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# **ANNUAL REPORT FFY 2025**

*Published November 1, 2025*

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (the Council) is part of the Minnesota network of programs funded under P.L. 106-402, the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act). The DD Act also funds the Minnesota Disability Law Center (the designated protection and advocacy agency for the state) and the Institute on Community Integration, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, located at the University of Minnesota.

The Council's business is to provide information, education, and training to increase knowledge, develop skills, and change attitudes that will increase the Independence, Productivity, Self-Determination, Integration, and Inclusion (IPSII) of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

This Annual Report summarizes the results of the 2022-2026 Five-Year State Plan program goals for FFY 2025

## **CURRENT COUNCIL MEMBERS (November 2025)**

Jenny Arndt, Vice-Chair of the Council  
Jason Blomquist  
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Elizabeth Marsh  
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Michael Nichols  
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Mary Raasch  
Connie Rabideaux  
Jenny Santema  
Lee Shervheim, Council Chair  
Bonnie Jean Smith  
Heather Stillwell  
Sumukha Terakanambi

## **FEDERAL OUTCOMES (IPSII)**

The DD Act charges each state council to promote the development of a consumer and family-centered comprehensive system to assist individuals with developmental disabilities to achieve:

**Independence:** Personal freedom to make choices and have control over services, supports, and other assistance the individual receives.

**Productivity:** Meaningful income-producing work or volunteer work that contributes to a household or the community.

**Self-Determination:** Authority to make decisions, control resources, and develop personal leadership skills.

**Integration and Inclusion:** Full participation in the same community activities as people without disabilities.

The Council measures success in the goals it funds by the degree to which each program contributes to the IPSII outcomes.

## **RESULTS**

In 2025, the Council received \$1,155,488.00 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. Of that amount, 70% was allocated for grants and contracts to fulfill the goals of the Council's Five-Year State Plan, approved by the federal government.

## **SELF-ADVOCACY**

### **SAM**

Self-Advocates of Minnesota (SAM), the statewide self-advocacy network founded in 2007, operates in six regions across the state. With more than 50 local self-advocacy groups and a Leadership Circle of regional representatives, SAM promotes the personal empowerment of self-advocates, raises disability awareness through public education, drives community changes, and works toward systems transformation. Self-advocates have been actively involved in implementing the Minnesota Olmstead Plan, a cross-disability effort.

Training sessions were attended by 175 individuals (unduplicated count) in the Central and Northwest regions, funded by the Council, on topics including disability equality and rights (building personal power and leadership skills), voting, transportation, healthy relationships, and engaging in difficult conversations; as well as the Olmstead Academy (classroom sessions and fieldwork to help lead the state's Olmstead Plan). Self-advocates evaluated 16 training sessions, with 5 receiving the highest rating. Across both regions and overall, knowledge gained averaged 4.6, usefulness 4.6, and presentation quality 4.5. The

self-advocate trainers rated their own Independence, Productivity, Self-Determination, and level of Integration and Inclusion at 5.0.

### **Olmstead Academy**

Advocating Change Together, Inc. (ACT) established an Olmstead Academy in FFY 2014 and has continued to offer the Academy annually. The Academy features training sessions on disability rights, leadership skills, the *Olmstead* decision, and Minnesota's Olmstead Plan. Fieldwork involves community projects that promote full community Integration (Disability Integration Projects - DITs). Participants are chosen through an application process.

#### **Supplier:**

Advocating Change Together, Inc.  
1821 University Avenue, Suite 177  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
<https://www.selfadvocacy.org/>

### **Ambassadors for Respect**

Ambassadors for Respect is a bullying prevention program that teaches children to address and confront bullying at an early age, potentially reducing bullying rates later in high school. In addition, a few of the developers and presenters of the program, all of whom have a developmental disability, have utilized the skills they developed while working on this program to secure full-time employment. Others learn skills such as time management, organization, public speaking, leadership, collaboration, and communication, which are helpful for future employment opportunities.

Several products are available to help others replicate the program. These products are available online. Ambassadors for Respect presentations are designed to last 50 to 90 minutes, depending on the classroom teacher's time allocation in a bullying prevention lesson plan. One hundred twelve self-advocate trainers were certified as Ambassadors, and all provided training sessions.

