

Creating CHANGE

IOWA DDCOUNCIL
Preparation, Participation, Power

ANNUAL MAGAZINE

WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council's Iowa DD Council in Action publication. This is an annual snapshot of the impact the Iowa DD Council and other Iowa advocates have had in creating change throughout our communities. While the disability community continues to face challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic, self and family advocates remain resilient. We hope you enjoy reading about the work of the council and our advocates across the state.

Sincerely,

Brooke Lovelace, Executive Director



Brooke Lovelace

ABOUT THE IOWA DD COUNCIL

The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council was created in response to a federal law, the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. The purpose of this law is to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and their families can help design and access necessary services, supports, and other forms of assistance.

The Iowa DD Council is a federally funded state agency that advocates for the development of services and supports so Iowans with developmental disabilities can make their own choices and take control of their lives. The council is made up of more than 20 volunteers who represent Iowans with disabilities, their family members, service providers, state agencies, and organizations concerned with developmental disability issues.

The Iowa DD Council promotes the development of a coordinated system of services and supports that provide opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to be independent, productive, integrated, and included in their communities.

This goal includes promoting projects and activities that aim to achieve the following:

- Influence changes to laws, policies, and attitudes that affect supports and services used by Iowans with developmental disabilities.
- Increase Iowans with disabilities' opportunities to make choices and have control over their lives.
- Improve communities' capacity to create welcoming accommodations for people with developmental disabilities.
- Assist Iowans with developmental disabilities in becoming advocates and leaders involved in the decision-making processes that affect them.

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IOWA DD COUNCIL UPDATES

IOWA DD COUNCIL MEMBERS

Kristin Aller, Self-Advocate

Alecia Balduf, Self-Advocate

Julie Bergeson, Iowa Department on Aging+

Carol Cross, Family Advocate

Allen Fagerlund, Chair, Family Advocate*

Robert Fisher, Self-Advocate

Brittney Funston, Family Advocate+

Amber Gale, Family Advocate

Jason Goulden, Self-Advocate

Catherine Hedderich, Self-Advocate

Hugh Kelly, Self-Advocate*

Scott Lyon, Disability Rights Iowa+

Paula Motsinger, Iowa Medicaid Enterprise

Tiffiny Poage, Iowa Department of Education+

Colin Priest, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services+

Rob Roozeboom, Self-Advocate

Mark Schneider, Family Advocate*

Mark Smith, Family Advocate

Steve Steveson, Family Advocate+

Mike Vratsinas, Self-Advocate+

Judy Warth, University Center for Disabilities and Development*

Brady Werger, Vice-Chair, Self-Advocate*

Jean Willard, Child Health Specialty Clinics

* Executive Committee member

+ New member in 2021

A PLAN FOR PROGRESS: OUR FIVE-YEAR STATE PLAN

Every five years, the Iowa DD Council develops a state plan with goals and objectives to address new ways of improving the lives of Iowans with developmental disabilities. Self-advocates, families, state agencies, providers, educators, and other stakeholders provided input into the development of the 2022-2026 state plan. This plan was approved by the Council, and we believe it will result in numerous positive changes and increased advocacy for Iowans with developmental disabilities. The state plan will guide the Council's activities over the next five years.

Goals included in the plan:

- Develop strong advocates and leaders who create the change they want.
- Improve policy and practice that positively impact people with disabilities.
- Strengthen communities to support people with disabilities.

Access the full plan here:

<https://iowaddcouncil.org/State-Plan/>

5-YEAR PLAN

**A PLAN 2021 - 2025
FOR PROGRESS**

CELEBRATIONS AND AWARENESS MONTHS

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH

March is National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM). The purpose of this month is to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. It also aims to bring awareness to the barriers that people with disabilities still sometimes face in connecting to the communities in which they live.

There are more than 368,000 Iowans who have a disability. More than 48,000 of those people have a developmental disability (i.e., a mental or physical disability acquired before the age of 22).

Through various advocacy efforts, the Iowa DD Council aims to ensure that Iowans with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all aspects of community life.



Tyrome Launderville

This year, as part of DDAM, the Iowa DD Council and Iowa's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (Iowa's UCEDD) hosted a webinar called "Moving Towards Change: A Virtual Celebration." We were joined by the Community Living Ambassadors for an interactive discussion on their lives, successes, and personal journeys in transitioning into community living as individuals with disabilities.

