



Under contract to the Partnerships in Employment Technical Assistance Center at the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston



**Investing in Our Future: Youth, Employment and Post-Secondary
Opportunities
The Experiences of Developmental Disabilities Councils
Report Prepared for the Partnerships in Employment Project
2012**

Content is supported, in part, by cooperative agreement #9090DN0290 from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The opinions herein are those of the grantee and do not necessarily reflect those of the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

Summary

The purpose of this report was to collect information about advocacy, capacity building, and systems change activities by state developmental disabilities councils (DD councils) specific to employment of youth with developmental disabilities and post-secondary education opportunities for youth with developmental disabilities.

DD Council survey and report analysis of the FY 2011 Annual Program Performance Report (APPR) and 2012–2016 five-year state plans were conducted to gather information regarding involvement, outcomes, collaborations, and priorities at the state level for DD Councils. DD Councils exist in 50 US states, five US territories, and the District of Columbia (Appendix A). They are authorized under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (the DD Act) and administered by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

The general provision of the DD Act provides DD Councils with guidance on roles and responsibilities; however, each state/territory DD Council is given flexibility and autonomy to develop strategic five-year plans to address the unmet and underserved needs of people with developmental disabilities through advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change activities. DD Councils ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families are included in the design of needed community services and individualized supports, and that they have full access to those services and supports.

DD Councils provide a venue for state agency leaders, community non-profit leaders, self-advocates, parent advocates, and guardian advocates to listen to each other and provide leadership and guidance to states and territories on issues, services, and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Activities of DD Councils promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion in all aspects of community life.

Employment of Youth with Developmental Disabilities

DD Council results to survey questions indicated their responsiveness to the ongoing need to improve employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities. 100% of DD Councils reporting indicated they have activities/initiatives designed to address employment of youth with developmental disabilities. This represents an increase as 10% of DD Councils reporting indicated for the previous five years they had no activity/initiative on employment for youth with developmental disabilities. Increased activity was noted for all categories related to employment of youth with developmental disabilities. Specific categories were: (a) dedication of internal staff; (b) membership in a statewide collaborative group addressing employment for youth with disabilities; (c) provision of funding of initiatives related to employment for youth with developmental disabilities.

Regarding youth employment initiatives, 45% of DD Councils dedicated internal staff time towards youth employment for the previous five years (FY 2007–2011). For 2012–2016, 57% of DD Councils have dedicated internal staff time on the issue. This represents an increase of 12%.

69% of DD Councils reported that they were a member of a statewide collaborative group for the previous five years (2007–2011). 83% of DD Councils reported that they are currently a member of a statewide collaborative group addressing employment for youth with developmental disabilities. This represents an increase of 14%.

DD Councils provide funding to outside entities to assist them in reaching the goals and objectives in a DD Council’s five-year strategic plan. From 2007–2011, 69% of DD Councils reported they funded a project specific to employment of youth with developmental disabilities. 83% of DD Councils report they have funding initiatives planned for the current five-year plan (2012–2016). This represents an increase of 14%.

Post-Secondary Education for Youth with Developmental Disabilities

DD Council results from its survey survey indicated involvement and activity in the area of post-secondary education for youth with developmental disabilities. Categories included: (a) dedication of internal staff; (b) membership in a statewide collaborative group addressing post-secondary education for youth with disabilities; (c) provision of funding of initiatives related to post-secondary education for youth with developmental disabilities. Results for these categories varied. However, increases were noted in the areas of funding for initiatives and dedicated internal staff time. A small decrease was noted in being a member of a statewide collaborative group addressing post-secondary education (2% decrease).

39% of DD Councils reported dedicated internal staff time on post-secondary education for youth with developmental disabilities for 2007–2011. 45% of DD Councils have dedicated internal staff time to post-secondary efforts for 2012–2016. This represents an increase of 5%.

57% of DD Councils reported being a member of a statewide collaborative group addressing post-secondary opportunities for youth with developmental disabilities for all or part of the period from 2007–2011. 55% of DD Councils indicated they are currently members of a stateside collaborative group. This represents a decrease of 2%.

39% of DD Councils reported they funded a project/activity or initiative during the 2007–2011 period. 52% of DD Councils indicated they have plans to fund a project/initiative related to post-secondary education during the 2012–2016 period. This represents an increase of 13%.

