



2016-2022
HALFWAY
REPORT

VERMONT DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

Created under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act.

About the Council



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Council Officers and Staff

Miriam Stoll

has served as Council Chair, and
Stacey Emerson, Lisa Rudiakov, and
Mike Gruteke as Vice Chairs.

Kirsten Murphy,

Executive Director

Susan Aranoff,

Senior Planner and Policy Analyst

Chelsea Hayward,

Coord. of Communication and Admin.

Dear Friends,

In the Vermont Leadership Series, we teach our participants to start their advocacy by imagining where they want to end up. When riding a bike, you naturally steer in the direction that you are looking. So keep your eyes on the destination, and you'll successfully navigate the curves ahead. Focus on the obstacles, and you'll crash into them.

VTDDC has just passed the halfway mark on its road to accomplishing the work outlined in our Five-Year State Plan. In 2016, our members set three goals for people with developmental disabilities and their families in our State:

- ◆ In rural communities, people with disabilities have the same access to employment, education and healthcare as those in more populated areas.
- ◆ Disability advocates have the training and tools they need to shape the policies and programs impacting them.
- ◆ Vermont service systems are equitable, adequately resourced, and designed to support meaningful lives in the community.

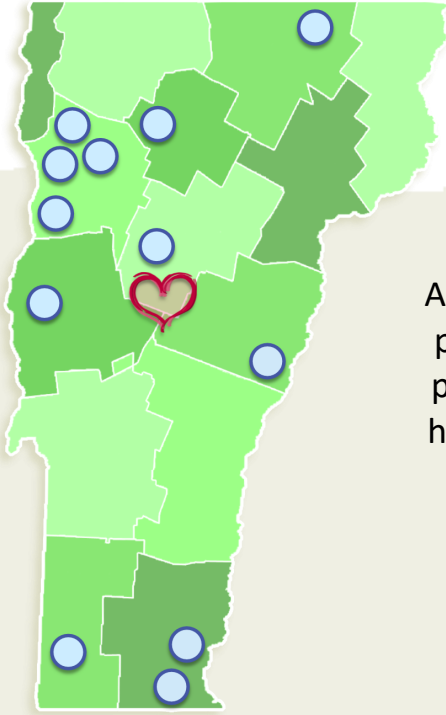
Along the way, there have been some steep climbs, some unexpected curves. Each of the key service systems on which people with disabilities depend — healthcare, special education, and developmental services — is undergoing tremendous change. State funding is an ever present challenge. Now more than ever, the voices of people with disabilities and their family members need to be heard.

Each activity in this report is a mile-marker on our journey. Keep your eyes ahead, I tell our Council members, and you'll naturally steer through the bends in the road. Oh, and don't forget to enjoy the view.

With warm regards,


Kirsten Murphy





Who are the Council Members?

At least 60% of VTDDC's members are Vermonters with developmental disabilities or family caregivers.

All Council members play a valuable role by informing VTDDC and policy-makers about what is happening throughout the State for people with developmental disabilities. Council Members decide how to invest VTDDC funds for the greatest positive impact. They work together to increase public awareness and to encourage systems change.

Self-advocates, family members, and agency representatives **from all over Vermont** are appointed by the Governor to be representatives for the community.

"NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US."



Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council Members and Staff.
June 2019. Killington, Vermont.

How do I become a candidate for membership?

The Council seeks to maintain a diverse membership that represents communities across Vermont. Applications are on VTDDC's website, and staff are happy to assist in filling out the form or to suggest an alternative format as an accommodation.

The Membership Committee reviews each applications, interviews qualified candidates, and makes recommendations to the Council at Quarterly Meetings. **Openings are limited.**

Underserved Communities

RURAL VERMONTERS ARE SUPPORTED BY GOAL 1 OF THE 5-YEAR STATE PLAN

VTDDC will reduce barriers to competitive employment, inclusive education, and effective health care services for people with developmental disabilities in at least two (2) underserved rural Vermont communities characterized by significant economic poverty.