The Community Living Ambassadors who participated:

- Brady Werger
- Eric and Marcia Mullins
- Jessica Williams
- Michael Gillette
- Tyrome Launderville

Watch the "Moving Towards Change" webinar here:

<https://youtu.be/u8yraUnPmFo>

CELEBRATIONS AND AWARENESS MONTHS

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is celebrated every October. The purpose of this month is to educate people about disability employment issues and celebrate the many contributions of America's workers with disabilities.



The history of NDEAM starts in 1945 when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

For NDEAM 2020, the Iowa DD Council and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services hosted a virtual celebration called "Increasing Access and Opportunity." We were joined by the individuals whose employment stories were shared throughout October for an interactive discussion on their experiences in the workforce.

Watch the "Increasing Access and Opportunity" webinar:
<https://youtu.be/Fp1qnXKIKFE>



Marissa Schletzbaum

"National Disability Employment Awareness Month 2021." US Department of Labor, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/ndeam>.

2020 EMPLOYMENT VIDEOS

- Marissa Schletzbaum, Straw Hat Farms
- Janet Linkenmeyer, Osage Community Day Care
- Sarah Schierbrock, Sonny's Supermarket
- Jason Pohren, MercyOne North Iowa, Mason City
- Governor Kim Reynolds: NDEAM Proclamation

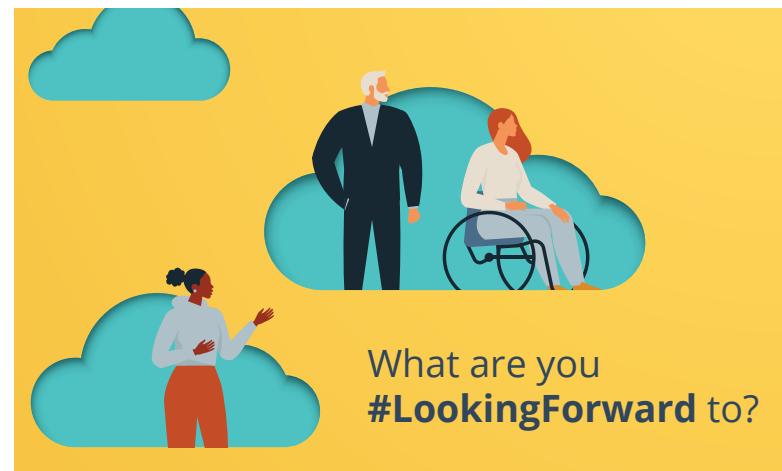
Learn more about our events and awareness months here: <https://iowaddcouncil.org/celebrate/>

COVID-19 EDUCATION

COVID-19 VACCINE CONFIDENCE CAMPAIGN

Many people with developmental disabilities are at a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19 (the coronavirus). To help educate people about the virus and the vaccine, we put together a campaign to share information and resources that would help Iowans with disabilities make the best decisions for themselves. Our #LookingForward campaign was designed to help people better understand COVID-19 and the ways they can protect themselves and those in their communities.

As part of this campaign, we created flyers, social media posts, advocate video interviews, radio ads, and more. These items allowed us to reach nearly 800,000 Iowans with disabilities! We also developed a toolkit for organizations with shareable COVID-19 vaccine resources, video testimonials, social media content, and more. View the toolkit here: <https://iowaddcouncil.org/looking-forward/>.



What are you
#LookingForward to?

A photograph of a man with glasses and a red polo shirt, identified as Rob Fisher, Waterloo DD Council Member and Self-Advocate. He is smiling and standing in a grocery store aisle. To his left is a dark blue sidebar containing a quote and a small illustration of two people in clouds. To his right is a photo of him in the grocery store.

"Don't be nervous, don't be scared. If there's pain in your arm [after the vaccine], it's okay. You can feel a little bit, and then it goes away and then you can go back to what you normally do!"

Rob Fisher, Waterloo
DD Council Member and Self-Advocate

What are you **#LookingForward** to?

HOLIDAY GATHERINGS: CELEBRATING DURING A PANDEMIC



As the holiday season approached at the end of 2020, we wanted to help Iowans prepare to celebrate safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. We partnered with COVID Recovery Iowa counselors for two webinars that included presentations and discussions about ways to enjoy the holidays—even though they looked a little different than usual.

