



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

# *highlights* | 2013

ANNUAL REPORT





# Working for the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life.

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

In **Highlights 2013** we provide an overview of the ways in which the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council invested staff resources and grant funds this past year to shape public policy, change attitudes, support innovation, and improve services and supports that are essential to people with developmental disabilities and their families. The following pages highlight the priorities we addressed through the direct work of the Council, as well as through the grants we funded.

As a statewide public policy and advocacy organization, the Maryland DD Council helps lead the way to change that has broad, lasting impact. You will see in the following pages that in 2013 the Council was active in issues across the lifespan, with an intensive focus on: increasing the availability of quality inclusive child care; improving services that lead to real and valued employment; supporting the development of self-advocacy skills, including among youth with disabilities; and facilitating improvements to important state programs.

To impact these and other issues, the Council often plays an active role in bringing together diverse stakeholders and facilitating dialogue and debate that generates positive change. We help bridge divides.

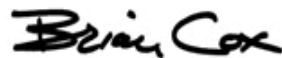
As we evolve and embrace new technologies in 2014, watch for better and more frequent communications from the Council that will get useful and thought-provoking information quickly into the hands of those of you who can use it. Through the Council's new logo and communications we want to convey: ***New Year – New Look – Same Commitment.***

Together we can work to make Maryland a state where all people with developmental disabilities exercise control over their lives, reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

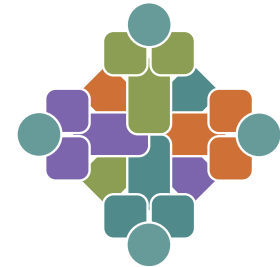
Sincerely,



Eric Cole  
Vice Chair



Brian Cox  
Executive Director



Together we can work  
to make Maryland a  
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— Brian Cox

# MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

## OUR VISION:

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council envisions a state where all people with developmental disabilities exercise control over their lives, reach their full potential, and lead healthy, fulfilling lives with enriching relationships.

## OUR MISSION:

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council's mission is to advance the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, empowering people, and promoting innovation.

## TO ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION THE COUNCIL:



- Educates and informs policymakers about issues of importance to people with developmental disabilities and their families.
- Advocates for policies, practices, laws and services that support people with developmental disabilities to exercise control over their lives, reach their full potential, and lead productive, meaningful lives.
- Designs & funds initiatives that increase community inclusion, improve services and supports, and increase opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to pursue their hopes, dreams and aspirations.



- Promotes innovative approaches to supporting people to live, learn, work and enjoy community life.
- Advocates for the elimination of barriers that create separation and segregation and limit opportunities for full inclusion and community participation.
- Raises public awareness about people's contributions and capabilities so differences are respected, attitudes change, and inclusion and equality become an expectation.



- Supports people with developmental disabilities and their family members to develop advocacy and leadership skills to affect change in their own lives and the lives of others.