Youth Summit

by Green Mountain Self-Advocates

Each year, students preparing to transition from school to adulthood attend an all day conference to talk about advocacy and career goals. They explore opportunities to further their education, learn where to find local self-advocacy groups, and talk about how to stand up for themselves on their journey to greater independence.

Employment Summit 2017

by Center on Disability and Community Inclusion and Vermont APSE

Professionals, family members, and self-advocates were invited to discuss employing people with disabilities in competitive, integrated settings. High expectations in school set the stage for greater achievements in life.

Northeast Kingdom Alternatives to Guardianship Project

by Vermont Legal Aid

Attorneys from Vermont Legal Aid met with three (3) probate judges to discuss supported decision making and **self-determination**. Customized educational materials were made to promote alternatives to full guardianship. Thanks to VTDDC's initial investment, courts statewide are suggesting more limited guardianships.



Nurturing Alternatives

by Green Mountain Self-Advocates

People with disabilities taught their peers in the Northeast Kingdom about the ins-and-outs of revising or revoking guardianship arrangements, exercising greater choice over one's finances and healthcare, and seeking healthy support when making difficult decisions.

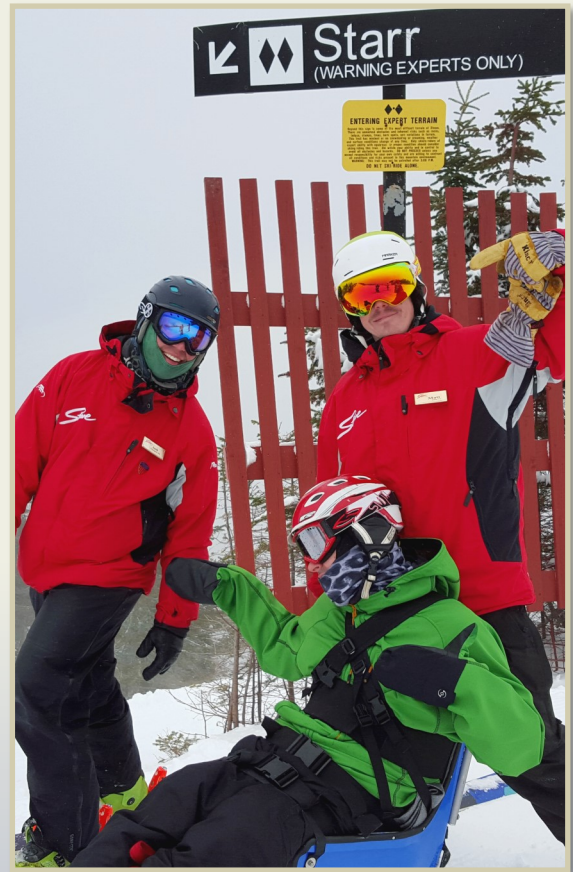


Unified Fitness Program by Special Olympics Vermont

To improve health outcomes for individuals with disabilities, Vermonters eight (8) years and older were paired with volunteer coaches to learn valuable life skills about maintaining good health. **Athletes were trained for several weekends to perform physical and mental wellness activities.**

There was a post-participation survey to determine the projects overall success. Those who saw the strongest improvement overall were the most mindful about food choice and physical activity.

All participants lived in communities without easy access to a gym, fitness center, or health food store, and additional clubs have been established since the project's original implementation.



Unified Fitness works!

When Jason joined Unified Fitness, he wasn't sure he would like working out between his practice sessions for the Special Olympics Bocce Team. His doctor had told him that his chronic joint pain might improve with exercise, but Jason, who has a developmental disability, lives in a small village where there isn't a gym or even a bus that could take him to one. Keeping up with good health has been challenging.

Jason and his partner started by setting a modest goal – they would walk together for a mile-and-a-half once a week. Soon they added some simple stretches and strengthening exercises. Jason's partner also brought hand weights for him to try.

