



Five year plan: 2021 – 2026



The Council would like to acknowledge the 2020 and 2021 members who developed the state five-year plan and thank them for their service in creating change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities.

Acknowledgments

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) would like to thank everyone who offered input in the creation of this plan. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, populations in hard-to-reach remote and rural areas where visits had been planned were instead reached through regional State Plan webinars and surveys. Video conference meetings with providers, educators, Developmental Disability Act (DD Act) partners, parents and guardians, individuals with developmental disabilities, and special-interest stakeholders (such as those with an interest in issues affecting people who are deaf or hard of hearing) took place in spring and summer 2020. Council staff listened to what people thought needed to change to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. The Council spoke with individuals with disabilities, families, providers, educators, infant learning programs and others to learn about services throughout Alaska. Thanks to everyone who spoke with us during these visits to give input. Also, thank you to the 216 people who completed our online survey.

Find the Plan Online

"Long" and "short" versions of this state plan are available online, as follows:

Full version, as submitted and approved by the federal Administration on Community Living (ACL)

Short version, simplified and updated annually

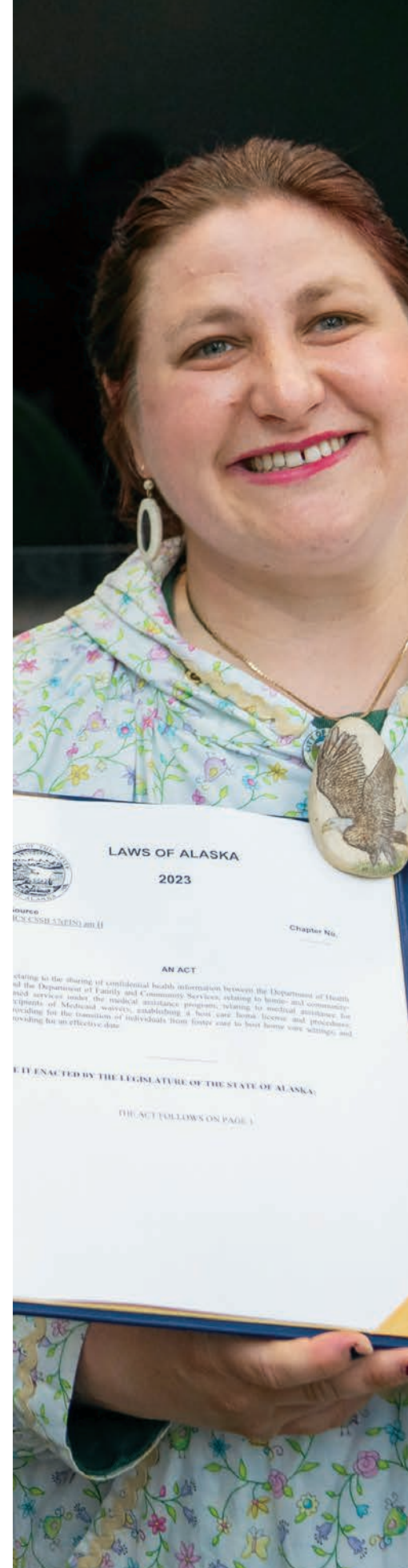




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Our Mission

To create change that improves the lives of Alaskans with disabilities.

Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision

Alaskans share a vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job and their community. Our vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state, now and into the future.

What Does the Council Do?

The Council was established in 1978 through the Alaska Legislature to meet the requirements of several state and federal laws. The Council combines the expertise and experience of many stakeholders throughout the state into one unique Council. The Council works to make systems changes in the following ways: recommending changes in statute, regulation, policy and/or procedures, building capacity and coordinating advocacy activities.

As the State Council on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), the Council works with the Alaska Division of Senior and Disabilities Services and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families receive the services they need and participate in the design of those services.

As the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), the Council advises the Department of Education and Early Development on the provision of special education and related services for children with disabilities from ages 3 through 21.





As the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities, the Council advises the state's early intervention program on the coordination and provision of quality early intervention services for children with disabilities from birth to age 3.