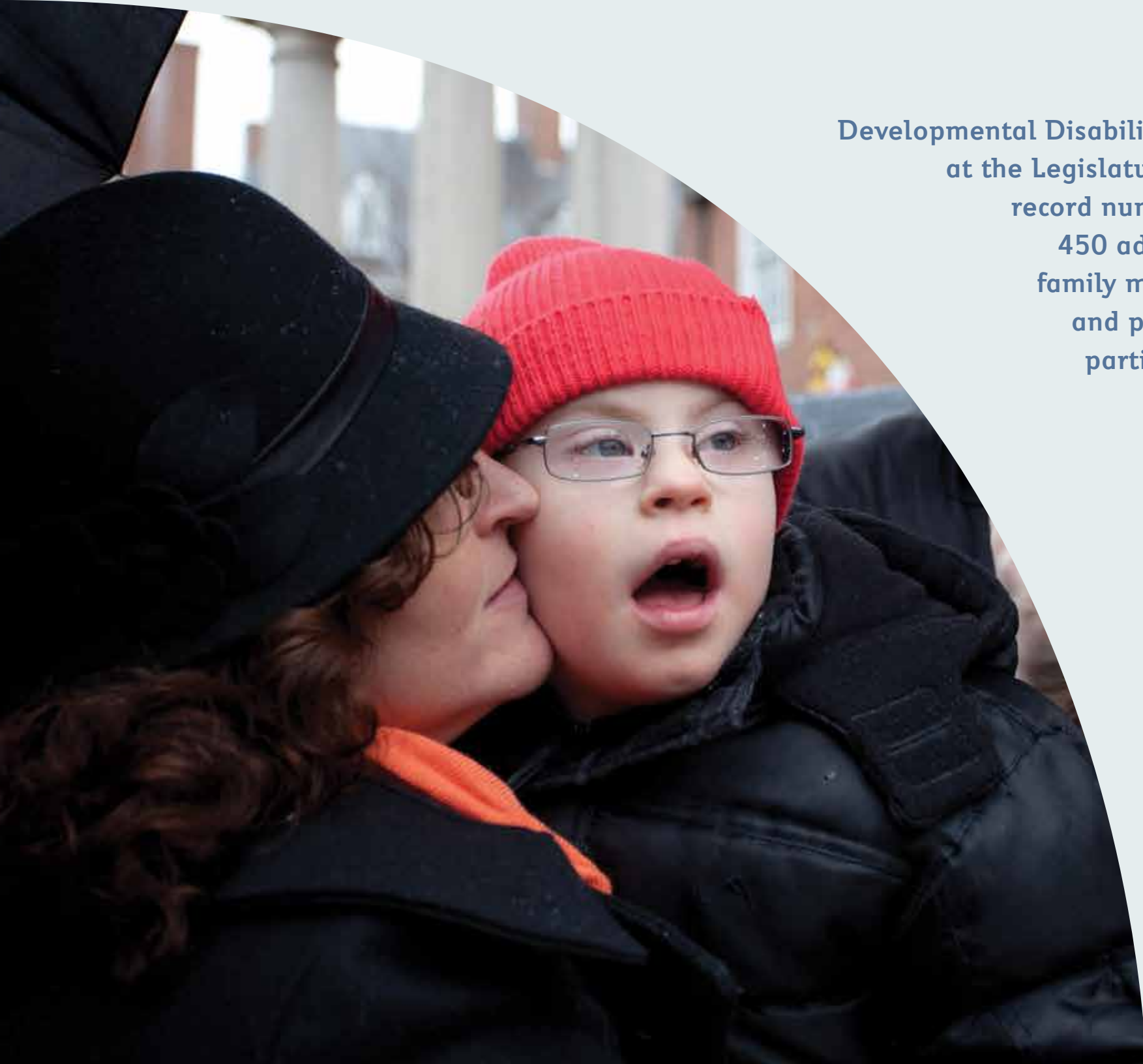
The Council works in partnership with people with developmental disabilities and their families, as well as other individuals and organizations, to bring about lasting change. We develop a five year **State Plan** that establishes our priorities and serves as a roadmap for accomplishing our goals.

## WHO WE ARE:

A small staff works on behalf of the Council to carry-out our mission and address the priorities and goals established in the Council's Five-Year State Plan.



The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council is part of a national network of DD Councils.



Developmental Disabilities Day  
at the Legislature drew  
record numbers as  
450 advocates,  
family members,  
and providers  
participated.



## ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP

### HELPING YOUTH DEVELOP PERSONAL ADVOCACY SKILLS

After its first year of funding from the Council, **Project ACT** (Advocacy, Communication & Transition) made great strides in building the advocacy skills of youth with disabilities and preparing them for the future. Utilizing the “Whose Life is it Anyway?” curriculum, Project ACT collaborated with ArtStream theater group and Somerset County Public Schools to deliver an interactive, hands-on training series on a range of topics. Twelve youth were educated about leadership dynamics, communicating in groups and advocating for themselves.