In FFY 2025, training was provided to 43 elementary schools and 126 classrooms (75 in the Metro area and 51 in Greater Minnesota), serving 3,022 4th graders and 15 teachers and principals. Of the 3022 students, 398 students had a disability. After the training, 98% of 4th-grade attendees could list three ways to include others, 94% could list three ways to advocate for themselves and others, and 95% indicated they learned how to use Person First Language. Ambassadors also benefited from the program: 98% reported that, through participation, they are increasing their advocacy. 94% of Ambassadors reported they are better able to say what they want, and what is important to them [Self-Determination]. 85% of the Ambassadors reported that they are now participating in advocacy activities, and 18% report belonging to a cross-disability coalition, serving on a policy board or advisory board, or holding a leadership position. The self-advocates assessed themselves on the IPSII: Independence 4.4, Productivity 4.3, Self-Determination

4.2, and Integration and Inclusion 4.3. The Ambassadors expressed 100% satisfaction with the program. The Pre- and Post-IPSII scores increased by 10%. On a 1–5-point scale, the 4<sup>th</sup> graders rated the usefulness of the information as 4.3, the amount of new information as 4.2, and the quality of the presentations as 4.6.

**Supplier:**

PeaceMaker Minnesota  
2131 Fairview Avenue North  
Suite E  
Roseville, MN 55113  
<http://www.peacemakermn.org>

**CULTURAL OUTREACH**

The purpose of the Cultural Outreach Goal is to support the development of leadership skills in culturally diverse communities through collaborative efforts with organizations in these communities, aiming to increase awareness and knowledge, and to develop skills that encourage participation in other leadership development programs and foster a presence within the broader disability rights movement. The Cultural Outreach goal is also the targeted disparity goal that will enable individuals in our training programs to access and enroll in Home and Community-Based Waiver services (HCBS). Training sessions covered disability rights, early childhood and special education resources, county services (including what and how services are delivered to individuals with disabilities and their families), housing access services, Partner in Policymaking, disability law and the legislative process, health insurance, civic engagement, public policy, employment, and accommodations. A competitive bidding process was used, and the chosen cultural group was the Asian Indian Disability community, specifically the 25 Indian dialects spoken in Minnesota.

The subgrantee began recruitment through outreach efforts and contacted 62 individuals and families. Before the training started, 50-60% of individuals and families were unaware of IEPs and waiver services, and no one had ever worked with public officials. Fifteen individuals and family members were trained. The training program was created and managed by Asian Indian people with autism. It provided 24 hours of training from January 2025 through September 2025, covering best practices in education, community living, and employment. The attendees rated the knowledge gained at 4.78, the usefulness at 4.7, and the quality of the presenters at 4.85 on a scale of 1-5.

Fifteen individuals completed the training, and seven were enrolled in waiver services. Autism Sibs Universe studied multiple cultural barriers and taboos to build trust, personalize connections, and improve the program. Many Asian Indian families found community, connection, and hope for the future through this program. The subgrantee worked with several groups, including Autism Society of Minnesota, Telugu Association of North America, Volunteering Together for Service, Akshaya Patra, Multicultural Autism Action Network, SEWA-AIFW, and Mana American Telugu Association. Of the 15 people

who completed the training program, seven were enrolled in the waiver program, two received a more appropriate waiver, and one received other appropriate services. Four of the individuals were approved for the first time for a waiver.

**Supplier:**

Autism Sibs Universe  
14107 54th Ave North  
Plymouth, MN 55446  
[612-440-9133](tel:612-440-9133) | [info@asu-living.org](mailto:info@asu-living.org)

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

**In-Person Class 42.**

There were 26 graduates from Class 42. Pre- and post-scores: IPSII scores reported by graduates indicated changes in all areas: Independence (4.2 to 3.9), Productivity (4.0 to 4.2), Self-Determination (4.1 to 4.6), and Integration and Inclusion (3.2 to 4.2). 100% of both the self-advocates and parents were satisfied with the program. At the conclusion of Class 42, graduates indicated that 100% had increased their advocacy, 96% are better able to say what is important to them, 88% are participating in advocacy, and 60% are serving on cross-disability coalitions. The graduates were also asked about the knowledge gained (4.7), the usefulness of the information (4.7), and the quality of the presenters (4.8).

Class 42 results are separated by self-advocates and parents' ACL scores. Self-advocates reported a 100% increase in their advocacy, 89% are better able to say what they want or what is important to them, 89% reported participating in advocacy activities, 56% served on a cross-disability coalition, and 100% were satisfied with the project activity. Parents and family members reported: 100% increased their advocacy; 100% are better able to say what they want or what is important to them; 90% reported participating in advocacy activities; 40% serve on cross-disability coalitions; and 100% are satisfied with the project activity.