The Council also serves as most of the governing board for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), which provides training and consultation to Alaska school districts serving children with low-incidence disabilities.

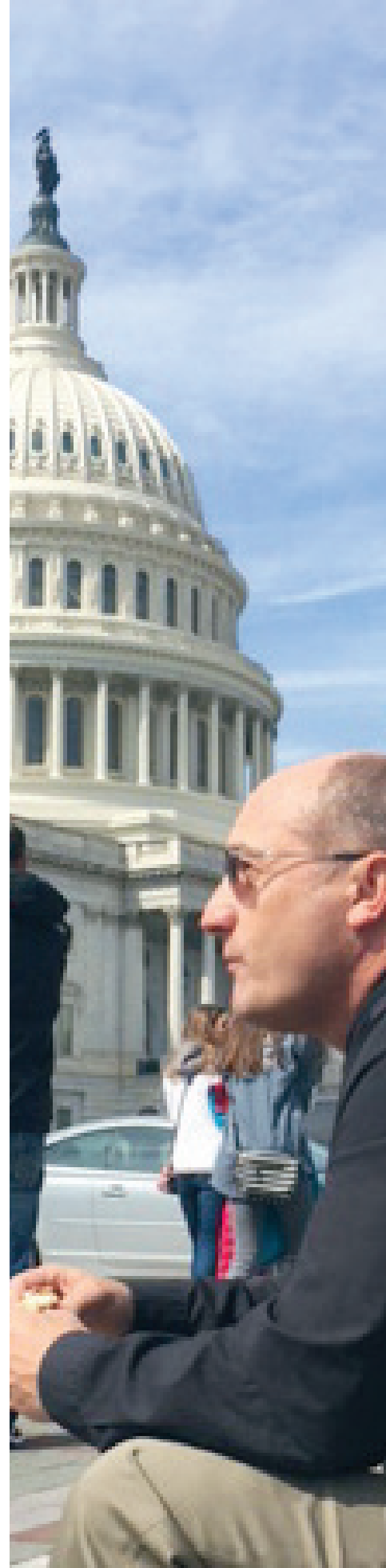
Additionally, the Council serves as a beneficiary board of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, advising the Trust on the status, conditions and needs of Alaskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Who Serves on the Council?

The Council has up to 25 members appointed by the Governor. At least 16 of the members (or 60 percent of the Council) are self-advocates, or parents or guardians of someone who has a disability. Other appointed Council members represent a partner organization or state agency required by the Council's state and federal roles. Members serve three-year terms and may apply for reappointment when their terms are up.

- Laura Allen is a special education administrator who lives in Palmer.
- Marlene Anna Attla is a self-advocate from Anchorage who grew up in Galena.
- Jena Crafton is a self-advocate who lives in Eagle River.
- Art Delaune is a parent of an adult with a disability and lives in Fairbanks.
- Donald Enoch is the Special Education Administrator at the Department of Education and Early Development and lives in Juneau.

- Margaret Evans is a self-advocate who lives in Anchorage.
- David Fleurant is the Executive Director of the Disability Law Center and lives in Chugiak.
- Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus is the parent of several children with disabilities and lives in Kiana.
- Corey Gilmore is a self-advocate who lives in Anchorage.
- Kenneth Hamrick is the Children's Behavioral Health Program Director at the UAA Center for Human Development.
- Elizabeth Joseph is a parent of a child with a disability and lives in Kongiganak.
- Heidi Lieb-Williams is a self-advocate who lives in Anchorage.
- Duane Mayes is Director of the State of Alaska's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and lives in Eagle River.
- Anthony Newman is Director of the State of Alaska's Division of Senior and Disabilities Services and lives in Juneau.
- Caitlin Poindexter is a parent of a child with a disability and lives in Anchorage.
- Sabrina Richmond is a self-advocate who lives in Juneau.
- Nona Safra is a senior and disabilities advocate who lives in Homer.
- Shelly Vendetti-Vuckovich is a parent of a child with a disability and lives in Anchorage.
- Fred Villa is a parent of a child with a disability and lives in Wasilla.
- Jennifer Zucati is a teacher and parent of a child with a disability and lives in Palmer.





