



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

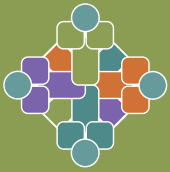
highlights | **2016**
ANNUAL REPORT



empowerment

opportunity

inclusion



Working to advance the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

In this edition of *Highlights*, you'll read about the many issues the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council tackled in 2016 including education, child care, employment, housing, family support, police training, and self-advocacy. You'll also read about the many ways in which the Council addressed these issues—providing testimony, serving on work groups to develop solutions, and supporting training, awareness, and inclusiveness through grants to diverse groups throughout the state. Faith leaders in Prince George's County, parents of children with autism in Howard County, transition professionals and families on the Lower Eastern Shore, and Orthodox Jewish families in Baltimore—this is just a sampling of the wide range of groups the Council reached this year.

The outcomes of these collaborations were far-reaching. Here's a glimpse of what we helped accomplish through our partnerships with many individuals and organizations:

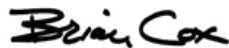
- The **Equal Employment Act** was passed, making Maryland the **second state in the nation** to legislate that employers may no longer pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage.
- People with disabilities and their families in Maryland will soon have the opportunity to **save for disability-related expenses** because of the **establishment of the Maryland ABLÉ Program**. It is estimated that between 31,500 and 53,600 Marylanders will use this program.
- **Supporting Children with Developmental Disabilities in Child Care**, an e-learning module produced through a Council grant, is now the **second most requested training nationally** on the Child Care Aware® online training platform.

Going forward, the Council has developed its strategic five year state plan, setting our goals and priorities for 2017 - 2021. We are eager to capitalize on the momentum of 2016 as we look ahead to make even greater progress for Marylanders with developmental disabilities.

Sincerely,



Eric Cole, Chairperson



Brian Cox, Executive Director

“The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council and our partners are on the front lines—sharing what’s important to us, leading the lives we want, and changing the discussion from inclusion to community belonging.” — Eric Cole



Eric Cole



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.

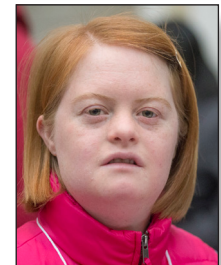
TO ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSION THE COUNCIL:

- 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 and 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 limits 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 working 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.





Close to 600 people with disabilities, family members, advocates, and providers attended Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature 2016, co-sponsored by the Council in collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Coalition. The Council supported people with disabilities and their family members to attend and meet with their legislators.

In a post-event survey, 32% of respondents said it was the first DD Day they had attended, indicating our reach has expanded.

LEGISLATIVE INVOLVEMENT & ACTION

BRINGING ABOUT CHANGE THROUGH LEGISLATION

The Council actively followed 61 bills that had a direct impact on people with developmental disabilities and monitored 64 others.

We provided testimony, as well as advocacy on, a wide range of legislation, including bills to:

- mandate funding for people on DDA's waiting list who are in crisis
- require funding for prekindergarten education
- require parental consent before an IEP team can take certain action that affects a child's special education
- require IEP teams to provide parents with written and oral explanation of their right to request mediation
- remove the requirement that financial aid be used for tuition before a tuition waiver is given to a person with a disability attending community college
- increase insurance coverage for habilitative services
- prohibit housing discrimination based on source of income, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- The Council helped take the lead on the **Ken Capone Equal Employment Act**, which phases out the use of subminimum wage in MD, and the establishment of the **Maryland ABLE Program**, both of which passed. The Ken Capone Equal Employment Act (EEA) makes Maryland the second state in the nation to legislate that employers may no longer pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage as is currently permitted under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Maryland ABLE Program will allow people with disabilities and their families to save for disability-related expenses similar to the way families save for college. According to the MD ABLE Task Force, it is estimated that between 31,500 and 53,600 Marylanders will take advantage of this program.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES DAY 2016 AT THE LEGISLATURE

Once again, DD Day at the Legislature brought large crowds to Annapolis. Individuals with developmental disabilities, families, providers, and advocates met with their legislators to make personal connections and share information that pertained to key legislation.



The governor signing legislation to establish the MD ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) Program.

