



What is the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council?

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is a 21-member group appointed by the governor and empowered by federal and state law to advocate for people with developmental disabilities. The council has an exciting mission: “To support people with developmental disabilities to achieve life dreams.”

The Council’s overarching principle will guide its work: **“People with disabilities are supported across their lifespan to live self-determined lives in a diverse and inclusive community.”**

Congress created DD Councils – one in each state and territory - to change service systems to be more responsive to the needs, wants and desires of people with developmental disabilities and develop advocacy strategies to make change happen. Councils help people create better lives for themselves by challenging the status quo in America.

The law that drives this commitment is the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act as amended in 2000.

The Council works to ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard. It speaks with them to the governor, legislature and other policymakers. It supports them in directing their own lives.

The DD Council works with its partners to create and sustain opportunities for housing, education, transportation, employment, health, and recreation; nearly every experience of American life. Its outreach includes support for families, recognizing diversity and supporting grassroots advocacy.

Staying in touch with those who make policy and laws is very important. The Council informs people about the political process, sponsors a legislative event, promotes voting and supports other activities to increase the political clout of people with developmental disabilities.

THREE WAYS TO MAKE CHANGE

The DD Council works through three main avenues of systems change: grants, Regional Inclusive Community Coalitions (RICCs), and advocacy.

1. Grants. This program has awarded over \$40 million over the past 30 years. All grants are for projects to carry out strategies written in the Council's Strategic Plan. A competitive "request for proposal" (RFP) process is designed to bring in the proposals and select the projects that will achieve the results the Council seeks.

Over the years, grants have funded a variety of amazing projects and studies. Projects funded more than 30 years ago are still improving lives and systems! Grant projects support the efforts of people to direct their own lives, to work and contribute to their communities.

2. RICCs. Regional Inclusive Community Coalitions are local grassroots organizations. Historically, RICCs have had four main functions: (1) to provide a forum for addressing local issues; (2) to outreach to diverse populations of people with developmental disabilities and their families; (3) advocating for needed changes in the community, and (4) to inform the DD Council about local conditions for persons with developmental disabilities. Each RICC member works with the group to make his or her community more accessible for everyone. Any person living in the community may become a RICC member.

3. Advocacy. The Council educates policymakers to achieve policy, law or systems change in order to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Advocacy involves teamwork and communication. The Council combines its resources and talents with those of other groups and individuals to work toward common goals.

COLLABORATORS, WORK GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

The Council's collaborators include people with disabilities, parents, advocates, professionals and grassroots activists. The Council works to get more people involved in systems change through its RICCs, work groups and committees. People with disabilities and other advocates eager to make a difference are asked to contact the Council office.

Council members, people with disabilities and other advocates serve on its committees and work groups. Each work group focuses on one major system, such as family support, education, health or housing. The committees (Public Policy, Program and Diversity) address wide-ranging issues. These groups provide ideas for advocacy and projects; team up with other advocacy groups to make a broader impact; and advise the Council on trends and changes in systems and the laws that control them.