Our Five-Year Plan

Why Does the Council Write a Five-Year Plan?

Every five years, the Council is asked by the federal government to write a plan. Planning helps the Council decide what it would like to accomplish. It helps the Council focus on what is most important to Alaskans with disabilities. Before writing the plan, the Council seeks feedback from Alaskan communities to find out what is important to our beneficiaries. Then the Council decides what action to take. This five-year plan describes what the Council will work on from October 2021 to September 2026. This plan is sent to the federal government's Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, which then reviews and approves the plan.

How did the Council Develop its Five-Year Plan?

The Council authorized the start of data collection for the five-year plan at the annual Winter Council Meeting held on February 4, 2020. Alaska is a state that contains broad geographic and economic regions, so efforts were made to focus on specific regions and sub-populations via community forum webinars, focused group emails, and social media sharing on regional organizations' platforms and pages. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the locations that were planned for face-to-face visits were reached instead through targeted promotions of regional State Plan webinars and surveys. This way, we were still able to gain representation from populations in hard-to-reach remote and rural areas. Videoconference meetings with providers, educators, DD Act partners, parents and guardians, individuals with developmental disabilities, and special interest stakeholders (such as those with an interest in issues affecting people who are deaf or hard of

hearing) allowed time for obtaining structured feedback and open discussion on unmet needs and existing services. There were two versions of the online survey available 24/7 on the Council's website, one in Spanish and one in English. The total number of responses from statewide outreach was 216.

Public testimony on areas of significance were also taken from Council meetings at the spring and fall 2020 meetings. At the May 2020 meeting, Council members were guided by staff through the discussion of data, barriers, unmet needs, existing services, community forum input, survey results and outcomes from the work on previous goals and objectives. During that meeting, the Council engaged in a robust discussion and exploration on considerations for establishing priorities among mandatory and optional areas of significance for the Council's work. The Council selected and ranked priority areas from among the mandatory and optional topics described in the DD Act as areas for comprehensive research and analysis (CRA). Staff prepared three models and presented them to the Executive Committee on July 3, 2020. A model was selected. A second draft was presented to the Executive Committee July 10, 2020, where additional amendments were requested. A third draft was reviewed on September 4, 2020, which resulted in a proposal to present to the full Council in the fall 2020 meeting. The Council discussed the proposed draft goals and objectives, made revisions and amendments, and approved the proposed draft on September 30, 2020.

Following the approval of the proposed draft five-Year Plan, the plan was published repeatedly throughout the required 45-day public comment period, from October 21, 2020 through December 10, 2020. There were 24 respondents to the online public comment survey. Five people submitted written comments in addition to their survey responses.





Most comments were aligned with previous community input and survey responses and thus were already integrated into the proposed five-year plan. In the February 2021 meeting, the Council reviewed the written public comments and the data collected from the online surveys. An extended discussion was had about alignment of the objectives with the priorities discussed in May 2020 and the goals and objectives approved in September 2020.

Council Accomplishments from Last Five-Year Plan Period (2016-2021)

2016

The Alaska ABLE Act (HB 188)

The Alaska ABLE Act (HB 188) was passed and signed into law establishing financial accounts for individuals with disabilities providing opportunities for increased independence and employment.

2017

Disability Training and Identification Bill (HB 16)

The Council successfully advocated for the passage of the Disability Training and Identification Bill (HB 16). This bill requires more police officer training on disabilities — especially hidden disabilities — to improve interactions between individuals with disabilities and law enforcement officials. This had been an interest of the Council for several years and was finally passed by the Alaska Legislature and signed into law.

National Disability Policy Seminar

In April, through a special grant, Trust funding, scholarships and personal funds, two Council members participated in the National Disability Policy Seminar in Washington, D.C., along with Council staff, representatives of Hope Community Resources and members of the UAA LEND

(Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities) program. Besides attending educational forums on national issues impacting persons with disabilities, the group was able to meet with Alaska's congressional delegation, discussing healthcare, special education and other topics. The Council also sent several follow-up comment letters to the Alaska congressional delegation, educating its members on potential impacts of legislation or policy changes in healthcare and special education.