An additional data element indicated 21% of DD Councils reporting they had no activity in the area of post-secondary education for youth with developmental disabilities for 2007–2011. Seventeen percent of DD Councils reported no activity planned for post-secondary education initiatives for 2012–2016. This represents a slight increase (4%) in the number of DD Councils becoming involved in the issue of post-secondary education for youth with developmental disabilities.

Background

DD Councils exist in each state and territory and are authorized under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, PL 106-402 (DD Act). The intent of the DD Act is to improve the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through planning and building system capacity and competence; providing for protections of their individual and civil rights; and establishing centers focused on research, training, and knowledge dissemination. DD Councils are authorized under Part B of the DD Act to develop and implement a statewide plan to address identified priorities important to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. DD Councils work to increase the independence, productivity, inclusion, and integration of people with developmental disabilities into the community through advocacy, capacity building, and systemic change activities.

DD Councils are designed to provide leadership within a state or territory. DD Council members are appointed by the Governor and include people with developmental disabilities (self-advocates), parents of individuals with developmental disabilities (parent advocates), guardians of people with developmental disabilities (guardian advocates), non-profit leaders concerned with services for people with developmental disabilities, state agency leaders in decision making roles, Developmental Disabilities Network partners, and other organizations or agencies deemed necessary by a governor.

DD Councils are unique because they are established at the state level with a federal mandate to change state systems. Other federal laws create councils and commissions, but they are part of a larger “service” law. For example, IDEA, the Rehabilitation Act, etc., and these groups mostly serve as advisory. Federal dollars give flexibility to DD Councils so they can learn about new approaches, promising practices, and best practices. DD Councils operate with a federal law and have funding to address issues specific to each state/territory. The following information was reported by the identified DD Councils in FY 2011.

DD Council funding is determined through a formula grant process. Funding allocations range from minimum allotment to large allotment (\$248,845–\$6,904,064 in FY 2012). Grants to DD Councils are administered by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD), Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The DD Act (42 USC 15004, Sections 104 and 105) provides guidance regarding accountability.

In the spring of 2012, AIDD provided three million dollars in funding for employment initiatives to improve collaboration in states by creating formal partnerships to promote system change efforts. These efforts should result in the development of policies that support competitive employment in integrated settings for youth and adults with developmental disabilities. Post-secondary activities contribute to successful competitive employment and therefore will also be included in this report.

Method

For the purposes of this report, 29 DD Councils (53%) provided information through a survey to illustrate the initiatives and activities conducted by DD Councils on the topic of employment and post-secondary opportunities for youth with developmental disabilities.

In addition, 100% of Annual Program Performance Reports (APPR) for FY 2011 were reviewed and analyzed to determine initiatives and outcomes for youth employment and post-secondary activities.

Finally, FY 2012–2016 five-year state plans were reviewed for the purpose of gauging upcoming work in the areas of youth employment and post-secondary opportunities for youth with developmental disabilities.

Results

DD Councils are provided with federal funding to address emerging trends and issues important to people with developmental disabilities. As best and promising practices are identified throughout the country, DD Councils can invest in projects and initiatives that will impact the services and supports systems in their state/territory. The ultimate outcome for a DD Council is to effect systemic change with regard to goals and objectives as identified by DD Council members within the specific state/territory. For this report, the outcomes specific to youth employment and post-secondary opportunities are outlined by DD Councils' reported areas of emphasis including: advocacy, capacity building, systems change, partnerships, policy collaborations, and related APPRs.

Advocacy

Each state and territory DD Council must have a goal for each year of their strategic plan that includes supporting people with developmental disabilities who are considered leaders to provide training to individuals with developmental disabilities who may become leaders. As a result, many DD Councils include youth with developmental disabilities in self-advocacy and leadership training programs and projects.

A number of DD Councils provide funding and/or sponsor the Youth Leadership Forum program. The YLF program seeks to empower high school juniors and seniors with disabilities to further develop their leadership skills. Students, serving as delegates from communities throughout the state, participate in a wide range of activities and learning experiences during a four-day YLF set on a university campus.

The YLF curriculum includes training and development of individual career and life-goals, leadership skills, social skills, and self-esteem. Delegates benefit from sharing the experience of an energetic and socially rich environment with other delegates, distinguished guests, mentors, and highly motivated volunteer staff.