- November 2020: <https://youtu.be/VadzD0bl4fc>
- December 2020: <https://youtu.be/xAITA4enb-E>

2021 MAKE YOUR MARK! SELF-ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

FIRST ANNUAL MIA PETERSON SELF-ADVOCACY AWARD

In June 2021, we said goodbye to a lifelong leader and disability advocate.



Mia Peterson



Mia Peterson dedicated her life to advocating for individuals with disabilities. By speaking up for herself and her peers, meeting with legislators, and starting conversations about the disability community, she truly made a difference for Iowans across the state. She was not afraid to share her experience with Down syndrome, and she openly discussed the things that made her unique.

All of this allowed her to reach audiences near and far while making people aware of the importance of people-first, plain language that lets individuals with disabilities be fully included in the conversation. Mia was also very outspoken about helping people live independently; this showed her true passion for creating inclusive communities throughout Iowa.

In honor of Mia, the Iowa DD Council introduced an award to commemorate her legacy and keep her vision alive. The Mia Peterson Self-Advocacy Award will be presented annually at the Make Your Mark! Self-Advocacy Conference. Each year, this award will recognize an Iowan with a disability who embodies Mia's legacy and works to advocate for the rights of all people with disabilities.

Brady Werger of Glenwood, Iowa, was this year's recipient of the award!

Brady carries out Mia's legacy by advocating for a better quality of life and inspiring others to consider an independent lifestyle in the community.

"Brady creates change by educating multiple audiences about the capabilities of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities," said Michael Hoenig, who nominated Brady for the award. "Some efforts include serving as a Community Living Ambassador, sharing his story—challenges, successes, and hopes—through the 'Possibilities' newsletter, capably representing persons with disabilities through a WHO-TV interview, advocating for improved quality of life for all housemates by requesting Conner Training Connection funds, speaking with legislators about the importance of home and community-based services, and many more."

2021 Make Your Mark! Continued

After receiving the 2021 award, Brady shared his goals for the future.

"Mia was such a great advocate to those in Iowa who have dealt with and [are] living with a disability," he said. "I plan to take over and do the same thing that Mia did by being an advocate for people who can't advocate for themselves. In Mia's honor, I want to say thanks to all who are advocates. Don't stop, don't give up, and remember no one fights alone."



Carol Peterson, Brady Werger, Mike Peterson

Brady also had the chance to meet Mike and Carol Peterson, Mia's parents. "When we met Brady, he quickly impressed us with his passion for advocacy!" said Mike and Carol. "Mia would be so pleased and honored that Brady is the first recipient of the Mia Peterson Self-Advocate of the Year Award!"

All of us at the DD Council are thrilled that Brady was the first recipient of this award and are excited to support his continued efforts to create positive change for all Iowans with disabilities.

Interested in nominating someone for the 2022 Mia Peterson Self-Advocacy Award? Nominations will open in July!

THANK
YOU
THANK
YOU
THANK
YOU



2021 MYM! SPONSOR: THE IOWA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC)

Thank you to the Iowa SILC for sponsoring this year's Make Your Mark! Self-Advocacy Conference. The SILC is made up primarily of individuals with disabilities. The Council's role is to plan for the coordination and expansion of independent living services in Iowa.

2021 MAKE YOUR MARK! SELF-ADVOCACY CONFERENCE *Continued*

LEARNING TO COME TO YOUR SENSES AND GO ALL IN



Michael Kutcher

Stories of inspiration, determination, and game-changers were just some of the highlights during this year's presentations. Michael Kutcher, an Iowa native and self-advocate with cerebral palsy, kicked off the conference with his presentation called "Come to Your Senses." Michael's story of perseverance and overcoming obstacles offered a new perspective on life and the ways we approach the people we encounter every day. His experiences and perspective on cerebral palsy have led him to work directly with Reaching for the Stars, A Foundation of Hope for Children with Cerebral Palsy, as an advocate and public speaker.

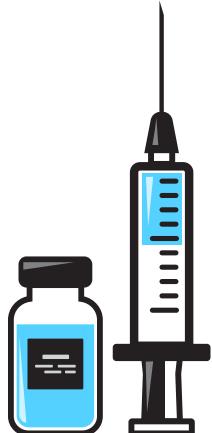
Later in the day, Alex Watters—another self-advocating Iowan—shared his experiences with adversity and resiliency after becoming paralyzed shortly after graduating high school. Instead of letting this unexpected challenge get the best of him, he turned his attention to politics and public service. Alex is proof that life can deal some challenging hands, but it's important to go "all in" with the situations we've been given in order to discover our abilities to become true change-makers. He knows that even though advocating for yourself and others can be intimidating, there's always a chance to start.