“I would like you to know what can—and did—happen to a family when funding for services is a hope away, but never becomes a reality. My son, Adam, is ranked as “crisis prevention.” He requires one-on-one assistance 24/7... We are one of 1,200 families stuck in this prevention status for many, many years without the support we need.”

— JoEllen Barnhart



Council member JoEllen Barnhart and two of her sons, Adam and Andrew, at DD Day 2016. The Barnharts testified in front of the Senate Finance Committee in support of a bill that would require funds to be used to provide ongoing services to individuals in the “crisis resolution” category on the DDA waiting list.

ADVOCACY

People on the Go (POG) of Maryland is a statewide self-advocacy organization led by and for people with developmental disabilities. POG receives funding and other support from the Council and the Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) and works in partnership with the Council and MCDD on many issues. Over the past five years, POG has grown, both strategically and in number, to steadily increase its presence at high-level state planning meetings and the legislature, becoming a strong force in systems advocacy and leadership. This year, POG led the way in the passage of the Ken Capone Equal Employment Act, named after POG's Public Policy Director. By forming the Equal Employment Coalition, a coalition of partners consisting of national and state advocacy organizations, the group educated the community about the issue, drafted the language for this important bill, and advocated for its passage. After legislative hearings, stakeholders, including advocates, providers, and state agencies, met and arrived at consensus on amendments to the legislation. The legislation, which represented compromise on all sides, was signed by the governor and requires the phase-out of subminimum wage by 2020.

Other Key POG Accomplishments:

- Provided leadership training from experts during their quarterly meetings, including public speaking presentations from Toastmasters.
- Delivered presentations to the community, reaching 335 people through organizations including Independence Now, The Arc of Washington County, and Pathfinders for Autism. Topics focused on self-advocacy and leadership. The group also provided voter training in Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore.
- Actively participated in workgroups and committees addressing statewide issues such as transition, employment, person-centered planning, rate setting, and compliance with the new HCBS settings rule.
- Delivered a conference that provided training opportunities in developing leadership skills, understanding self-direction, safely expanding use of technology, and achieving independence for 80 attendees. Presentations were given by people with developmental disabilities, some of whom were new to public speaking.



Mat Rice, Public Policy Specialist for POG, after giving the Call to Action at DD Day 2016.



The Ken Capone Equal Employment Act (EEA) makes Maryland the second state in the nation to legislate that employers may no longer pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage. This legislation passed as a result of strong leadership by People on the Go, the Council, and many other advocates and organizations. This diverse coalition worked closely to amend the bill to address concerns, ensuring a stronger bill with more widespread support. When the bill was voted on in the Senate, senators applauded the passage and Senate President Miller publicly congratulated the coalition for its work.

Ken Capone speaking at DD Day at the Legislature.

ADVOCACY BY THE BAY

The **Advocacy by the Bay Project (ABB)** was a cross-agency collaborative effort to assist youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities in “finding their voices” in order to become active members of their schools and local communities. Administered through Tilson & Diaz Solutions, Inc. (TDS), consultants who build and enhance programs supporting people with disabilities to achieve their goals, this Council-funded project began three years ago to increase the self-advocacy skills of transition-age youth in middle and high school and inform their families and educators on the Lower Eastern Shore (Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties).

Upon completion of this initiative, TDS identified transition professionals to continue core components of the project. To build on the success of this grant and support its ongoing sustainability, TDS partnered with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the three lower shore school districts, and ArtStream, a theater-based self-determination program.

Key Accomplishments Include:

- Provided professional development, workshops, and individualized training to more than 40 educators and support staff, expanding their knowledge of self-advocacy, transition, and the IEP process.
- Delivered workshops to 87 students in elementary through high school, both with and without disabilities, teaching them how to expand and apply their self-determination and self-advocacy skills in various school and community settings, including IEP meetings.
- Developed and distributed more than 600 teacher activity guides to support educators in building assertive communication skills among students with disabilities.
- Trained more than 50 parents about their children’s education rights, including how to write measurable post-school goals on the IEP.
- Presented two successful Advocacy & Transition Conferences on the Lower Eastern Shore and in Southern Maryland. Forty six students attended, 100% of whom reported that they learned about who can help them when they leave school, how to tell people about their strengths, and how to share with others what they need to be successful.