When their ten weeks together ended, Jason said that he could tell his balance was improving. He was proud that he could punch faster when he shadow boxed with his coach. And he had picked up a set of hand weights so that he could keep training for the summer games.



Theatre Adventure Program

by the New England Youth Theatre

Lead by professional actors, self-advocates **skillfully harnessed their own hidden super-powers**. Through theatre arts, participants practiced public speaking and communication, as they learned to balance teamwork and leadership. The theatre workshops took place in southern Vermont, where they are now a regular feature of self-advocacy training.



Special Education Training

by The Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPPA)

Scholarships were awarded to seventeen (17) Vermont parents to participate in this national, online training. Over the 22-hour program, participants learned how to **navigate the complexities of the special education system and to understand special education as a civil right**.



Enhanced Family Driven Support

by Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

A family-support person was employed to aid parents of students with disabilities in the Southern region of Vermont. So far, twelve (12) families have received guidance through this new project to successfully navigate the school system, receive services, and identify resources.



People Planning Together

by the Green Mountain Self-Advocates

Still in the planning stage, 16 adults with disabilities will become **nationally certified trainers and peer mentors**. The goal is to develop a cadre of trained peers who can assist others in understanding their service options and how to speak up in their service planning meetings.

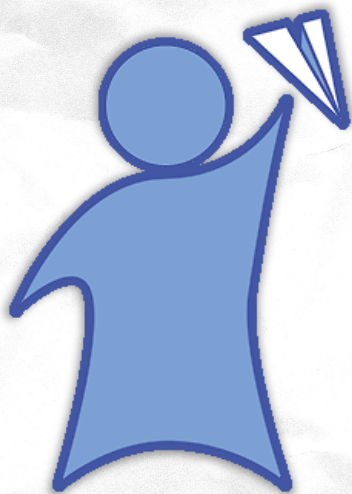
FINALLY! ALL OF YOUR DISABILITY-RELATED NEWS IN ONE PLACE.

Council Connections highlights what matters to you so that you can read the news quickly and go about your day.

VTDDC staff follow local and national news, and simplify what's happening in disability rights, provide resources that promote inclusion, and list opportunities for advocacy.

Visit our website and subscribe today.

<https://ddc.vermont.gov/>



**“IT’S EXCELLENT!
I ESPECIALLY APPRECIATE
THE SUMMARY OF BILLS
TO WATCH IN THE STATE
HOUSE.”**

**- COUNCIL MEMBER,
TERRY HOLDEN**





Empowering Vermonters

*WITH DISABILITIES IN
GOAL 2 OF THE 5-YEAR
STATE PLAN*

VTDDC will nurture and support a powerful movement of self-advocates and family members prepared to advocate for policies, programs, and funding that realize the vision of the Federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000.





WORK
WITH
DIGNITY

EMPOWERING VERMONTERS, GOAL 2



The Self-Advocacy Project by Green Mountain Self-Advocates

Vermonters with developmental disabilities govern a powerful non-profit called “Green Mountain Self-Advocates.” Together, they lead partners and professionals, give technical assistance to over twenty (20) self-advocacy groups statewide, celebrate their achievements with an annual conference, host a strong presence on social media, and drive the disability-rights movement for self-advocates nationwide.

Self-advocates are empowered to participate on advisory boards, cross-disability coalitions, and other groups, giving them leadership opportunities as they work for social change. They say,

**“NOTHING ABOUT US,
WITHOUT US.”**

Disability Awareness Day

by Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights

More than three-hundred (300) self-advocates, family members, and allies gather at the State House annually. They educate policy makers, participate in workshops, and witness the graduation ceremony for the Vermont Leadership Series. There is also a press conference and reception.



Disability Competency Tool Kit

by VT Developmental Disabilities Council

Two-hundred and forty (240) **healthcare workers received twenty (20) hours of instruction** about delivering care coordination to patients with disabilities. Vermonters with disabilities experience chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension at twice the rate of people without disabilities.

www.healthcareinnovation.vermont.gov



The Vermont Leadership Series is a unique training opportunity for self-advocates and family members to learn side-by-side. Each year new participants learn about disability history and how to support full inclusion, about building a successful campaign for change and how to speak to policymakers, and about the impact of community organizing. All materials are accessible and the skilled trainers present with diverse learning styles in mind.