Virginia, Oklahoma, Maryland, California, Washington, Montana, Tennessee, Florida, Idaho, New Jersey, and Wyoming are among the DD Councils that support YLF programs in their state.

Advocacy Activity Snapshot

One example of a promising practice in the area of leadership and advocacy training is the Enhanced Person Centered Planning Project supported by the **Colorado** DD Council. This project builds and expands upon existing person-centered planning efforts with young adults with developmental disabilities. The targeted ages range from 18–30 years and represent a broad range of ethnic, cultural, and geographic diversity in Colorado.

The **Delaware** DD Council supports an inclusive leadership and advocacy training program, Junior Partners, which is modeled after the Partners in Policymaking™ program. Twenty high school students have opportunities to improve personal self-advocacy skills and use their skills to inform and educate policymakers on key disabilities issues.

Capacity Building

A key element of DD Council work is centered on capacity building. DD Councils engage in wide variety of activities that are designed to increase the skills, infrastructure, and resources of individuals, organizations, and communities.

Training and education activities for youth with developmental disabilities and their families were prevalent, as well as partnerships with school districts. Principles of self-determination were a foundation for training and education activities and demonstrated the priority that youth with developmental disabilities should be in the “driver’s seat” with regard to their future. The information and education shared centered on increasing self-advocacy skills, decision making, and future goals.

The majority of reporting DD Councils indicated activity related to transition from school to adulthood, including community employment and continued education and skill building. Transition toolkits, information guides, websites, and other informational materials and workshops were sponsored to help youth with developmental disabilities and their families to navigate the transition to adult life. **Mississippi, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Arkansas, Idaho, the District of Columbia, and American Samoa** are a few of the DD Councils that reported investments in capacity building for youth with developmental disabilities and their families.

The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a unique, business-led, one-year, school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and relevant job-skills training through strategically designed internships. During FY 2011, 10 DD Councils reported being active in or providing funding to establish or expand Project SEARCH sites in their states. **Alaska, Arizona, California, Delaware, Georgia, Kansas, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, and Tennessee** were among those DD Councils. However, it is important to note that over the years, DD Councils have been involved in the replication efforts of Project

SEARCH in their states. **Pennsylvania, Texas, Nebraska, District of Columbia, Indiana, Virginia, Wisconsin, Oregon, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Florida, Colorado, Arkansas, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Washington State** have been active in Project SEARCH efforts.

Several DD Councils sponsor disability mentoring days and other mentoring projects specifically for youth with developmental disabilities. DD Councils taking the lead in sponsoring internships include the **District of Columbia, Idaho, Indiana New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Texas.**

A number of activities and initiatives will continue and new activities are planned for the FY 2012–2016 period. A few of the activities planned by DD Councils include: **Alaska** (Transitions Outcomes Project), **Connecticut** (transition project Using MAPS, PATH, and Circles of Support), **District of Columbia** (Summer Youth Employment Program), **Guam** (transition guide and advocacy initiatives to improve transition to jobs), **Florida** (Discovering Personal Genius, Project Discover, and Project Achieve), **Indiana** (improving high school transition programs), **Massachusetts** (self-advocacy leadership series for youth, transition specialist licensure program, portfolio development program), **Nebraska** (funding pilot projects to improve employment outcomes for youth), and **Puerto Rico** (job fairs, YLF, and pilot projects for school-to-work transition).

Capacity Building Activity Snapshot

What's Next? is a transition program for youth supported by the **Alabama** DD Council. This program provided training on Social Security, Medicaid waivers, self-care, navigating an adult medical home, and writing powerful transition Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

The **California** DD Council, including the staff and offices of the Council's 13 area board locations, provided presentations and trainings to agencies and school districts regarding employment and transition programs for people with developmental disabilities and their families in both English and Spanish.

The **Florida** DD Council hosts the FYI Transition website that provides information and education about a wide array of issues and topics facing youth who are transitioning to jobs, the community and post-secondary education options.

The **Hawaii** DD Council is a major coordinator in the Maui Big MAC (Moving Across Community) transition event for students with IEPs in Grade 9 and up. The event provides information to students in high school and their parents about transition planning and services available after high school. This event is a model for other school districts and is being considered to be replicated statewide. It is a collaborative effort by the Hawaii DD Council, Maui DD Committee, Department of Education-Maui District, Community Children's Council of Maui, Department of Human Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Best Buddies, Easter Seals Hawaii, Hawaii Families as Allies, Hawaii Medicaid Infrastructure Grant, Hilopa'a Family to Family Health Information Center, University of Hawaii Center on Disability Studies, and VSA Arts of Hawaii-Pacific.