ArtStream: In ArtStream workshops, students conducted role plays, created characters to solve issues, improvised various ways of communicating with others, and discovered their strong voices. These activities had a profound impact on increasing students' self-determination.



Counter Clockwise: Michael, Hunter, and Tatiana participate in Advocacy by the Bay programs.

Before participating in these self-advocacy activities, a student was asked what he'd like to do for a career. He replied, "I'd like to go to college." When asked what he would like to study, his response was, "I don't know," as he fidgeted in his seat. After the integration of ArtStream activities into his education, he was asked the same question. He said right away, "I want to be a graphic designer." One of his teachers reported that at the end of the school year, he approached his teachers and told them that he wanted to go back to his home school. The teacher said, "He really advocated for himself. (He) made the case for why it would be better for him to be there. We called an IEP meeting, talked about it. He's going to his home school next year!"

EMPLOYMENT

TIP GRANTS: TRANSFORMING AND IMPROVING PRACTICES

To improve the ways people with developmental disabilities receive employment support and have meaningful days, the Council established a new partnership with **Maryland Works**, a statewide membership association committed to expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Together, we developed and issued an RFP for grants entitled **Transforming & Improving Practices through Customized Technical Assistance (TIP)**.

Fourteen employment service providers were selected as grant recipients. Grantees identified specific activities to increase the number of people with developmental disabilities employed in community jobs of their choice, increase the number of hours worked and/or increase the number of people participating in meaningful community activities of their choice when not working, and decrease the number of people in facility-based employment and day services.

Selected providers are receiving technical assistance from subject matter experts and ongoing peer-to-peer mentoring to address their specific organizational needs. As a result of this initiative, the Council expects an increase in the number of individuals with developmental disabilities who report a measurable improvement in their employment status and an increase in new ideas and approaches implemented and evaluated by employment service providers. Effective practices will be shared among peers to be replicated.

COLLABORATIONS TO ENSURE BEST PRACTICES

To expand opportunities and build capacity, the Council also continued to participate in collaborative groups focused on employment policies, practices, and related issues. We played an active role on the **Employment First Leadership Team** that was established to develop recommendations for a statewide plan. The Council also facilitated meetings of the **Maryland Organizational Change Peer Network**, which grew out of a past project, with eight employment support providers throughout the state working to identify and address systemic changes needed to improve employment outcomes for people with developmental disabilities.

“The support provided by this grant will enable us to further strengthen our model, support the individuals we serve, and ensure our team has access to tremendous subject matter experts.”

— 2016 TIP Grantee



This photo, submitted by Rosemary Ross, was a winner in the Council's annual photo contest. Brad has worked at Sal's Pizza for several years.



“Employment gives people with disabilities a sense of belonging and expands their social opportunities. Maryland is making progress to ensure meaningful employment for people with disabilities, but there’s still much work to be done to improve employment services. We must continually raise expectations and advocate for all working age adults who have disabilities so they have access to the supports they need to get and keep the jobs they want.”

— Aaron Kaufman
Council Vice Chair

Aaron Kaufman, Council Vice Chair, is photographed here attending DD Day at the Legislature.

SMALL GRANTS & EVENT SPONSORSHIPS

Through small grant funding, the Council supported a wide range of projects that correspond with our key focus areas and overall mission. Grantees included:

- **Accessible Resources for Independent Living** (a Center for Independent Living) — to conduct a track for transitioning youth during the Howard County Transition Symposium, led for the first time by and for people with disabilities.
- **Ardmore Enterprises** — to support the development of a new self-advocacy group. The group established rules and routines and met with Ardmore’s executive leadership team to discuss changes to make at the agency.
- **CHI Centers, Inc.** — to begin a self-advocacy group. The group held a voter registration forum presented by a person with developmental disabilities who taught about voting rights and responsibilities.
- **Community Life Resources** — to help identify and develop new housing options for individuals with developmental disabilities. After engaging in extensive research, a promising new sustainable strategy was developed that builds on Howard County’s current programs with the intent to pilot the initiative in 2017.
- **Prince George’s County Adults with Developmental Disabilities Citizens Advisory Committee (ADDCAC)** — to support the execution of the group’s five-year strategic plan, which includes increasing the number of faith leaders who support inclusive programs.
- **Partnerships for Extraordinary Minds** — to develop a curriculum for training middle and high school students without disabilities to support diploma-bound peers who have autism in their pursuit of student service learning hours.
- **Menucha, Inc.** — to provide parent training regarding sibling support adapted to the needs and customs of the Orthodox Jewish Community.
- **The Arc Maryland** — to support advocacy and awareness related to the DDA Waiting List focused on legislators and the media.

