

Statement on 60th Anniversary of the DD Act

October 31, 2023

The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), and the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) honor the 60th Anniversary of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights (DD) Act.

The DD Act established the DD Network, which includes State Councils on Developmental Disabilities; University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Services (UCEEDs); and Protection & Advocacy Systems (P&As). These entities work to identify and solve issues that individuals with developmental disabilities face in their communities. The three DD Act programs provide training and technical assistance to policymakers, and work to remove barriers that prevent individuals with developmental disabilities from having their voices heard. The 56 Councils, 57 P&As, and 67 UCEDDs across the United States also work with local, state, and federal governments to develop robust policy solutions aimed at empowering these individuals and promoting self-determination. During the pandemic, these programs have rapidly stood up virtual platforms to ensure that the voices and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities can be heard and met even as traditional health care and advocacy is interrupted. They continue to ensure that state and federal responses to the pandemic consider and account for the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. . The DD Network is supported by NACDD, AUCD, and NDRN.

The DD Act ensures that people with developmental disabilities and their families are able to plan for supports that focuses on their self-determination, independence, and being an included and valued member of their community. The DD Network is a collaboration between the programs and organizations sponsored and supported by the DD Act. This network supports individuals, families, and communities by providing outreach materials, leading conferences, implementing and sharing research, as well as working together across policy issues.

In the years since 1963, the deinstitutionalization of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities has been a large movement. Many remember the 1972 expose of Willowbrook State School, but it was not until the 1999 Supreme Court of the United States decision in *Olmstead v. LC* that, segregating individuals to institutions based on disability, violated the Americans with Disabilities Act. This began a need for community-based services.

Services for individuals with developmental disabilities have expanded and improved; however, there is still more work to be done. Often for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the ability to be in the community is not available or accessible. Nursing homes continue to be a relied upon service due to funding and workforce limitations.

There is a shortage of direct service providers, underfunding for HCBS, and barriers to family caregivers being compensated.

“The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act is a key piece of legislation for our disability community. Ensuring that there are programs and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities to be successful in living in their communities and achieving their dreams is vital to our society,” says Robin Troutman, Deputy Director of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities. “The DD Network allows for every state and territory to learn from each other, support one another, and be change-agents. It is the job of the network to share resources and create connections across the nation for individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, and their communities. Every individual deserves to live and participate in their community and the DD Network is here to aid in that.”

“By creating the Protection and Advocacy Network, the DD Act ensured that people with developmental disabilities experiencing abuse, neglect, or other violations of their rights had somewhere to turn to for help,” said NDRN Executive Director Marlene Sallo. “We recognize its historic importance on this 60th Anniversary and pledge to continue working with our partners to fulfil our shared vision of full inclusion, access, and independence for people with disabilities.”

“Because of the DD Act, we can celebrate huge advances in science, community inclusion, and access to services for those living with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” said John Tschida, Executive Director at AUCD. “Our organization will continue to support our members in research, education, health, and service activities, in strong alliance with our DD Act partners.”

About NACDD

NACDD is the national association for the 56 Councils on Developmental Disabilities (DD Councils) across the United States and its territories. The DD Councils receive federal funding to support programs that promote self-determination, integration, and inclusion for all people in the United States with developmental disabilities.

About AUCD

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) is a membership organization that supports and promotes a national network of university-based interdisciplinary programs. These programs serve and are located in every U.S. state and territory and are all part of universities or medical centers. They serve as a bridge between the university and the community, bringing together the resources of both to achieve meaningful change.

About National Disability Rights Network: The National Disability Rights Network works in Washington, DC on behalf of the Protection and Advocacy Systems (P&As) and Client Assistance Programs (CAPs), the nation's largest providers of legal advocacy services for people with disabilities.