The **Ohio** DD Council initiated the Transition to Inner City Youth Project, which provides information and training to inner city youth and their families on transition planning, vocational training, and post-secondary education opportunities that will lead to jobs.

The **Nevada** DD Council supports individualized capacity building events held in the summer for youth with developmental disabilities. The Job Readiness Summer Camp provides students on-the-job training in a variety of professions. Local businesses provide supports through community-based career exploration and job training. The CRAVE Summer Camp is a week long and uses VISTA volunteers. The focus is on employment and higher education; how to find job opportunities, dress appropriately, and interview; how to write resumes and participate in mock interviews; expectations in higher education; how to choose a major; professor relationships, etc. The goal of both activities is to build the career-seeking competence of the young person.

The **New Hampshire** DD Council hosts a Student Job Fair and provides education and training through the Transitioning Youth to Independent Living program.

The **New York** DD Council funded Project NOW (No Opportunity Wasted) in two New York rural counties. Project NOW is based on the Project SEARCH model and provides students with a fully inclusive, real work environment.

The **North Dakota** DD Council supported the Transition Age Work Experience Project, which provided vocational support services (job coaching and job placement) for high school students ages 16–21.

The Peer Power Program is supported by the **Wisconsin** Board. Peer Power is designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of students with developmental disabilities so that they can take the lead in transition planning for their lives after high school.

The **Vermont** Council provided funding for the Youth Employment Specialist (YES) Project. The YES Project supports youth with autism and other disabilities that are not eligible for services in job placements.

The **Georgia** Council on DD assisted in organizing a statewide Project SEARCH initiative that arranges for technical assistance and training for teams that would like to have Project SEARCH in their community. There are currently 14 Project SEARCH sites across the state, with two others scheduled to begin in FY 2011. The network of people from Project SEARCH sites around the state meet quarterly to share ideas, problem solve, gather data, and receive training.

Systems Change Activity Snapshot

The **Alabama** DD Council provided funding for the demonstration of a new approach to providing employment services. The Jobs for All Utilizing Customized Employment established a new service delivery system that provided a wraparound delivery approach to employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. This was a collaborative effort between the Alabama Department of Mental Health, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, and

Alabama APSE. Customized employment services continue, and initiatives to expand use of Medicaid Waiver funding for supported employment are in process.

The **Georgia** DD Council has supported the Employment First Georgia Initiative, which has trained individuals around the state in the Discovery Vocational Profile. It has also worked with VR to certify those individuals as employment specialists and qualified assessors in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, so that they can be paid by VR to do profiles. The pilot specifically targets youth with significant disabilities between the ages of 16 and 25 who would be likely to be unemployed or who have been deemed “too disabled to work.” There are waivers that can fund the continued supports post-VR. This pilot project, called Discovering Jobs, served 10 young people during the 2011–2012 school year.

The **West Virginia** DD Council supports the STEP (School Transition to Employment) Project. The STEP Project promoted using teachers and other school personnel to become WV Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) vendors as supported employment specialists. This allows them to be reimbursed for working with students off school grounds and off school hours in job development activities. In addition, they work with students during the summer and after graduation to explore employment opportunities. The project has sustained funding from WV DRS and is a good fit for school districts that do not have work exploration programs.

Also in **West Virginia**, the DD Council’s Career and Technical Education Pilot Project is demonstrating that students with developmental disabilities can receive certificates and gain skills necessary for valued employment. This project increases access to and participation by students with developmental disabilities into community technical education programs by implementing a new model of programming and support, the Individualized Occupational Certificate. The VSI Project, in cooperation with the West Virginia Department of Education, develops pilot programs that are competency-based to meet industry standards. These programs are also flexible academically, person-centered, and focused on specific skills acquisition necessary for entry-level employment.