Each youth developed a Positive Personal Profile (PPP) to assist them with life goals and planning for a career. The PPP was so successful it prompted the director of special education of Somerset County to adopt it as a tool for all youth with an Individualized Education Program. In 2014, Project ACT will expand activities to include professional development trainings for all staff in the Somerset County school system. The Council supports this work because Somerset has the lowest per capita income in Maryland and there are fewer efforts focused on the development of advocacy skills compared to other areas of the state.

### SPONSORING YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Remaining committed to providing opportunities for youth advocacy, the Council again co-funded and participated in the **Youth Leadership Forum** (YLF). Thirty high-school students represented a range of disabilities making for a diverse forum. Participants successfully completed a four-day, three-night event, held on the campus of Towson University. Training topics included community leadership, assistive technology, and career development. On Legislative Advocacy Day, the Council worked alongside leaders with developmental disabilities in the advocacy field to educate participants about providing testimony during the legislative session, visiting a legislator’s office, and learning how a bill becomes a law.

### SUPPORTING STATEWIDE SELF-ADVOCACY AND ACTION

In 2013, People On the Go of Maryland (POG) combined activities from its **Enhancing Advocacy and Public Policy Work Project, Legislative Internship** and **Southern Maryland Self-Advocacy Consortium** to form one comprehensive initiative that is impacting policy and boosting advocacy efforts across the state. POG members received training on public speaking,



**“I never expected this to be a life changing experience!”**

**—Youth Leadership Forum participant**

**When Brian, a 19-year-old young man with autism, started the self-advocacy series he was hesitant to participate and barely spoke to anyone...after completing the exercises, he was confident and actively engaging with his peers, using his own voice.**  
**— Project ACT staff**

letter writing and how to actively participate in meetings. As a result, 5 members put their advocacy skills to work by serving on committees and advisory boards addressing issues on housing, transportation, employment, and civil rights. Other activities and outcomes include:

- POG's statewide self-advocacy conference educated over 50 advocates, family members and professionals on leadership, self-advocacy, resume building and housing.
- POG presented on the importance of self-advocacy at conferences in Washington, D.C. and Virginia.
- Members actively participated in Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature by attending a rally and visiting legislators' offices.
- The legislative intern and other members testified on more than 10 bills and important budgets.
- POG's Community Organizer supported three new self-advocacy groups in southern Maryland to grow their membership, access public transit training and become appointed to several transportation study groups where they provide vital feedback on transit issues affecting people with developmental disabilities.

### PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO BE HEARD

To support the active engagement of people with developmental disabilities and their family members in important issues that impact their daily lives, the Council co-sponsored a **Town Hall meeting** with the DD Coalition. Over 225 people attended. The Director of the Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene provided updates on key issues, heard first-hand about people's support needs, and took questions on a wide range of concerns. The forum provided an opportunity for people to communicate directly with top state officials, providing information, perspectives, and ideas to influence the course of policy and programmatic decisions.



### PROMOTING PARTICIPATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

In collaboration with our DD Coalition partners, the Council co-sponsored the largest **Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature** to date, with 450 people with developmental disabilities, family members, providers, and other advocates participating. Titled "*Champions for Real Lives*," the event honored Sen. Kasemeyer, Sen. Middleton and Del. Hubbard for their many years of leadership on behalf of Marylanders with disabilities. Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown rallied the crowd, followed by comments and statements of support from leaders of the Departments of Education, Disabilities and Health & Mental Hygiene. Diehard advocates then marched in the rain to a rally outside the State House and delivered messages to their legislators about key budgets and bills.



## COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

### EDUCATING POLICYMAKERS SO THEY MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

The Council followed 47 priority bills during the **2013 legislative session**, providing written and /or verbal testimony to inform legislators about the impact each bill would have on people with developmental disabilities in Maryland. We monitored another 110 bills for changes that might impact people with disabilities and their families. Changes to Maryland's laws and state agency budgets – even when the changes may appear minor – can have profound and lasting impact on the supports and resources available to people with disabilities and the opportunities and rights they enjoy.