Along with more than 50 other Alaskan stakeholders, the Council helped develop a robust five-year plan around Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) with the following priority areas: Prevention, Screening and Diagnosis, Early Intervention and Education, System Transformation and Navigation: Youth and Adults, and Community Outreach and Engagement. The plan has the following vision: "Through education, prevention, and provision of quality, relevant supports and services, the prevalence of (FASD) is reduced, and individuals who experience FASD and their caregivers are empowered to reach their unique and full potential."

2018

Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision Bill (SB 174)

The Council joined advocacy groups from around the state in support of the Developmental Disabilities Shared Vision Bill (SB 174). This bill placed aspirational language into statute that will provide a solid platform for how services are provided throughout the state, ensuring that individuals with developmental disabilities receive services that lead to meaningful lives, for current and future generations of Alaskans. It solidified a spirit of self-determination for individuals with developmental disabilities within the Alaskan service system. This bill passed the House and





Senate and was signed into law by Governor Walker in August 2018.

The “DD Shared Vision” states: “Alaskans share a vision of a flexible system in which each person directs their own supports, based on their strengths and abilities, toward a meaningful life in their home, their job, and their community. Our vision includes supported families, professional staff and services available throughout the state now and into the future.”

Supported Decision-Making Act (HB 336)

The Council successfully advocated for the passage of the Supported Decision-Making Act (HB 336). This bill provides equal access to decision-making for adults with disabilities by authorizing written agreements between an adult and supporters which describe a process for making life decisions; this includes decisions related to a person’s finances, where and with whom the person wants to live, the services, supports, and medical care the person wants to receive, and where the person wants to work. Supported Decision-Making Agreements would be a legal alternative to full or partial guardianship. This alternative actively engages people with disabilities in creating the decision-making structures and tools that serve their lives and autonomy. This bill formalizes a support process, describes eligible supporters, creates a blueprint for valid written agreements, and provides safeguards to protect the well-being and independence of adults with disabilities. The bill passed the House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Walker in September 2018.

\$1.96 million from Administration on Community Living

Also in September 2018, the Council was awarded a \$1.96 million dollar five-year “Living Well on the Last Frontier” federal grant by the Administration on Community Living to

develop model approaches to community monitoring and community capacity-building. The overarching goal of this project is to increase the community integration, health, safety, independence and well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities through realization of our DD Shared Vision. The grant objectives are: 1) Improve health and safety as well as independence and employment; 2) Improve workforce sustainability and training; 3) Increase leadership opportunities for self-advocates; 4) Improve rights. The Council has many partners in this grant, including: Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD), Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (the Trust), Disability Law Center of Alaska (DLC), Peer Power, Inc. (a nonprofit peer advocacy organization), Key Coalition of Alaska (a nonprofit advocacy organization), the Alaska Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS), Southeast Alaska Independent Living Center (SAIL, a nonprofit independent living center), Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development (UAA-CHD). The Council also works closely with the Alaska DD Systems Collaborative on this grant.

2019

Medicaid Advocacy & Alaska Work Matters

In 2019, the Council continued to advocate for increased Medicaid funding for Home and Community-Based Services, as well as the end of the Medicaid Waiver waitlist. The council also began advocating for “Alaska Work Matters: Employment for Individuals with Disabilities.” The Council developed and began implementing its objectives under the Living Well Grant received in late 2018. This included: the HomeMAP (Home Modifications for Aging in Place) technology/home assessments training to improve independence, safety and self-sufficiency; self-determination webinar training series as developed and





delivered to self-advocates; development and launch of a survey instrument to determine the current system's alignment with the DD Shared Vision; developing trainings regarding person-centered planning in alignment with the DD Shared Vision and on cultural and linguistic competency; and the Community Relationship Building Pilot, which developed a new service provider type called "Community Engagement Facilitators" to build natural supports for individuals with disabilities.