Through event sponsorship funding, the Council also supported many education, training, and other events, including:

- **Independence Now's 2016 Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)** — provided high school juniors and seniors with disabilities from across the state the opportunity to learn about self-advocacy, disability rights, transitioning from high school to college or jobs, and how to advocate for change through the legislative process. Students spent a day in Annapolis meeting with legislators and participating in mock hearings.
- **Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Regional Institute: From Workshops to Workplaces** — six provider agency representatives attended this event that taught about converting center-based services to community integrated employment.
- **2016 ADA Anniversary Celebration** — attended by 350 community members, included a technology fair and workshop on accessible social media.
- **Maryland Professional Transition Institute** — attended by 128 school, community, and rehabilitation professionals and post-secondary educators.
- **Moving Maryland Forward Retreat** — assisted eight service provider agencies from across the state in implementing organizational change through this event sponsored by the Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS).

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

To engage a wider audience, the Council continued its partnership with The Arc Maryland in hosting webinars. Topics, which were determined by conducting a survey, were: "All You Ever Wanted to Know about the DDA, but Were Afraid to Ask," "So You're Approved for DDA Services—What's Next?," and "Employment First: New Opportunities, Dispelling Myths & Misconceptions." 434 people attended the webinars. One participant summed up the impact when she commented that the webinars provided "Encouragement to think outside of the box."



Photo at Top: Youth Leadership Forum 2016 participants (*photo courtesy of Independence Now*)

Photo at Bottom: Celebrating the 26th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (*photo courtesy of the Maryland Department of Disabilities*)



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES

The Council partnered with the Developmental Disabilities Administration to lay the foundation for the **Maryland Community of Practice for Supporting Families (CoP)**. This is part of a national initiative that aims to expand and improve informal and formal supports available to families that include a member with intellectual and developmental disabilities. A leadership team was formed and in 2016 our work included identification of state and local partners and co-sponsorship of regional events to inform and engage a wide array of community stakeholders.

State and community partners will work together to create policies and practices to better support families across the lifespan. The regional events will continue through the first quarter of 2017, with goals for developing awareness of the principles of the CoP, as well as tools that individuals, families, and support systems can use to help identify and chart what would personally constitute a good life for each individual. Feedback from a diverse representation of community partners, families, and individuals with developmental disabilities will serve to inform the MD CoP Leadership Team's development of a three-year strategic plan. The MD CoP seeks to promote high expectations about people with I/DD among families, the community, and the systems that support them.



CHILD CARE & EDUCATION

The Council continued to advocate for children with disabilities to learn and play alongside their peers without disabilities in child care and school settings through grant funding, public awareness initiatives, and advocacy.

Ongoing impact of grants:

In 2015, the Council produced two videos with Eddyline Media highlighting inclusive practices in child care and before and after-school programs. In 2016, the videos were distributed widely and posted on the websites of Maryland Family Network, Ready at Five, the Office of Child Care, and MD EXCELS. They were also presented to more than 100 attendees at the Division of Special Education's professional learning institute, more than 100 child care licensing specialists at their annual conference, and were incorporated into the training required for all child care providers regarding the ADA and Inclusive Practices.

New grant initiative:

The Council provided a grant to Maryland Family Network (MFN) to expand access to childcare for children in five counties on the Upper Eastern Shore. Two focus groups, one for family child care providers and another for child care center staff, were held to survey specific needs regarding children with disabilities and their families in this region. MFN created a Community of Practice with 20 child care providers who received onsite training and ongoing technical assistance.