Alex Watters

A PROACTIVE, ACCESSIBLE COVID-19 VACCINE CLINIC

Gathering in person for this year's conference was exciting! However, we had to take precautions to help keep attendees protected against COVID-19. Masks were required and social distancing was promoted. We also partnered with Disability Rights Iowa and the Dallas County Health Department to host a vaccine clinic.



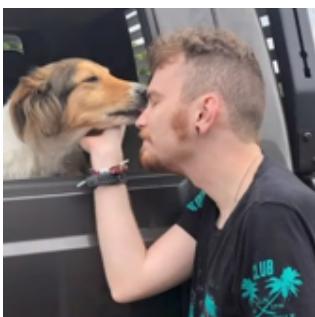
Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and others from getting the virus, so it's important that vaccines are accessible for Iowans with disabilities. Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines were available at our clinic and health professionals were there to administer vaccines, answer questions, and share their knowledge about the process.



Jessica Rose Williams



Brady Werger



Michael Gillette



Mari Brannaman



Eric Mullins

MEET OUR COMMUNITY LIVING AMBASSADORS

The Iowa DD Council proudly sponsors the Community Living Ambassador project with Iowa's UCEDD. Each of these ambassadors tells their story of moving out of institutions, ICFs, or nursing homes and into the community of their choice. Through these experiences, they discover the rewards and challenges of community living and the options for housing, services, jobs, and benefits.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions on in-person meetings, ambassador presentations in 2020 and 2021 were held virtually, using videos that told the ambassadors' stories as well as a question and answer portion with the virtual audience. These stories were shared in several webinars sponsored by organizations including REM Iowa, Imagine the Possibilities, and Mosaic. The videos also served as the keynote presentation at the Iowa Association of Community Provider's annual conference.

Five of the ambassadors (Jessica Rose Williams, Brady Werger, Michael Gillette, Mari Brannaman, and Eric Mullins) also shared their stories at the 2021 Make Your Mark! Conference. Audience members loved learning about the ambassadors' experiences and discovering how moving into their communities has impacted their lives.

We can't wait to see how the ambassadors continue educating Iowans about their experiences.



*Center for Disabilities
and Development*

Bill Kallestad, our public policy director, and Amy Campbell, our policy analyst, have been hosting virtual Capitol Chats almost every month. These online events are designed to educate Iowans about the issues that are important in our communities. Bill and Amy provide advocacy advice and updates about what's going on at the Capitol, and they facilitate discussions with members of the public. This is a great way to stay informed about the latest legislation and ways to advocate for Iowans with disabilities—and nearly 200 people have already participated!

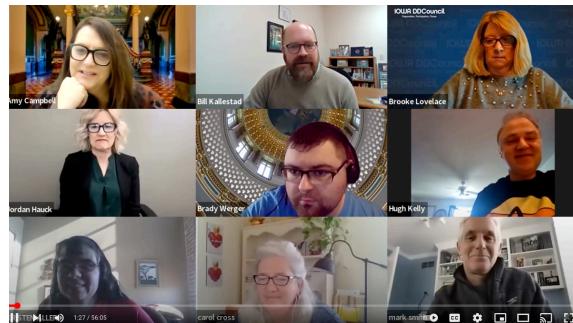
Eric Donat attended numerous Capitol Chats this year.

"I attend to stay informed," he said. "The Capitol Chats keep me up to date on the issues. I learn what to advocate for and I use the information to talk to my senator and representatives."



During these events, Bill and Amy also explain the tools on our infoNET website. The Take Action Center is a great resource that makes it easy to contact legislators, and the Bill Tracker provides information about all the bills that were signed into law during the most recent legislative session. These are just a couple of the tools we have designed to help make advocacy easier.

In 2021, Iowans used the Take Action Center for 81 advocacy actions! This includes advocating for adult changing tables, COVID-19 relief for individuals with disabilities, the direct care amendment, and more.



Capitol Chats will continue in 2022!

Visit <https://iowaddcouncil.org/upcoming-events/> for upcoming dates.

INFORMED

YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The second annual Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) took place during the summer of 2021. YLA is an introduction to leadership skills for youth with disabilities. The interactive training focuses on five themes: leadership, goal-setting, self-determination, civic engagement, and social networking and mentoring. We were proud to have 19 people graduate from the program with new skills this year!