2020

Advocacy Efforts with Key Coalition, National recognition of Council members, Alaska Plain Language COVID-19 Toolkit, Supported Decision-Making Symposium, SDMA Guide for Service Agencies

In 2020, the Council joined with Key Coalition of Alaska to continue advocacy efforts surrounding the DD Shared Vision, Supported Decision-Making Agreements, and Home and Community-Based Services cost savings and efficiencies. Providing services in a home and community-



Members of the GCDSE and Key Coalition Alaska gather on the front steps of the Alaska Legislature, advocating for disability rights.

based setting costs about 40 percent of what it would cost to provide those same services in an institutional setting.

Council members Heidi Lieb-Williams, Sydney Kresbach, and Corey Gilmore received national recognition when they were inducted into the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) National Self-Advocate Leadership Circle. Our Council Chair, Heidi Lieb-Williams, also won the Betty Williams Champions of Equal Opportunity Award.

Year two of the Living Well grant saw the Council take meaningful steps to improve the lives of people with disabilities, including: development of the Alaska Plain Language COVID-19 Toolkit to help people with disabilities stay healthy, safe, and connected during the pandemic; hosting a Supported Decision-Making (SDM) symposium to help educate the public on SDM Agreements (SDMA) as well as development of the SDMA Guide for Service Agencies that was widely disseminated throughout the state; person-centered/directed trainings were held for direct-support professionals, built on the DD Shared Vision primary principle: “I Live the Life I Choose with the Support I Direct.”

2021

Special Education Hill Day visits (virtual), Disability Policy Seminar, Special Education Service Agency (SESA) reauthorization

In 2021, the Council successfully advocated for the reauthorization of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA). SESA is an educational services agency providing special education consultation, training and resources for school districts, families and children with low-incidence disabilities across the State, which must be financially reauthorized every 8 years by the State Legislature. The





Council once again participated in the annual Disability Policy Seminar and virtual Hill Day visits. This year the Council, in conjunction with other DD Councils across the nation, advocated for disability policies involving community living, education, ABLE, Social Security, and criminal justice. Also discussed was the importance of vaccinations for the intellectual and developmental disabilities population, especially as it related to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Council members Jena Crafton and Anna Attla were inducted into the NACDD National Self-Advocate Leadership Circle and Ms. Crafton, the Council's Vice Chair, was awarded the "April Dunn Start Your Journey Award."

Under its Living Well grant, the Council began work on the Alaska Work Matters Task Force to meaningfully embed employment-first principles throughout state government; a core topic list was created with recommendations and barriers identified based on group input during the meetings. [The Alaska Work Matters Task Force Final Report](#) was completed and presented to the Governor and cabinet-level staff in August 2022.

Council's Goals for this Five-Year Plan Period (2021-2026)

Goals

The Council's selection of goals was based on information that members gathered from meetings with individuals around the state as well as on public testimony, recommendations from Council's committees, meetings with providers, personal experiences of Council members, and duties assigned by state regulation. The Council heard many of the same issues of concern over and over, including the fact that all the challenges were exacerbated in rural and remote communities. Selected goals include community inclusion supports and services, self-advocacy and leadership, and employment.

Community Inclusion, Supports, and Services

Issues surrounding home and community-based services are always a top priority based on public input and Council members' personal experiences. With the Alaskan budget being negatively impacted by the low worldwide price of oil and inflation, work on preserving current community services and supports for Alaskans with disabilities is crucial. This area also includes the Council's early intervention and education pieces. Early intervention services and the special education system are always issues that are brought before the Council as needing improvement. Under state statute, the Council also serves as the Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities, the Special Education Advisory Panel, and the majority of the governing board for the Special Education Service Agency. The Council continues to hear about the difficulty in providing early intervention and special education services in a state with vast geography and low populations in conjunction with severe living conditions (i.e., weather, isolation, housing, etc.).





