



Council on
Developmental Disabilities



Creating lasting,
positive change
in Tennessee.



What is the Council on Developmental Disabilities?

We are a state agency established to improve disability policies and practice, educate policymakers and the public, and facilitate collaboration across public and private organizations.

**Ultimately, we're here to
improve the lives of all Tennesseans
with developmental disabilities.**

Tennessee is fortunate to have many wonderful organizations and programs in place to serve our diverse intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) community. The system of services is complex and far-reaching.
We help it work better for everyone.

The Council is the only organization of its kind, tasked with understanding the entire disability services network, identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement, and bringing citizens, policymakers, and groups together to guide lasting change from the inside.

We help people understand and improve the disability system in Tennessee by:



Amplifying the collective voice of the disability community.

The Council creates year-round opportunities for **individuals**, **families**, and **organizations** in the I/DD community to voice opinions, share perspectives, and take an active role in affecting change.



Launching programs that transform.

We provide flexible resources and expert guidance to help organizations increase their impact, fulfill their missions, and be **innovative with sustainable** programs and initiatives.



Providing objective, informed guidance for policymakers.

Leveraging our deep knowledge of disability best practices, we act as a nonpartisan, unbiased resource and **guide for policymakers** committed to making informed decisions that impact the disability community.



Tracking disability policy.

We give all Tennesseans a **comprehensive, up-to-the-minute** understanding of the policies, systems, programs, and developments that impact the disability community.



Educating advocates across the state.

We provide individuals, families, and organizations with tools, resources, and opportunities to become **informed, empowered advocates** for people with disabilities.



Building a more inclusive Tennessee.

We bring people and organizations to the table to **innovate and collaborate** to make our state a more diverse and inclusive place to live, work, and thrive for all Tennesseans.

The Council has influenced disability policies and practices in Tennessee for more than 40 years. Councils like ours exist across the country, established and funded by Congress to work on state-specific issues.

Lasting change. Long-term impact.

As we collaborate and advise on disability issues, we're committed to solutions that not only solve problems in the short term, but also positively impact generations to come.



The Council

Bringing people to the table since 1975

The heart of the Council on Developmental Disabilities is a group of individuals, appointed by the Governor of Tennessee, who **provide vital perspective that informs our work at every level.** These private citizens are people experiencing disability and their family members; they represent diversity in disability type, age, race/ethnicity, and geography of the state. They are joined on the Council by key members from the disability service network, including representatives from state agencies and private organizations.

Partners in Policymaking

Training leaders since 1993

The Council takes an active role in equipping citizens with the information and resources they need to become leaders and advocates in their communities. Partners in Policymaking is a 100% FREE, seven-week leadership course for Tennesseans with disabilities or their family members. Attendees learn from local and national experts about policies and practices that impact them and the I/DD community as a whole, and **learn how to effectively use their voices to impact policies for generations to come.**

500+ Tennesseans
across the state are
Partners in Policymaking
graduates.

We are excited **25th class**
to welcome our **in 2019!**

TN Disability Pathfinder

Simplifying access to services since 1997

Tennessee's statewide information and referral service was launched by and continues to be funded through the Council. Pathfinder offers a central source where individuals and families can search, find, and connect with the disability services they need. Operated by Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, Pathfinder includes more than 2,200 agencies and is available by multilingual phone helpline or online searchable database, guiding citizens to disability services 24/7, 365 days a year.

2,200+ Agencies

listed

Accessible Anytime

- ✓ by multilingual phone helpline or online searchable database
- ✓ 24/7, 365 days a year



TN Employment Roundtable

Linking leaders since 2004

Every month, we bring state agencies together to collaborate on transition services for students with disabilities who are making their way into the workforce. It's a rare chance for 10+ agencies to work in partnership: identifying service gaps and opportunities, creating efficiencies across programs, coordinating services, and evolving the vital supports that **improve employment outcomes across the state.**

Inclusive Higher Education

Expanding opportunities since 2006

For more than a decade, we've worked to establish inclusive higher education (IHE) programs for students with developmental disabilities across the state. Operating within traditional colleges and universities, these non-degree programs **provide opportunities to gain employment, social relationships, and independent living skills** through college courses, internships, and jobs. In addition to **directly funding four of the five current IHE programs in the state**, the Council also **helped found the Tennessee Inclusive Higher Education Alliance**, a statewide partnership with universities and disability advocacy groups designed promote these programs.