Abigail Collins

Abigail Collins, a senior at Nevada High School, was one of the 2021 YLA graduates. Throughout her time in the program, she said she learned that the class is not just about how to advocate for people with disabilities, but for all people who have a hard time speaking up for themselves. She discovered that she could be a leader and help others by sharing her opinions and ideas.

"Before YLA, I never saw myself as a leader," she said. "I was honored to be nominated by someone at Easterseals; being nominated and taking the class gave me a lot of confidence. I am amazed that people see me as a leader. And now, I also see that in myself! The class is not a requirement, but I recommend everyone to take it. It's great for anyone who wants to learn to lead and make a difference."

Abigail has volunteered at the Harmony Clothing Closet in Nevada for several years. The organization has a board of directors, but you must be at least 18 years old to be a board member. Even though she is not yet 18, Abigail said graduating from YLA gave her the confidence to advocate for herself and

apply for a role on the board. The current members made an exception, and Abigail was voted in! Now she has a voice in important decisions for the Harmony Clothing Closet. In addition to attending Nevada High School, Abigail is also taking criminal justice classes at DMACC. Way to go!

The YLA program was a collaborative effort by members of the Iowa DD Council, the Iowa Department of Human Rights, Access 2 Independence, the UI Health Care Center for Disabilities and Development, and ASK Resource Center.

VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE TOWN HALL

In February, we hosted a virtual town hall meeting with Iowa DD Council members and disability advocates from across the state to discuss key advocacy topics and share legislative priorities with local legislators. We encouraged self-advocates to reach out to their legislators and let them know what issues are important in their communities. By making it easier to connect with legislators and other Iowa DD Council members, advocates were able to help identify new areas of focus. Watch the recording here: <https://youtu.be/UMMorglsEJE>.

LEADING CHANGE *Continued*

STORYTELLING WITH THE IOWA FAMILY LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE (IFLTI)

The IFLTI hosts trainings for families of children and youth with special healthcare needs, helping them find their own path to leadership. Over the summer, the Iowa DD Council partnered with IFLTI to sponsor a digital storytelling workshop. This training allowed family advocates to create short videos that bring their personal stories to life to promote advocacy and healing. Participants put together very impactful videos that can be found on IFLTI's YouTube channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLRKfFV9Q8S1uQYCp1B7Jj9B9BToU8gjmj>.



VOTING MATTERS!

In the 2020 elections, voter turnout surged among Americans with disabilities. This marks the third consecutive election with increased engagement among voters who have a disability. Sadly, accompanied by the exciting increase, people with disabilities have experienced difficulties with voting. A recent Election Assistance Commission study found that 11% of voters with disabilities had some difficulty voting in 2020; that indicates over 1.95 million voters with disabilities experienced challenges. One of the Iowa DD Council's key efforts is to make voting easy by providing training across Iowa before elections.

Almost all legislation proposed at the Capitol affects people in Iowa living with a disability and their families. Through the Iowa DD Council, they are able to stay informed during our regular Capitol updates and online

through infoNET. They have an important voice and want to have a say. And what better way to have a say than to VOTE?

To help Iowans with disabilities learn more about the voting process, the Iowa DD Council held voter trainings in October 2020. Voting can be intimidating, but the trainings make it easier and less scary.

We talked with the 67 participants about how to know if you're eligible to vote, how to register to vote, your rights as a voter, what a ballot looks like, and more. Attendees were given resources to assist as they prepare for upcoming elections. They left feeling empowered and ready to exercise their fundamental right to vote in the upcoming election.

IOWA EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE

The Iowa Empowerment Conference is a three-day, statewide event that educates individuals with mental health issues, their family members, providers, staff, governmental officials, and the public about important issues like empowerment, recovery, peer support, leadership skills, and the effects of stigma and discrimination.

During the 2021 conference, the Iowa DD Council's Bill Kallestad delivered an insightful presentation about how to be an effective advocate. He coached attendees through the process of shaping their personal experiences into a unique story and taught them ways to start finding solutions to their challenges.



Bill Kallestad

WEBINAR | IABLE PROGRAM: IMPROVED ACCOUNTS FLEXIBILITY, ELIGIBILITY, AND BENEFITS

The Iowa DD Council partnered with State Treasurer Michael Fitzgerald's office in September 2021 to host a webinar about the I Able program. The ABLE Act creates a new option for qualified individuals living with disabilities and their families to save for the future while protecting eligibility for public benefits. ABLE plans can change the way individuals with disabilities and their families participate in the community, build financial wellness, and plan for the future by empowering them to save and invest for the added expenses that come with having a disability without losing access to federal means-tested benefits.