Highlights include:

- Nationally known speakers and self-advocates inspire with their **“Go out and do it!”** attitude.
- Legislators coach participants on how they can have an influence at the State House.
- Action Teams collaborate to address current issues and spread awareness.
- Graduation takes place on Disability Awareness Day before a packed room of fellow advocates.



“I LEARNED — TAKE ACTION, BE UNCOMFORTABLE, TELL MY STORY, AND WORK TO CHANGE THINGS THAT NEED TO BE CHANGED!”

- 2019 LEADERSHIP GRADUATE



Systems Change

*IN THE STATE HOUSE WITH
GOAL 3 OF THE 5-YEAR
STATE PLAN*

VTDDC will vigorously seek changes in Vermont's many service systems so that Vermonters with developmental disabilities – including those who are currently not identified as having a developmental disability under Vermont law – and their family members have greater and more equitable access to supports that foster the four values in the Federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000: Community inclusion, self-determination, productivity, and independence.



SYSTEMS CHANGE, GOAL 3



Amicus Brief

by VTDDC supports Legal Aid in *RE RR*

In a “Friend of the Court” brief, the Council argued that a Vermont resident known only by the initials RR should receive developmental services. At issue, was whether **the State must respect the standard error of measurement** when using IQ for eligibility determination. The Vermont Supreme Court found in favor of RR and the need to consider the standard error of measure.

Cross Disability Coordinator

by Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights

The disability rights movement was strengthened by increasing the diversity of people involved, educating policy makers, and reaching out to individuals and families at the grassroots level. The Coordinator provided weekly updates by email during the legislative sessions.



Developmental Services provided by Designated and Specialized Services Agencies have been struggling with workforce shortages. As a result, the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council stood beside self-advocates to speak on behalf of the staff that serve them. The Council produced and distributed factual infographics, identified volunteers for testimony, and worked alongside network partners. At the end of the 2017-2018 legislative session, Act 82 and Act 85 were passed with two parts.

- Phase 1 took place within the first year of the Acts being signed. Designated and specialized agencies saw less staff turnover, and 2,000 staff received a pay bump to have a yearly minimal income of \$28,000.
- Phase 2 was side-lined for a year, but wage increases were written into the 2019-2020 legislative budget so that remaining staff could also receive a living wage.





Health Care Reform

was one of the hottest topic in 2018 and 2019, where the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council led the charge by gathering allies to discuss changes to health care delivery and financing. We asked, “What will happen to those who rely on Medicaid as Vermont embraces the All-Payer Model?” Dubbed, “Medicaid in Transition,” representatives from 15 disability organizations developed a plan to influence positive change in the health care system.

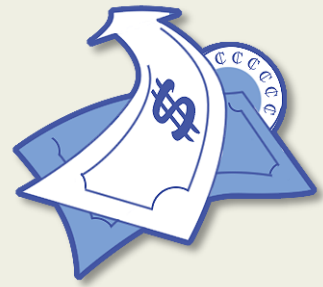
“THIS IS THE TYPE OF LEADERSHIP WE’VE BEEN LOOKING FOR IN THE DD COUNCIL. THANK YOU FOR BRINGING US TOGETHER.”

**- PROFESSOR AND ADVOCATE,
DEBORAH LISI BAKER**



Conflict Free Case Management

is among the new requirements from the Center for Medicaid Services (CMS). At issue is the need to reduce undue conflict of interest when agencies plan and coordinate services. Council members met with the Commissioner of Disability, Aging and Independent Living to share their experiences with case management. They gave examples of times when options counseling and care planning may have been influenced by an agency’s interest, as well as examples where care coordinators have gone “above and beyond” for an individual. The Council continues to advocate for a balanced approach to implementing the new rule.