The **Virginia** Board for People with Disabilities (DD Council) funded a project called Using 21st Technology and Skills to Promote Employment Success. Using the research-based framework of Universal Design for Learning, the project demonstrated how the melding of career assessment and effective instructional strategies, coupled with digital technologies and social media, can be used to break down barriers to employment opportunities. This project piloted the use of technology to assist youth with significant disabilities in assessing career aptitudes and in overcoming barriers to employment. It coupled use of iPads, iPods, and cell phones, along with social media and mentors, to provide eight students with the supports needed for successful employment experiences in careers of their choosing. The tool created, Expanding Career Options through Universal Design Learning, blended career education and universal design for learning. Eight students interned with eight employers that provided vocational supports. Additionally, two businesses (Booz Hamilton & Datatel) provided mentors to four of the participants.

DD Councils used a variety of strategies to reach outcomes and achieve results. Fundamental elements of their work include partnerships and collaborations with others. Because councils

occupy a leadership role in states and territories, they are in an excellent position to act as advisor, negotiator, and capacity builder. Ultimate outcomes for council work involve policy: creating, improving, or removing policies related to a specific area. The following information provides illustration of Councils' activities.

Partnerships

DD Councils provide leadership and advice on a number of statewide workgroups, coalitions, foundations, boards, councils, and committees, many specific to employment. When reporting, 69% of DD Councils indicated they were a member of a statewide collaborative group in the past. One prominent partnership for many DD Councils is with the Alliance for Full Participation (AFP). AFP is a formal partnership of leading developmental disabilities organizations with a common vision to create a better and more fulfilling quality of life for people with developmental disabilities. During FY 2011, DD Councils such as **Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Kansas, North Carolina, Nebraska, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee** and **Utah** reported coordinating, funding, and/or leading AFP teams as they worked towards meaningful employment in integrated settings.

Partnerships Activity Snapshot

The **Georgia** Council on DD hosts the Statewide Transition Steering Committee that has been meeting on a quarterly basis for the past eight years to discuss policy that affects the transitioning student.

The **Iowa** DD Council is a member of a Memorandum of Agreement between seven state agencies to strengthen employment outcomes for Iowans with disabilities. The DD Council is a member of the governing board and provides fiscal literacy training for the Iowa Able Foundation, a flexible loan program for Iowans with disabilities to procure loans for assistive technology, work-related expenses, and self-employment.

The **Illinois** DD Council provides leadership within the Governor's Employment and Economic Opportunity Task Force.

Kentucky DD Council is a member of the Vocational Rehabilitation Interagency Coordinating Council.

The **Louisiana** DD Council provides leadership and representation on the LA APSE Board, the LA Rehabilitation Council, the Work Pay\$ Coalition, and the Employment First Work Group.

The **Massachusetts** DD Council serves on the Employment Now Coalition.

The **Maine** DD Council is a member of the Commission on Disability and Employment.

The **New Hampshire** DD Council is a member of the Developmental Services Quality Council/Critical Employment Initiative.

Policy and Collaboration

DD Councils engage in a wide variety of collaborative activities related to policies to advance the positions of people with developmental disabilities and their families. DD Councils have members who use services and supports as well as members who are charged with providing the services and supports. In short, DD Councils are in an excellent position to advise others about service system design and re-design, or to influence the creation of services and supports that are individualized and promote independence, productivity, inclusion, and integration.

As of spring 2012, 31 states have policies and/or initiatives related to Employment First policy. DD Councils have been involved in these activities by providing leadership, education, and advocacy; participating in advisory or policy workgroups; and adopting position statements that include the support of Employment First. According to the Office of Disability Employment Policy, Employment First is a concept to facilitate the full inclusion of people with the most significant disabilities in the workplace and community. Under the Employment First approach, community-based, integrated employment is the first option for employment services for youth and adults with significant disabilities.

In FY 2011, 18 DD Councils reported outcomes connected to creating, advocating for, and adopting Employment First policies in their states. State DD Councils such as **California, Kansas, Massachusetts, Washington, Oregon, and Tennessee** have actively provided leadership and engaged in collaborative efforts to bring Employment First policies forward. 12 DD Councils have included Employment First initiatives in their FY 2012–2016 strategic plans; an increased level of staff participation was reported by DD Councils.

Regarding other collaborative efforts around policy, DD Councils have been very involved in their state's their Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG). According to the Clearinghouse for Home and Community Based Services, Section 203 of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 directs the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to establish the MIG program. Funding for this program is intended to facilitate enhancements to state Medicaid programs and services, to promote linkages between Medicaid and other employment-related service agencies, and to develop a comprehensive system of employment supports for people with disabilities.