During the webinar, attendees learned about changes to the law and improved flexibility with I Able accounts, what I Able is, what the I Able plan entails, program eligibility and self-certification criteria, investment options, and more.



Watch the webinar here: <https://youtu.be/l8bW8h9laUk>

INCREASING COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Iowa
Vocational
Rehabilitation
Services

CUSTOMIZED DISCOVERY WITH IOWA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Customized Discovery is a person-centered approach to employment designed to increase competitive, integrated job placement. Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), in partnership with the Iowa DD Council, has used this method to assist Iowans who have significant disabilities, haven't worked, worked primarily in segregated settings, or had little vocational success to become and remain successful members of the workforce.

With Customized Discovery, candidates work with a job coach to identify their skills, interests, abilities, conditions, contributions, and support in order to design a pathway to a career that focuses on the candidate's interest, talents, and contributions—not limitations. Nineteen new providers have now committed to providing this service across Iowa!

Ian Jensen's career has benefited from this type of program. During NDEAM, Ian shared his employment story and the ways he's using his role at Tech Zone as a stepping stone toward his goal of working at a video game company.

Ian Jensen

*"My personality leads me to anything tech-related," Ian said.
"Having a job brings me closer to one of my life goals."*

He also shared his advice for other people with disabilities who are looking for a job.

"Once you find a job that's closer to your personality, don't think of it as a fantasy—go and take it."

Watch Ian's video here: <https://youtu.be/qKUVr4t5Z8Y>

TRANSFORMING EMPLOYMENT

The Iowa DD Council awarded two grants to HCBS providers, First Resources and 43 North, to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Funds were used to create a campaign showcasing the purpose and success of First Resource's supported employment program. Videos highlighted client successes, ease of business partnerships, and the purpose of job coaching.

"The commercial was unbelievable for us. You wouldn't believe the calls we got," said Cindy Kurtz-Hopkins with First Resources. "We were able to share it to a big array of businesses that we wouldn't have been able to if it wasn't for [the grant]. Because it's such a rural town that we work in, it really helps in the areas that we fell behind on. We got an extra four or five placements from that. It was the best advertisement we've ever had."

IOWA DOT DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES TRANSPORTATION

In December 2020, the Iowa DD Council contacted the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) about available funding for providing transportation to Iowans with disabilities. The purpose was to get these individuals out into their communities and to address the barriers or challenges they experience during this process. The Iowa DD Council awarded \$93,505 to the Iowa DOT, allowing the organization to help address these challenges and improve accessibility.

"It was perfect timing to receive the funds. It was when things were calming down with COVID. Transit didn't have to be the next barrier to getting back into the community," said a community partner.

Another partner stated that the transportation provided by this grant gave a sense of "normalness" and independence for the riders. This partner typically uses their own modes of transportation, but the grant enabled them to save those funds for other activities. The riders enjoyed having their own transportation and participating in activities they were able to access.

Public transit is vital to enhancing the mobility of Iowans. It provides critical service to the general public and vulnerable populations. Iowa has public transit services in all 99 counties.



Funding was used for these projects:

Automatic Passenger Counter Technology Project

Ames Transit Agency (CyRide)

Barriers to Transit Equity for People with Disabilities

Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency

Pink Route

Marshalltown Municipal Transit

Healthy Accessibility

PeopleRides

ICF & HCBS Transportation

Region 8 Regional Transit Authority

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Iowa DD Council partnered with the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) to offer four grants to HCBS providers to develop a strategy to hire and retain qualified direct support professionals. The providers selected were Hills & Dales, Trivium Life Services, Systems Unlimited, and Lutheran Services in Iowa.

Michelle Schmitt, Hills & Dales' chief programs officer, shared how they benefitted from its grant. "The funding allowed for opportunities that were not previously financially feasible," she said.

The funds helped the organization to invest in projects like a job applicant tracking process, increased strategic recruitment and outreach, and leadership trainings and onboarding. It enabled the development of a competency-based curriculum that offers a pathway to career opportunities and growth in the organization.

"In the end," Schmitt said, "we were able to think bigger and more globally about our current processes and opportunities for the future of the organization and individuals with disabilities!"