Self-Advocacy and Leadership

The Council recognizes the importance and value in growing our leaders, especially our self-advocates that experience intellectual or developmental disabilities or both. Therefore, during this plan period, there is extensive planned collaboration between the Council and its Developmental Disability Act partners, such as the Disability Law Center of Alaska, the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development (UAA-CHD), and Stone Soup Group (SSG). With support of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and grants, our partnership for leadership development also includes the Key Coalition of Alaska, Peer Power, the Alaska Association of Developmental Disabilities (AADD), and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).

Employment

The Council chose to keep employment as a separate goal area due to continued great need in this area. The Council has many projects that are employment-focused. The Council will continue to develop the Employment First Initiative, Supported Employment, Alaska ABLE program, Trust Microenterprise grant program, and Traditional Rural Skills program. The Council will also work to support Project SEARCH sites across Alaska. This goal area includes the targeted disparity area, “Traditional Transition: for Transition-aged youth (14-22).”

Unserved and Underserved Groups

Developmental Disability Councils are required to develop a goal or objective with corresponding activities that identify a sub-population where disparities exist. The Council identified unserved and underserved populations in development of the Five-Year State Plan, through feedback from: virtual community forums across the state, public testimony opportunities, and survey response. From the feedback obtained as part of this process, the Council

identified the most significant unserved/underserved groups as including rural and remote communities, youth transitioning from school to adulthood, and post-secondary transition-aged youth. Unserved and underserved populations are also referred to as targeted disparity populations. The Council plans to work towards improving services for the populations noted above across its goal areas but has a specific targeted disparity objective under goal three, employment, with respect to specific work around “Traditional Transitions.” Transition-aged youth (ages 14-22) with developmental disabilities will have increased information, education services, training, and tools that are regionally, culturally and linguistically relevant to them to increase the number of young adults in rural communities with skills for meaningful, place-based adulthood.

Self-Advocacy

The Developmental Disability Act (DD Act) requires Developmental Disability Councils to have a goal or objective to:

1. Establish or strengthen a program for the direct funding of a state self-advocacy organization led by individuals with developmental disabilities;
2. Support opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities who are considered leaders to provide leadership training to individuals with developmental disabilities who may become leaders;
3. Support and expand participation of individuals with developmental disabilities in cross-disability and culturally diverse leadership coalitions.

The Council has elevated self-advocacy from the level of objective to a goal for this five-year plan. Goal 2, Self-Advocacy and Leadership, states: People with





developmental disabilities will have increased access to education, tools, and opportunities for self-advocacy across the lifespan to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities expressing their vision for their lives in local, state and national forums.

There are two objectives within this goal

Objective 1: DD Shared Vision Implementation. People with developmental disabilities will have information on the Shared Vision and will have opportunities to actively participate in planning and implementation of the Shared Vision to increase the number of people who understand the Shared Vision and the number who live the life they choose with the supports they direct.

Objective 2: Support Self-Advocacy Organization. A self-advocacy organization will have direct funding support and information, training and tools for success to increase its membership, sustainability and organizational outreach.

DD Act, Section 124 (c)(4)(ii)(I-III)

Developmental Disability Network Collaboration

The Developmental Disability Act (DD Act) requires Developmental Disability Councils to address collaboration in three ways: as a network, with each other and with other entities. Developmental Disability Councils must include a goal or objective with activities that relate to planned collaboration efforts with DD network partners: the Disability Law Center of Alaska (Alaska's Protection and Advocacy organization), and the University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Human Development (Alaska's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities). While the Council partners with DD Act network partners frequently on a variety of work efforts, the Council's specific DD network collaboration objective is within goal two around DD Shared Vision Implementation.

DD Act, Section 124 (c)(3)(D)

What will the Council be Working on in the Next Five Years?

GOAL #1: COMMUNITY INCLUSION SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

People with developmental disabilities will have increased access to a flexible system of meaningful supports and services in their homes and communities to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities living the lives they choose.

Objective 1.1: Choice & Independence in Long-Term Supports and Services. People will have information, training, tools and programs for systems change, supported decision-making, strategies and technology for independence, community-building, and more to increase the number of adults with developmental disabilities who choose and direct their long-term supports and services.