Policy and Collaboration Snapshot

Connecticut DD Council staff has increased participation on committees and work groups with Connecticut's Connect-Ability Medicaid Infrastructure Grant.

Hawaii DD Council's Employment & Education Committee members continued to participate and serve on advisory committees for the MIG.

Louisiana DD Council staff is actively involved in the MIG Employment Strategic Plan High Level Leadership Council.

Maine DD Council staff continues to participate as a member of the Commission on Disability and Employment (CDE). CDE activities include oversight of MIG employment options (including training and outreach).

Texas DD Council staff participated in the Department of Assistive & Rehabilitative Services' MIG committee meetings to identify best practices in employment activities and to provide input on employment-related policy activities. Staff assisted the committee to create a mission statement and goals for the final year, and met with the MIG administrator to discuss future directions and potential collaborative efforts.

New Hampshire DD Council has been involved in the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) known as the Granite State Employment Project, modeled after the recent council-administered Transition Realignment Project. This progression of employment initiatives has improved the planning and coordination needed for students to successfully transition from high school into an integrated, consumer-driven, and outcome-based employment system. The project supported outreach, trainings for people with disabilities and families, job fairs, job shadowing, coaching, and internships. In part as a result of the council effort in NH, employment enrollment over the past year increased by 13% and, over the past five years, by 33%.

In **Nevada**, Medicaid received a MIG for \$750,000 to assist people with disabilities in community employment (a \$250,000 increase over the previous year). With the reduction in state staff due to the economic crisis, Medicaid was unable to administer a grant process to fund community projects. The Nevada DD Council partnered with Medicaid to use the DD Council and its staff to administer these grants. Therefore, the council was able to expand its efforts in the employment area of emphasis, and assisted Medicaid in retention and continued funding of MIG. The results from the Employment Policy Summit set the criteria for the community grants requested through the final year of the MIG funding.

The **Rhode Island** DD Council continued work funded under a MIG to finalize and implement an innovative newly developed Financial Education Curriculum called That's Money in The Bank! This was a four-part series for adults with developmental disabilities. Two sessions were held in which 22 self-advocates were educated about banking, saving, working, and managing money to improve their financial futures. The DD Council also continued work under another MIG-funded collaborative grant to assist four people with disabilities to open/enhance their individual businesses through improved business planning and development, marketing, and media publicity. The council collaborated with three developmental disability adult provider agencies and received additional MIG funds to establish a new statewide employment supports model for 10–15 adults with disabilities.

Post-Secondary Opportunities for Youth with Developmental Disabilities

DD Councils have the latitude and flexibility to work in a number of emphasis areas. One area of emphasis is education. A specific annual program performance report measure is “post-

secondary institutions improved inclusive education.” During FY 2011, 17 DD Councils reported activities and outcomes connected to post-secondary opportunities. The following information highlights DD Council work in this area.

Think College is a national initiative that reflects collaboration of key organizations, individuals, and families working together to improve opportunities for post-secondary education for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. DD Councils across the nation are active participants on planning bodies to improve post-secondary opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. Currently, DD Councils in **Georgia, Idaho, and Illinois** have a goal to address post-secondary education. DD Councils in **Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, New York, North Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming** provide leadership and representation on behalf of students with developmental disabilities and their families related to post-secondary education.

Demonstration of innovative ideas is a strategy DD Councils use to accomplish systems change. Through demonstration, DD Councils have the opportunity to show others how an innovative idea can impact the way services and supports are provided, as well as impacting policies that govern services and supports.

An example of replication is provided by the **Oklahoma** DD Council. The council created the Tech-NOW program, which promotes the exploration of post-secondary education and careers related to technology. The Tech-NOW curriculum includes classroom instruction, field trips to local technology-related business, mentorship opportunities from local business leaders, and computer project competitions. Students participating in the program are eligible for scholarships and cash awards provided by local businesses. The Oklahoma DD Council initially funded six school sites to pilot this program, and today there are 36 junior high and high school sites that use Tech-NOW. Local school districts, the state department of education, the state department of rehabilitation services, and federal grants provide continued funding for this program.

The **Kentucky** DD Council created and supports the Post-Secondary Inclusionary Partnership (PIP) contracted through the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at the University of Kentucky. This program provided support to individuals with developmental disabilities who wished to pursue education after high school. PIP has been recognized nationally as a model program for its highly individualized and pragmatic approach to continuing inclusive education for students with disabilities. As a result, the University of Kentucky has been awarded a \$2.2 million grant from the US Department of Education Office of Post-Secondary Education. The Supported Higher Education Project will develop a comprehensive system of support for students with intellectual disabilities across the state, further enhancing and expanding the work of PIP.