2022 PREVIEW

There's so much to look forward to in the year ahead! Find out what we'll be doing this year, what to expect at the Capitol, and important information about the next election.



KNOWLEDGE IS A SUPERPOWER —MAKE IT YOURS!

The more you know about Iowa legislation and your rights, the more engaged you can be in your advocacy work. In order to make it easier to understand all of this information, we'll be launching a campaign to help you stay informed.

Throughout the year, we'll share information designed specifically for you—no matter who you are. Service providers will receive resources that benefit the individuals they serve, self-advocates will get information about involvement opportunities, family members will learn how to keep supporting their loved ones with disabilities, and more. We want you to have the knowledge to be a superhero for yourself and the people in your community.

TOWN HALL GRANTS

Iowans with Disabilities in Action will continue offering grant funds to local advocacy groups that are led by people with disabilities. These are groups that plan to take action in their community by hosting a town hall meeting with elected officials while encouraging Iowans with disabilities to be advocates on disability-related issues.

Local groups of individuals with disabilities, family members, friends, and advocates with an interest in supporting and encouraging Iowans with disabilities to get involved in advocacy are eligible to apply for a town hall grant. The groups that are selected will be expected to meet with elected officials and host a town hall meeting on disability-related issues. Groups may be formal or informal, but the majority of the members must be individuals with disabilities.

To learn more, visit our website here:
<https://iowaddcouncil.org/>.



WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE CAPITOL

There are several topics we expect to address with legislators this year:

- Fully fund healthcare services and community-based supports to address the workforce crisis in both rural and urban areas.
- Support an inclusive community for all Iowans.
- Reduce or eliminate HCBS waiting lists.

Our Legislative Agenda highlights the stories of three people whose lives could be greatly enhanced by changes made at the capitol this year. Here is Rob's story.

Rob wants to attend his children's events. Whether a basketball game, a play or a child's school conference, he wants to be there.

Schools, like many public places, are not fully accessible, as an example, they are not required to have a family restroom.

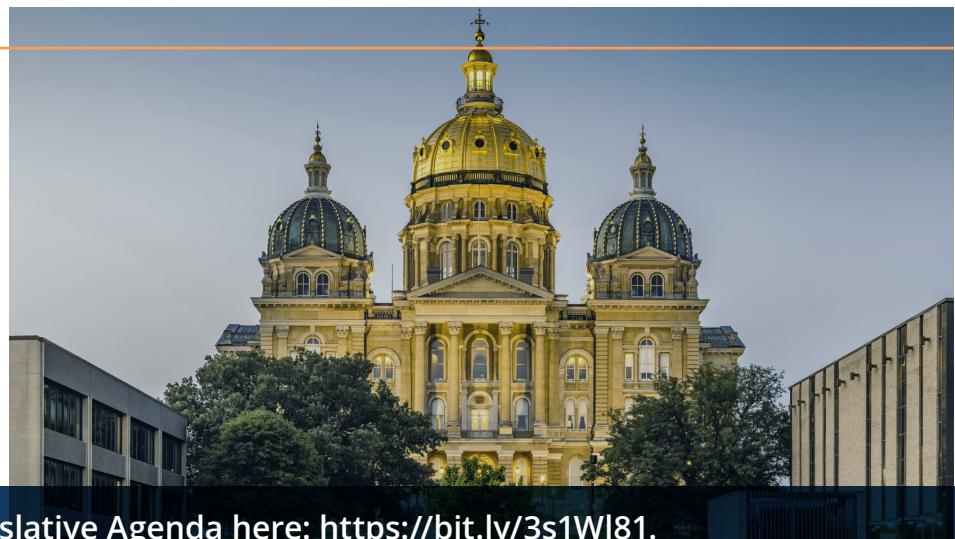
Rob needs his wife's assistance to use the restroom while at events. He must ask everyone to exit the restroom and wait while he and his wife go in. In some cases, Rob finds himself, his wife, and another individual in the restroom all together.

Of course, inaccessibility is not limited to restrooms. Sidewalks, transportation, businesses, and parks are other examples of public places and services that are not accessible. Rob knows that Iowa must continue to invest in making our state accessible for all people.

Rob is an entrepreneur and motivational speaker, living in northwest Iowa with his family.



Rob Roozeboom



View our full Legislative Agenda here: <https://bit.ly/3s1WI81>.

MISSION

Create change with and for persons with developmental disabilities so they can live, work, learn, and play in the community of their choosing.

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