Objective 1.2: Housing. People with developmental disabilities and their families will have information, training, tools, and programs for housing accessibility, housing availability, housing rights, landlord-tenant relations, cohabitation strategies, and more to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities who live where and with whom they choose.

Objective 1.3: Health and Healthcare. People will have information, training, tools and programs about Medicaid services, home and community-based services, health and well-being, community events and activities, and more to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities across the lifespan who are living full and meaningful lives.

Objective 1.4: Education & Early Development. People with developmental disabilities across the lifespan and their families will have information, training, tools, and





programs to increase the number of people with disabilities included with non-disabled age peers in infant daycare, preschools, K-12 and post-secondary education.

Objective 1.5: Emerging Needs. People with developmental disabilities and their families will have information, training, and tools to prepare them for personal emergencies, natural disasters, and/or other emergent circumstances to increase personal safety and the security of services, supports and self-determined choices.

GOAL #2: SELF-ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP

People with developmental disabilities will have increased access to education, tools and opportunities for self-advocacy across the lifespan to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities expressing their vision for their lives in local, state and national forums.

Objective 2.1: DD Shared Vision Implementation. People with developmental disabilities will have information on the Shared Vision and will have opportunities to actively participate in planning and implementation of the Shared Vision to increase the number of people who understand the Shared Vision and the number who live the life they choose with the supports they direct.

Objective 2.2: Support Self-Advocacy Organization. A self-advocacy organization will have direct funding support; and information, training, and tools for success to increase its membership, sustainability and organizational outreach.

GOAL #3: EMPLOYMENT

People with developmental disabilities will have access to supports, services, programs and training necessary for successful transitions to adulthood, meaningful work

experiences, and integrated and competitive employment, as well as career development, across the lifespan.

Objective 3.1: Employment First Implementation. People will have information, training, tools and programs on telework, the state as a model employer, employment rights, and universally designed work environments to increase the percentage of people with development disabilities with meaningful, integrated, competitive employment in typical work settings.

Objective 3.2: Traditional Transition. Transition-aged youth (14-22) with developmental disabilities will have increased information, education services, training and tools that are regionally, culturally and linguistically relevant to them to increase the number of young adults in rural communities with skills for meaningful, place-based adulthood.

How will the Five-Year State Plan Work be Completed?

The Council accomplishes most of its day-to-day work through its committees. Council members chair and lead this committee work following annual work plans — in many cases in partnership with other community members. Most committees meet monthly; some meet less frequently. If interested in serving on a committee, please contact any council staff member or join our “Gov Delivery” list serve: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/AKDHSS/subscriber/new?topic_id=AKDHSS_30 to receive meeting notices.

Council Committees Include:

Executive Committee — Chair, vice-chair, member-at-large and all committee chairs.





Legislative Committee — proposes a legislative agenda annually for the Council considering federal, state and some local issues, and then tracks progress on this agenda and engages the council and partners in advocacy.

Community Inclusion, Supports and Services Committee — addresses all the issues that impact Alaskans who experience intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. They delve into state and federal policy issues that impact our beneficiaries.

Self-Advocacy and Leadership Committee — works to promote leadership and development of self-advocates who want to be engaged in public policy issues.

Employment Committee — looks solely at the issues that impact employment of persons with disabilities, and oversees Council projects related to this topic, such as Alaska ABLE, Disability Benefits, Project SEARCH, and the Alaska Work Matters Task Force.

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) — the state's advisory board for the Infant Learning Program (ILP).

Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) — State's advisory board for special education and related services.



Creating change
that improves the lives
of Alaskans with disabilities





GCDSE Staff



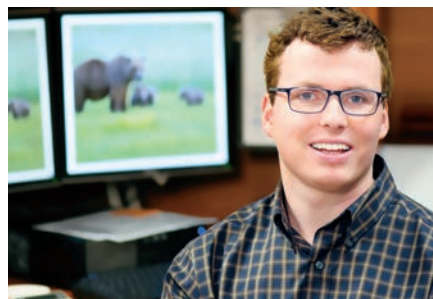
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