### LEADING CHANGE – IMPROVING SERVICES & SUPPORTS

Recognizing that DDA's **Low Intensity Support Services** program is in need of significant improvements – a point of view shared by many stakeholders, including the Developmental Disabilities Administration and people with developmental disabilities and their families – the Council took the lead in identifying what is working, what is not working and what should change. In 2012, we surveyed 900 people about LISS. We followed this with a 2013 survey to further gauge the depth and breadth of issues and solicit input, garnering nearly 700 responses.

Building on this momentum, the Council formed an LISS Stakeholders Workgroup and facilitated thorough analysis and lively debate that resulted in 25 recommendations for overhauling the LISS program, with the intent of maximizing its impact. DDA agreed with all but two of the recommendations and will implement the others in 2014.

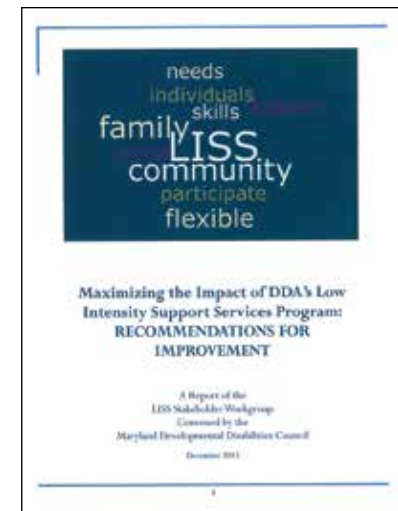
### BEING “AT THE TABLE” INFLUENCING POLICY

Council representatives serve on many state **workgroups, commissions and task forces** – 28 at last count. We help find solutions to challenging problems, advocate for positive change and design new approaches that improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities in Maryland.

For example, for several years the Council has actively advocated for the development of more community-based options for people with developmental disabilities who are involved in the criminal justice system. We served on two task forces with other advocates, state officials and representatives from the judicial system. The Council provided information about national best practices, funded national experts and advocated for a community-focused approach, alongside the MD Disability Law Center and others. In 2013, state officials ultimately decided to pull back from a plan to expand facility-based services and instead work to improve current services and expand community options that are least restrictive while ensuring public safety.



Del. Jim Hubbard, Sen. Mac Middleton  
and Sen. Ed Kasemeyer honored  
at DD Day at the Legislature.





“...we have been productive as a self-advocacy organization and I believe that we continue to command the respect of our individual legislators as well as our partners in the legislative arena.”

— Mat Rice, Legislative Intern for People On the Go of Maryland

## CHILD CARE

### EXPANDING ACCESS, SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION

The Council was active in many ways throughout 2013 to improve access to high quality, inclusive child care and out of school time activities. Multiple endeavors will support lasting change that improves quality of care, increases access for more families and results in more children with and without disabilities living, learning and playing together.

We expanded our work with the Maryland State Department of Education, families and other stakeholders to implement recommendations from the Council's 2012 **Barriers to Access to Child Care and Out of School Time Activities** report so that children and youth have the support they need to participate in child care, after-school care and other out of school time activities. Recommendations in the report revolved around building capacity, training and technical assistance, funding, information dissemination, and policy. To implement the recommendations, in 2013 the Council:

- Led efforts to pass legislation that established a unique, diverse workgroup that is developing ways to improve policies, procedures and laws in Maryland that will help families and child care providers resolve disputes that result when children are denied access to child care.
- Partnered with the Maryland Out of School Time Network to sponsor a symposium for providers who care for children when they are not in school and others to identify strategies to improve the availability of high quality, inclusive out of school time activities for youth with disabilities. As a result, smaller forums are being held around the state to determine methods of implementation at a local level.
- Collaborated on a statewide survey to gauge the need for an online repository of information about inclusive child care. This information will be used to develop a comprehensive repository of resources, training and technical assistance information providers need to effectively support children with disabilities in child care and out of school time activities.
- Worked with the Office of Child Care to add more measures that focus on the effective inclusion of children with disabilities in the MD EXCELS standards, the quality rating and improvement system for child care providers in Maryland. As a result, parents will have access to more information about child care providers regarding their ability to appropriately support children with disabilities.
- Worked with the Maryland Child Care Resource and Referral Network Advisory Board to identify ways to improve and promote their services to reach and support more families with children with disabilities.



**“I have been to a lot of trainings and I have never left with so much useful information. I’m going back and putting a lot of this into practice”**

**~ Child care provider at the DD Council /MOST Network forum**

# EDUCATION

## BUILDING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Families need more information and skill-building opportunities to be effective long term advocates for their children's educational needs. But it can be difficult to access good training and resources, especially in outlying areas of Maryland and regions with high poverty levels. In response, the Council funded **three new initiatives** for parents in 2013 that focused on the special education process and other critical issues affecting children with developmental disabilities.

- The Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) conducted education, training, and skill development sessions for nearly 100 family members living in Maryland's nine Eastern Shore counties.
- TransCen, Inc. trained more than 30 family members and other advocates in rural Somerset County, taking into account unique barriers families face in that area and keeping them actively engaged through follow-up in between training sessions.
- The Arc Baltimore partnered with other organizations to conduct outreach and education for families in Baltimore City and County who are homeless and have children with developmental disabilities in special education. The partnerships developed by The Arc led to increased outreach to homeless families, as well as the organizations that support them. The Arc presented to over 200 Baltimore City public school social workers at the beginning of the school year and will participate at the homeless services fair with hundreds of other providers.

As a result of the training provided by TransCen, Inc. through support of the Council, many parents have emerged as mentors to other parents and potential leaders in the community on disability issues important in the area. For example, after attending the first few workshops, one mom gained the knowledge and confidence to work with the school system to ensure her son received specific work experiences, coursework and supports appropriate for his final year of school. She also successfully advocated for his participation in a pilot continuing education program at the community college.

**“It is vital that we have programs offered on the Eastern Shore.**

**I have learned so much that I can bring back to my support group and my county's Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee”**

**— Mom in Queen Anne's County who attended MCDD training sponsored by the Council**





Eliminating barriers  
that create separation  
and segregation



# ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

## INCREASING INDEPENDENCE THROUGH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

At the close of year three, AT: LAST, Inc.'s **All Together in the Mountains** initiative helped organizations that support children and adults with disabilities incorporate and sustain assistive technology (AT) services in their programs. AT: LAST, Inc.'s technical assistance trained over 120 teachers, childcare providers, administrative staff, and families on how AT can increase the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities across settings. The project's intervention directly changed how large organizations serve people with developmental disabilities; results include increased participation by people with disabilities in their Individual Plan process, and advocating for healthcare and community employment opportunities.

