

The Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

An Introduction for the Senate Health and Welfare Committee

Kirsten Murphy, Executive Director

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DD Councils across the Nation

- Created by the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (2000).
- There is a DD Council in every state and territory in the USA, 56 in all.
- Funded by annual Congressional appropriation (\$520,000).
- Report to the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD) within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), US Agency for Health and Human Services.

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Why did Congress Create DD Councils?

Federal lawmakers from both parties understood that the cornerstones of disability policy –

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Certain titles in Social Security

Would not take root at the state level without “boots on the ground.”



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Charge in our enabling statute:

- To ensure people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their family members have a strong voice in the development of public policies that impact their services and their lives.
- To conducting **advocacy, systems change, and capacity building** efforts that promote these core values:

Independence

Self Determination

Productivity

Full Community Inclusion

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The Vermont DD Council

- Is a public board of 26 individuals.
 - 16 self-advocates and family members
 - 3 representatives from 3 partner organizations
 - 7 representatives from State Government
- Resides in the Agency of Human Services as an Affiliated Board.
- Has an MOU with AHS that ensures our authority to advocate for policies consistent with our federal enabling statute and the directives of our members.
- Receives NO state general fund.

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Meet some of our members...

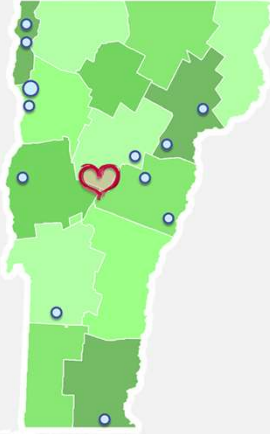


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Statewide Representation & Diverse Members



- Brattleboro to Swanton, Danby to St. J.
- Individuals you use different DAIL programs – or who do not qualify for Home and Community Based Services.
- Representatives of different age groups.
- One member must have experience living in an institution.

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The Five-Year Plan

- Every 5 years, we must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for people with I/DD in our State.
- Our members set our priorities and write our goals.
- Our federal partners approve those goals and hold us accountable for making measurable progress toward those goals.



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What are some of our systems change projects



- Part of a \$10 million federal grant to DAIL focused on improving outcomes for transition age youth with disabilities.
 - Parent Education
 - Training in Customized Employment
 - Training in alternative to court ordered guardianship
- Created a portfolio of health information for self-advocates in plain language through a grant from VT Dept of Health.
- Support designated agencies in strengthening their capacity to provide culturally and linguistically competent services to diverse Vermonters.

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How do we help State Government?

- Co-Chair the Health Equity Advisory Committee.
- Co-Chair the Medicaid and Exchange Advisory Committee.
- Members/Participants of 15+ advisory groups in AHS.
- Provide core funding for Vermont's Self-Advocacy Organization, GMSA.
- One of the lead writer for the Pathways to Partnership Grant that brought \$10 million to VT.
- Strong connections to the National Network of DD Councils.

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Some Successes Stories

- Consistently advocated since 2014 that Vermont adopt independent case management for Home and Community Based Services in accordance with Medicaid Rules: Implementation Oct. 2025.
- Partnered with State Treasurer Beth Pearce to create the Vermont ABLÉ Savings Program: Almost 1200 accounts and \$11.5 million under management.
- The first organization in Vermont to call attention to the health disparities faced by people with disabilities: 2016 White Paper, Breaking the Barriers.

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In the Statehouse, every day is Disability Awareness Day

- The Vermont Leadership Series
- Make-a-Date with Susan Aranoff
- Support for the Developmental Disabilities Housing Initiative (DDHI)
- Our platform (handout)
- Other roles – Health Equity and Land Access



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We are a resource for Vermont lawmakers.

Please contact us with questions about disability and disability services.

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