Vermont ABE

is a program that allows Vermonters with disabilities to save money without jeopardizing federally funded benefits like social security and Medicaid.

VDDC has partnered with the Office of the State Treasurer to get the word out about this new savings opportunity.

VTDDC has presented the ABE Program to more than 1000 case managers, advocates, individuals and family members since it opened in 2016. To date, 300 Vermonters have enrolled.

The Council also advocates that Congress raise the age of onset for qualifying disabilities.

Why wait? Register today!

www.vermontABLE.com



About the Budget

2017-2019 Overview

Each year the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council receives an allocation from the United States Government through the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD).

The Council must provide AIDD with a detailed work plan and annual updates to show that these federal dollars have been working hard to improve the lives of Vermonters.

The total amount received over three years was: \$1,513,300.

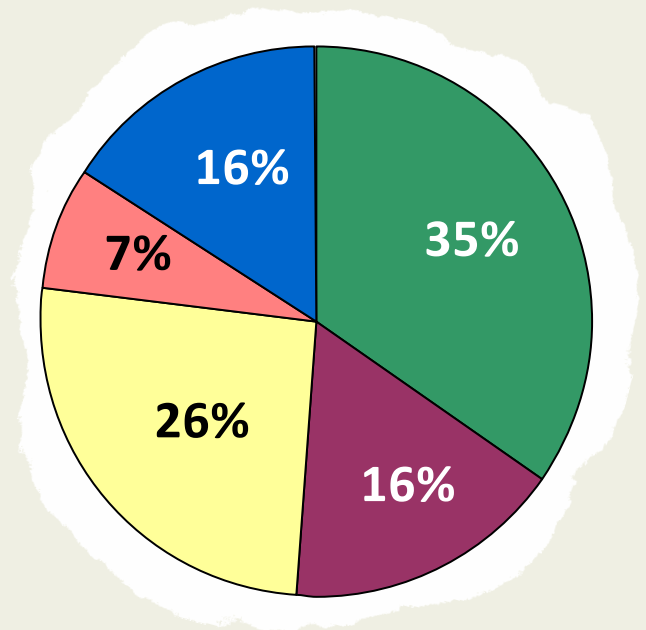
The total amount spent over three years is anticipated to be: \$1,491,442

Supporting the Five-Year Plan

To help implement its Five-Year State Plan, the Council works with many amazing community groups. VTDDC invested at least \$550,038 in partner organizations and Vermont businesses during the past three federal fiscal years, including:

Green Mountain Self-Advocates	\$191,000
VT Leadership Series	\$90,470
VT Coalition for Disability Rights	\$141,200
Conferences and Trainings	\$40,050
SEEDS Grants	\$87,318

New England Youth Theatre
Special Olympics Vermont
The Disability Law Project
Vermont Family Network
VT Federation of Families



Grants and Contracts

When a partner organization undertakes a project for VTDDC, the Council cannot fund more than 75% of the total cost.

In this way, the Council leverages other resources for the benefit of people with developmental disabilities. As of June 30, 2019, the total match for three years was \$431,300



Do you have a creative idea that supports inclusion, self-determination, and productivity?

GET A “JUMP START” FROM SEEDS!

Projects and activities can be small or big, local or statewide, and everything in between. Activities may including strategic planning, outreach and coalition development, training, and demonstration projects (pilots). Ideas for underserved communities are especially encouraged.

SEEDS are non-renewable awards that grant \$10,000 to \$15,000 to one-time projects sponsored by a non-profit organization.

Qualifying projects must support one of VTDDC’s goals or objectives, and must reflect the values found in the DD Act.

Want to apply? Watch VTDDC’s website for announcements and opportunities, and SOW the SEEDS of systems change:
<https://ddc.vermont.gov/>





THE MISSION OF VTDDC IS TO HELP BUILD CONNECTIONS AND SUPPORTS THAT BRING PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES INTO THE HEART OF VERMONT COMMUNITIES.