Education Workgroups, Advocacy, and Community Leadership

The Council's work on education in 2016 was far-reaching and included:

- Served on the Special Education State Advisory Council (SESAC), the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC), the Office of Child Care's Advisory Committee, and the Education Advocacy Coalition--all of which advise MSDE on issues that affect children with disabilities.
- Provided feedback to MSDE on a myriad of issues, including the implementation of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to ensure the school achievement gap continues to close for students with disabilities.
- Provided testimony and leadership in support of legislation affecting students with disabilities on a wide range of issues.



The Council plays a unique role in the state, helping to bring about sustainable, systemic change through collaborations that have been developed over many years. Marcella Franczkowski, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services, commented on this, "The children and adults of Maryland benefit from our strong and productive partnership."

2016 BY THE NUMBERS

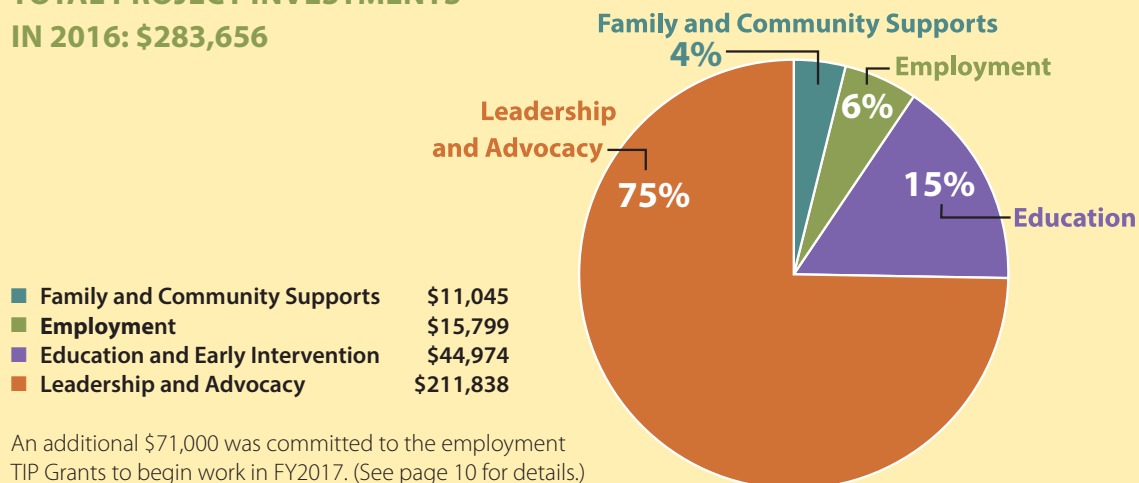
The Council's work resulted in:

- 2671** people trained through Council supported initiatives, including leadership, self-advocacy, and self-determination activities
- 54** people involved in systems advocacy
- 18** programs/policies created or improved
- 133** organizations involved in coalitions, networks, or partnerships
- 27** organizations engaged in systems change efforts
- 188** legislators educated about DD issues
- 2700** members of general public educated about DD issues
- \$130,000** leveraged for additional grant funding

INVESTMENTS IN MARYLAND

We consider our grant funding to be an investment that builds a better and more inclusive community, ultimately building a stronger Maryland.

TOTAL PROJECT INVESTMENTS IN 2016: \$283,656



STAY CONNECTED

- Sign up for our newsletter, News You Can Use, on our website: www.md-council.org or by calling us at 410-767-6249.
- By signing up, expect to receive timely information about current and emerging issues, legislation, Council activities and grants, and other issues of importance to children and adults with developmental disabilities and their families in Maryland.
- Be informed about upcoming statewide conferences, hearings, and workshops.
- Be a part of the conversation driving change in Maryland! Find us on Facebook and Twitter



To learn more about current initiatives funded by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, go to the Projects tab on our website, www.md-council.org.

2016 MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Council member Damon Briggs with Chairperson Eric Cole and Vice Chair Aaron Kaufman.



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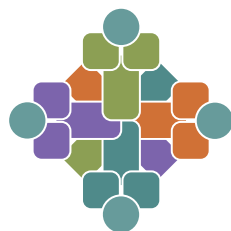
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