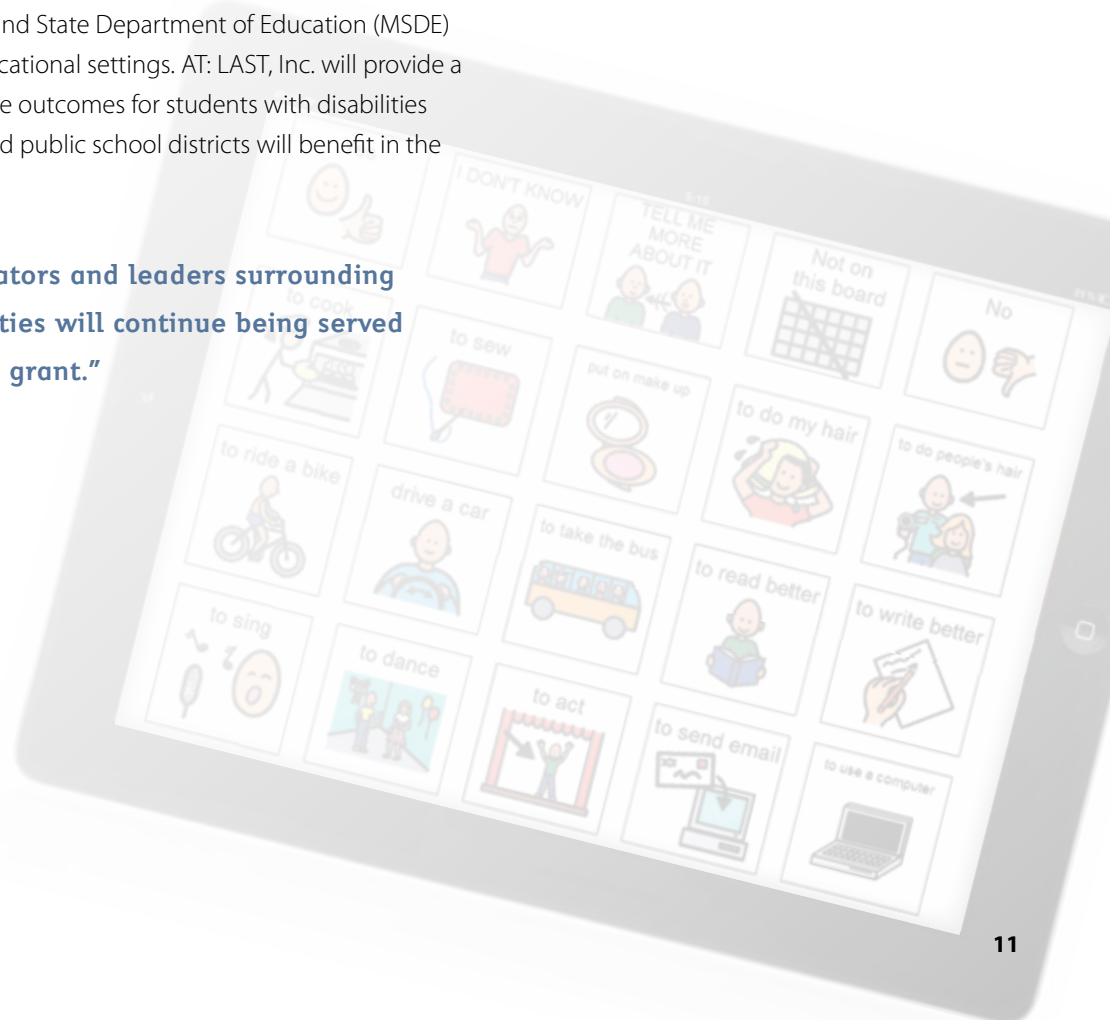


## INVESTMENTS THAT EXPAND AND SUSTAIN

With Council support, AT: LAST, Inc. received a \$25,000 grant from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to implement its model of assistive technology services and supports in educational settings. AT: LAST, Inc. will provide a front-line AT expert to build the capacity of education system staff to improve outcomes for students with disabilities by increasing their access to assistive technology equipment. Three Maryland public school districts will benefit in the first year, with the possibility of continuing beyond 2014.