Identifying and Improving Areas of Need in Tennessee

Our actions and accomplishments begin with listening to citizens in Tennessee. It's this first-hand perspective that drives our actions, leads us to support innovation, and directs our resources toward the most relevant and effective programs and initiatives.

Promoting and Launching Innovative Best Practices

We stay informed on forward-thinking disability best practices and actively promote those concepts through programs, partnerships, and initiatives.

Supported Decision Making

Helping people with disabilities make as many decisions about their own lives as possible.

We collaborate with legislators, state government agencies, educators, legal experts, community members, and disability organizations to support the rights of all Tennesseans to make as many decisions about their lives as possible – a concept called **“supported decision making.”** We continue to lead training for families and professional groups on how to effectively use supported decision making.

Employment First

Emphasizing employment in the general workforce as the first and preferred option for individuals receiving public disability services.

Through our leadership in establishing Tennessee as an Employment First state and our continued role as a member of the **Tennessee Employment Task Force**, we work to increase community employment opportunities and improve employment outcomes for Tennesseans with disabilities.

Person-Centered Organizations

Ensuring that the disability service system and agencies providing disability services are truly driven by the goals of the people they serve.

Through our partnership with the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Person-Centered Practices office credentials trainers, coaches and provider agencies in this **globally recognized best practice.**

Training Leaders and Advocates

We equip individuals, families, and professionals with the information and tools they need to improve the disability system for everyone.

Training Disability Professionals

Training for state government employees helps to improve the individual and family experience with all state programs and services. Our training creates a consistent, collaborative approach to serving the disability community based on a shared set of values, goals, and principles.

We launched the **Leadership Academy for Excellence in Disability Services**, a training program developed with the TN Department of Human Resources. The Academy trains leaders who oversee more than 50 different services for Tennesseans with disabilities and is the only program of its kind in the nation.



Developing Youth Advocates

Our youth-focused initiatives help students prepare for productive lives as adults living with a disability. Our programs cover topics like independent living, employment, and connecting with community resources.

Youth Readiness Days are free, one-day programs helping high school students across the state plan for post-secondary education, employment, and independent living after leaving high school.

“School2Life” Youth Leadership Academy is a 3-4 day training offered in partnership with Tennessee’s Centers for Independent Living (CILs), designed to place youth exiting high school on a positive path towards post-secondary training, employment, and independent living.



Promoting Awareness and Action

In a sea of changing information, we keep people informed and updated on disability policy, services, and other issues that directly affect the I/DD community. Our email newsletters, *Breaking Ground* print magazine, and free presentations and trainings have become reliable resources for thousands of Tennesseans across the state.

Launching Meaningful Initiatives that Change Lives

We're here to make everyday life accessible to Tennesseans with disabilities, piloting innovative programs and partnerships that reach beyond traditional disability services.

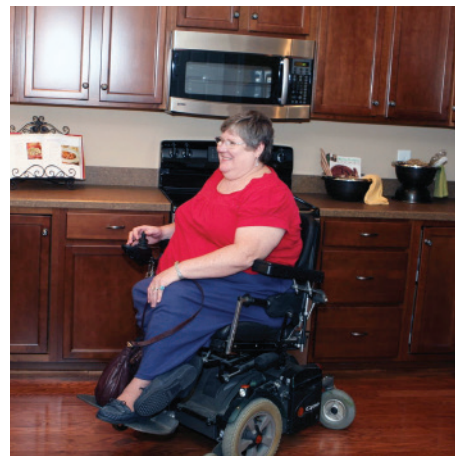
Home Ownership

Home of Your Own

This project educated banks and lending authorities on how to support home ownership for people with disabilities. Today, home ownership is a common choice for people with all types of disabilities.

