to work in rural communities.*

3.3 Improve access to medical, dental, behavioral, and reproductive healthcare for people with developmental disabilities.

- a. Advocate for medical, dental, behavioral, and reproductive healthcare policies and services that meet the needs of children and adults with developmental disabilities.
- b. Advocate for increased access to telehealth and dental care in rural communities.
- c. Advocate for incentives to increase the number of medical, dental, and behavioral health professionals in rural communities.*
** Incentives are things like higher pay, student loan repayment, and help with housing or moving costs.*
- d. Advocate for and support colleges and universities to train healthcare professionals to effectively treat and communicate with people with developmental disabilities.

3.4 Increase opportunities for recreation and community connections for children and adults with developmental disabilities.*

** Community connection means having relationships and being a part of the community.*

- a. Help communities increase the number of recreation spaces, including playgrounds that can be used by people with and without disabilities.
- b. Advocate for policies and programs that help people connect with others and feel part of their communities to reduce social isolation.*
** Social isolation means having little or no regular contact with other people and few chances to take part in community life.*
- c. Use social media to inform people about in-person and virtual recreation opportunities.

3.5 Improve safety for people with developmental disabilities by reducing risks in the community.

- a. Advocate for policies, practices, guidance, and laws that improve water safety and reduce wandering and elopement for people with DD.
- b. Support training for first responders on how to communicate with and treat people with disabilities.*
** First responders are police, paramedics, firefighters, people who work in emergency rooms, and others.*

Result: People with developmental disabilities have what they need to live and thrive in their communities. Community supports and services work well and are available when people need them, resulting in better health, safety, and day-to-day support.

Goal 4

People with developmental disabilities and families are leaders, advocates, and informed decision-makers.

Objectives

Strategies

4.1 Increase opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to be effective advocates and leaders.

- a. Support a statewide self-advocacy group.
- b. Support and expand participation of people with DD in cross-disability and culturally diverse leadership coalitions.*
** Cross-disability and culturally diverse leadership coalitions are groups of people with different disabilities and from different backgrounds who work together on shared issues.*
- c. Support self-advocacy groups to recruit, train, and engage younger people, including high school students.

4.2 Prepare and support people with developmental disabilities and families to take part in advocacy and leadership activities.

- a. Fund a leadership development program for people with developmental disabilities and families. This includes people with DD as trainers.
- b. Work with partners to involve more families, especially families of transitioning youth, in advocacy activities.
- c. Build a statewide network that connects leadership program graduates with organizations looking for board members, staff, or volunteers.
- d. Support and fund activities that help more people with developmental disabilities and families in rural areas take part in advocacy.

4.3 Increase the number of people with developmental disabilities and families that receive information in ways that are easy to understand.

- a. Provide Council resources in multiple languages and plain language.
- b. Use Council funds to help other agencies and organizations translate their resources into plain language and different languages.
- c. Advocate for state agencies to provide their resources in multiple languages and plain language.

Result: People with developmental disabilities and their families influence decisions that affect their lives because they have the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to lead, advocate, and make informed choices.