**“By changing the philosophy and mind-set of administrators and leaders surrounding assistive technology, people with developmental disabilities will continue being served far beyond the parameters of this grant.”**

— AT: LAST staff



# EMPLOYMENT

## LEADING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Even though Maryland has made progress, much more needs to be accomplished to increase inclusive, competitive employment for people with developmental disabilities. To that end, the Council formed and led a partnership with the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Dept. of Disabilities (DOD), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DORS) and four other statewide organizations that applied for technical assistance and support to develop a state-level consortium focused on systems change and the development and implementation of a state strategic plan. Maryland was one of seven states selected through a competitive process to participate in the national **Employment Learning Community: Improving Employment Systems and Services for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.**

The foundation for this systems change initiative was laid in 2013 and over the next two years, Maryland will focus on: 1) creating a culture where employment of people with developmental disabilities is an expectation, 2) strengthening state and local collaborations that facilitate increased employment, 3) adopting policies, regulations, and funding mechanisms that remove barriers and promote competitive employment, and 4) identifying and implementing an on-going training and professional development plan to improve the quality of employment services and supports.

## EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

In addition to addressing state level systems issues, the Council assists supported employment providers at the local level. The Council supported four organizations to improve their ability to provide customized employment supports and services. These organizations are committed to making organizational changes, enhancing collaboration, and increasing staff skills and knowledge. Outcomes from Council-funded training and technical assistance will have lasting impact and include:

- Agency decisions to no longer provide sheltered work, instead focusing on employment in the community;
- More effective working relationships with the Division of Rehabilitation Services;
- Realignment of staff to achieve employment outcomes; and
- Improved discovery and customized employment services.

As a result, Goodwill Industries of Monocacy Valley, Penn-Mar Human Services, Ardmore Enterprises, and The Arc of Howard County helped additional people obtain integrated competitive work in the community in 2013.



## FACILITATING PEER SUPPORT & NETWORKING

Recognizing the value of peer-to-peer learning, the Council has sponsored the **Maryland Organizational Change Peer Network** for three years. The Network brings together service providers and representatives from the Division of Rehabilitation Services to share best practices and strategies for making organizational changes that increase and improve the delivery of customized employment services and supports. Ten providers currently participate in the Network with representation from executive and middle management along with job developers and job coaches. Network members supported 141 people to obtain jobs in the community.

## ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS FOR TRANSITIONING YOUTH

Effective strategies for supporting youth transitioning out of school who want integrated, competitive employment are a critical need across the State. In an effort to expand effective practices, the Council awarded TransCen, Inc. a second year of funding for the **Employment Supports for Transitioning Youth Project**. Through training and technical assistance, TransCen provides consultation and tools to five organizations to build their capacity to serve transitioning youth. By engaging in a seamless transition model, providers have strengthened their connections with DDA, DORS and local school systems. Twenty-one transitioning youth have benefited from the support of providers to obtain jobs of their choosing or to gain work experience in summer jobs.



Through a Penn-Mar Human Services' project funded by the Council, Stephanie Nichols has started a successful career within the long term care industry. Under this project, Penn-Mar Employment staff received ongoing training and technical assistance from area consultants specializing in customized employment practices. Consequently, Penn-Mar staff were able to develop a customized position for Stephanie at Country Meadows Retirement Communities, while also learning the best way to support Stephanie in her career. These skills will be used to help others find employment in the community.



## PUBLICATIONS, RESOURCES & OTHER INITIATIVES

### PROVIDING RESOURCES THAT INFORM & TRANSFORM THINKING

People with disabilities and their families, advocates, providers, and state officials continued to use the Council's education and training resources to increase awareness, change attitudes, and enhance understanding of important, yet complex, issues.

- **Planning Now** has informed and guided close to 2000 families to understand and engage in futures and estate planning. All printed copies have been distributed but demand remains high. An additional 1000 copies in English and 1000 in Spanish have been printed to supplement the online versions.
- In 2013, the Council's publication **What's Possible**, and documentary **Departing Rosewood**, reached new audiences in Maryland and other states. Our investment in these resources continued to pay dividends as diverse audiences learned about the positive impact on individuals and families when people leave institutions for life back in their communities. One state summed up the reaction to *What's Possible* as an educational and advocacy tool this way: "People are going wild for this publication."