The **Georgia** DD Council is a key partner in the Kennesaw State University (KSU) Academy for Inclusive Learning and Social Growth. This program offers a fully inclusive two-year college experience to students with intellectual or developmental disabilities who do not meet the university requirements for admission as a degree-seeking student. Students participate in typical university courses alongside degree-seeking students and experience social integration, career exploration, and training resulting in a Certificate of Social Growth and Development. As a

result of the KSU project, students see further education as an important step toward career success.

The **Tennessee** DD Council supports the Next Steps Project at Vanderbilt University. Next Steps is a two-year non-degree college program for 18- to 26-year-old students with intellectual disabilities. The program promotes the idea that higher education can be an opportunity for all students to gain self-awareness, and that it can provide access to social networks, employment, and independence. Individual programs of study include education, social skills, and vocational training.

The **Oregon** Council on Developmental Disabilities supports groups to use person-centered planning to increase outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Post-Secondary Learning, Access and Needed Support for Students with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities, a collaboration between University of Oregon UCEDD, the Oregon DD Council, and The Arc Oregon, works with a team including students with I/DD and their families, the Oregon AIDD Network, state agencies, universities and community colleges, Oregon Association For Higher Education and Disability, family and advocacy groups, K-12 educators, and transition programs serving students 18–21 to develop a five-year plan for increasing inclusive and authentic post-secondary opportunities for students with I/DD.

The **North Carolina** DD Council supported Beyond Academics at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a sizable investment. Beyond Academics is for students with developmental disabilities. The course of study prepares students for a self-determined lifestyle emphasizing careers, meaningful avocations, and community living. Students completing requirements receive a certificate awarded by the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

The **Idaho** DD Council created a student resource, Moving On, which provides information on post-secondary education and training as well as school and community participation opportunities.

The **Georgia** DD Council is an active participant in the Georgia Inclusive Post-Secondary Education Consortium for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.

A number of activities and initiatives are planned or will continue to be supported by DD Councils related to post-secondary education opportunities for youth and young adults with developmental disabilities. Based on a review of submitted FY 2012–2016 DD Council strategic plans, the following activities provide a partial view of planned activities by DD Councils.

- The **Alaska** DD Council will initiate activity for a student loan forgiveness program.
- **Alabama** will initiate expansion of college preparation programs.
- **California** has plans to develop and expand post-secondary opportunities.
- **Connecticut** will support a student internship project.
- **Delaware** will initiate activity for a higher education project.
- **Hawaii** will support resource development for community college and post-secondary opportunities.

- **Massachusetts** will support a portfolio development project and an inclusive concurrent enrollment program.
- The **Northern Mariana Islands** will collaborate with the Northern Marianas College to expand opportunities for youth.
- **North Dakota** will support training events for post-secondary education opportunities.
- **New Hampshire** will support education, training, and support for participation in lifelong learning opportunities and post-secondary education.
- **New Mexico** will promote an array of post-secondary opportunities including four-year and community colleges. In addition, the New Mexico DD Council will establish a stakeholder group to collaborate on higher education opportunities.
- **Utah** will establish post-secondary initiatives with technical and community colleges.
- **Virginia** will explore supporting the Think College program.
- **Washington State** will promote policies so people with developmental disabilities can access vocational and technical education, secondary education, and apprenticeship programs.
- **West Virginia** will partner with the Department of Education, WV Division of Rehabilitation Service, adult basic education programs, vocational/technical schools, skilled trade organizations, and others to develop new initiatives that create greater access to employment training for students with developmental disabilities after high school.

Conclusion

DD Councils recently celebrated 40 years of authorization. People with developmental disabilities, their families, and service delivery systems in all states and territories have benefited from the work of DD Councils. This report provides insight into the important work of DD Councils specific to employment and post-secondary opportunities for youth with developmental disabilities. Through leadership, guidance, partnerships, and collaborations on issues important to people with developmental disabilities and their families, DD Councils have built capacity and changed systems. Many innovative ideas that have changed the way services and supports are provided have been supported by DD Councils. DD Councils continue to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities through advocacy, capacity building, and systems change efforts.