EasyLiving Homes of TN

Our voluntary certification program encouraged builders to include "visitable" homes in new housing developments, designed with basic accessibility to allow easier access for anyone with mobility issues. The program was adopted by the Tennessee Housing Development Agency and continues under the name Flexible Home Concepts.



Childcare and Education

Childcare Resource Centers

In an effort to increase quality childcare options for families of young children with a disability, we launched and supported 11 centers designed to educate licensed childcare providers about developmentally appropriate practice, health and safety, and inclusion of children with disabilities. These centers are now managed by the Department of Human Services.

Occupational Diploma Support

The Council helped to research and support the creation of a high school diploma for students with disabilities based on competencies that support transition to employment and independent living. Graduates received the first occupational diplomas in 2015.

Arts and Recreation

From inclusive book clubs to performing arts programs, the Council funds and leads projects that help individuals with developmental disabilities access and use recreational, leisure, and social activities in their communities.



Employment

Employment Initiatives

The Council has launched and supported numerous statewide employment initiatives, including the state's first supported employment and self-employment projects.

Project SEARCH

We partnered with state agencies to implement this nationally acclaimed employment model for high school students with disabilities in 17 sites (and counting) across the state. The Council started Tennessee's first Project SEARCH site at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital and maintains an active role in supporting the program. Project SEARCH is now a partnership between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and the Department of Education.

Technology

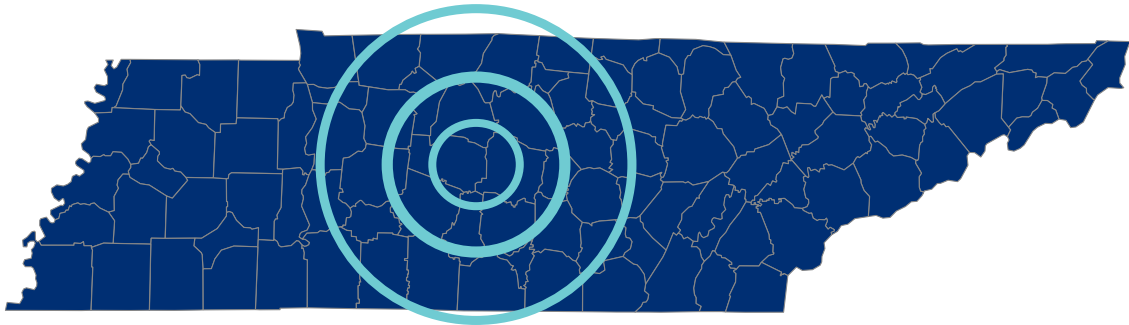
The Council secured the federal grant that established the Tennessee Technology Access Program (TTAP), which increases statewide access to assistive technology devices and services.

Five **Assistive Technology Centers**, now administered by the Division of Rehabilitation Services, help people with disabilities and their families access the tools they need to live independent, productive lives where and how they choose.



Focus in 2019

The Council's 2019 priorities include:



Expanding Outreach to Rural and Diverse Communities

Improving access to disability resources in rural and ethnically diverse communities through a new Tennessee Disability Pathfinder project. The project will focus on several rural counties, with training and community engagement opportunities to increase the understanding of how to navigate disability services and find community resources. This initiative is designed to be replicated in other areas facing access challenges.

Expanding youth leadership

and community outreach programs and training in rural areas.

Promoting Supported Decision Making Statewide

Leading research and training in this nationally recognized best practice, empowering people with disabilities to make their own decisions using a trusted support network.

Engaging with experts in the field to educate the community.

The Council has sponsored the country's leading supported decision-making expert to lead state-specific trainings and tools for professionals and families in 2019 and beyond.

Continuing Collaboration Across Tennessee

Bringing government and outside groups together

to work on improving access, funding, employment, healthcare, education, and other services and supports for people affected by disability in Tennessee.

The Council estimates that
over 100,000 Tennesseans
are living with developmental disabilities*

Tennessee has
16 state agencies with
more than 55 separate programs that
directly impact the lives of
Tennesseans with disabilities.

We bring them all
to the table.

*Statistic based on national data on prevalence rates.



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