**"What's Possible is a poignant reminder of why we do what we do." — Texas advocate**

### ENHANCING COMMUNICATIONS

The Council developed new communication strategies to better inform people with developmental disabilities, families, and other stakeholders about up-to-date resources and opportunities to engage in advocacy activities. More people are following the Council on Facebook and joining our growing list serve of over 1,400. This will be supplemented in 2014 with a shift to monthly newsletters and breaking news blasts that will foster the distribution of current information to a wider audience.

**"I am sure many, many families will find the Planning Now guide to be a useful reference that they will refer to again and again."**  
**— Executive Director of provider agency**



Planning Now

## SUPPORTING LEARNING THAT LEADS TO CHANGE

The Council's **Conference Participation Fund** provides people with developmental disabilities and their family members direct access to information and tools to inspire and equip them to act on issues they find important, acquire resources, and share lessons-learned with others around the state.

**“The conference helped to empower my girls and increase their self-confidence.” — Parent**

## SPONSORING SMALL INITIATIVES THAT HAVE IMPORTANT IMPACT

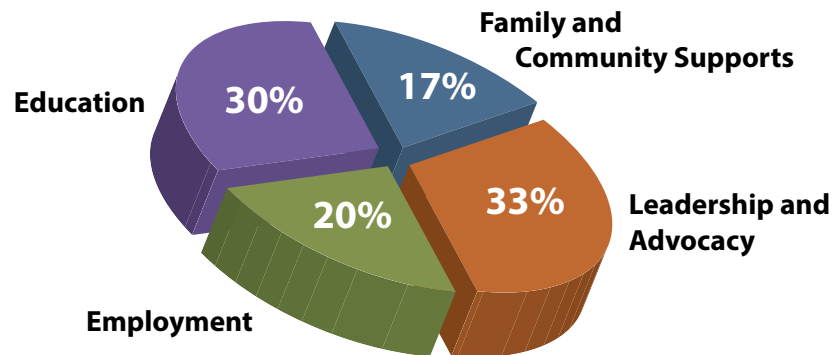
The Council's **Small Grants** funding is used in various ways to spread awareness, support communities, increase advocacy, and educate people with developmental disabilities and their families on issues of importance. Below is a diverse list of activities supported in 2013:

- Co-sponsored the ReelAbilities Film Festival in the greater DC, MD, and VA that promoted awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories and artistic expressions of people with varying abilities
- Supported a facilitator to conduct focus groups with families to identify barriers in the school to work transition process at the Maryland Transition Conference
- Co-funded ACTIVATE HERE, an online self-advocacy resource video that prepares people with developmental disabilities to advocate on local, state, and national levels
- Co-sponsored the 23rd Maryland ADA celebration where Lt. Governor Anthony Brown addressed over 250 people with disabilities, family members and professionals
- Sponsored a public panel discussion about labeling and accessibility for the Evergreen Museum & Library at Johns Hopkins University



One family with two daughters with developmental disabilities attended a national conference with financial support from the Council's Conference Participation Fund. Sessions focused on being included in the community and advocacy gave the entire family valuable information they immediately put into practice once they returned home to Maryland. Edith and Rose advocated on their own behalf to obtain competitive employment. Edith turned her volunteer work into a 16 hour a week paid position with an assisted living organization and Rose went from earning sub-minimum wages in an enclave to fulfilling her dream of working in child care. The family continues to share the information and resources they received.

## TOTAL PROJECT EXPENDITURES in 2013: \$380,641



■ Family and Community Supports	\$63,182	17%
■ Leadership and Advocacy	\$126,776	33%
■ Employment	\$74,567	20%
■ Education and Early Intervention	\$116,116	30%

*Funding for this publication is authorized by Subtitle B of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Community Living, Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Washington, D.C.*

## CONNECT WITH US

For information about Council publications, announcements, and funding opportunities, in addition to other timely news important to people with developmental disabilities, their families, and allies in Maryland, **join our email list-serve** and **follow us on Facebook.**



THIS PUBLICATION IS AVAILABLE  
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