**Six-month follow-up.** The six-month follow-up study with Class 41 graduates showed increases in all four areas measured by IPSII. Individuals reported IPSII scores of 4.1 for Independence, 3.1 for Productivity, 4.0 for Self-Determination, and 3.9 for Integration and Inclusion, respectively. Family members reported IPSII scores of 4.4 for Independence, 4.1 for Productivity, 4.3 for Self-Determination, and 4.1 for Integration and Inclusion, respectively. Additionally, after six months, respondents reported 100% satisfaction, indicated they were better able to identify which services were essential to them, and reported an increase in advocacy: 90% are participating in advocacy, while 40% now serve on cross-disability coalitions.

Additional questions were asked of the Class 41 graduates about their contacts with officials. There were 29 contacts with federal officials, 46 contacts with state officials, and 60 contacts with local officials. Graduates sent 116 letters and emails, 103 phone calls,

and made 19 in-person visits. Class 41 graduates also used social media 121 times for a variety of resources including: conferences, hearings, committees, radio and television appearances, and written articles.

### **Longitudinal Study.**

In FFY 2025, the Longitudinal Study surveyed graduates from Classes 38, 39, and 40. Sixteen graduates responded, and the individuals with developmental disabilities' IPSII scores were 5.0 (Independence), 4.7 (Productivity), 5.0 (Self-Determination), and 5.0 (Integration and Inclusion). Family members rated their IPSII scores as 4.2 (Independence), 4.0 (Productivity), 4.4 (Self-Determination), and 4.3 (Integration and Inclusion). 100% of the respondents were satisfied with the program. 56% of the respondents are serving on coalitions; 81% are participating in advocacy activities; 100% are better able to identify the services and supports needed; and 100% reported increased advocacy activities as a result of participating in the program.

### **Graduate Workshop**

The FFY 2025 graduate workshop was held on October 20, 2024, and coordinated with the October weekend session of Class 42. The featured speaker was Kit Welchlin, an expert on civil conversations. The all-day workshop was attended by 35 people (11 individuals with developmental disabilities and 15 family members). The scores on IPSII were Independence 3.8, Productivity 4.1, Self-Determination 4.5, and Integration and Inclusion 4.0. The attendees rated the workshop — knowledge=4.8, usefulness=4.8, and quality of presenters=4.9.

#### **Supplier:**

The Odyssey Group  
1730 New Brighton Blvd, Suite 104 - #237  
Minneapolis, MN 55413  
<https://www.theodysseygroup.com/>

### **EMPLOYMENT**

During FFY 2025, the MSS employment project supported 26 transition students and adults with developmental disabilities to get employment in competitive, integrated settings. The Discovery Process, an information-gathering strategy involving seven stages to learn about interests and skills, was used to identify individual vocational themes, better match or shape employment opportunities that would be successful and productive and assist individuals in preparing for informational interviews with potential employers.

The average monthly work hours were 23, with an average hourly wage of \$15.28. Through the Discovery Process, 396 businesses were contacted to align job opportunities with individuals' vocational themes. The impact of this approach is evident, as both transition

students and adults with developmental disabilities successfully found jobs of their choosing, increased their hours or wages, retained employment, or changed jobs to develop new skills or explore other fields of interest. Ratings for IPSII were Independence 4.4, Productivity 4.6, Self-Determination 4.4, and Integration and Inclusion 4.7.

MSS collaborated with PACER in offering training to individuals and family members. MSS also presented information on employing people with disabilities to 40 business leaders.

**Supplier:**

MSS

900 Ocean Street

St. Paul, MN 55106

<https://www.mssmn.org/>

**TRAINING CONFERENCES**

The Council co-sponsored 10 educational events and training conferences. Attendees totaled 745, including individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, and professionals. Three conferences were hybrid; six were in-person; and one was virtual only. The total number of respondents to the satisfaction survey was 165 self-advocates and family members. Across all ten educational events, respondents rated the knowledge gained at 4.24, the usefulness at 4.35, and the quality of the presenter at 4.45 (on a scale of 1-5, with five as the highest). These scores are a weighted average. The weighted averages for IPSII were 3.9 (Independence), 3.7 (Productivity), 3.8 (Self-Determination), and 4.1 (Integration and Inclusion).

For individuals with a developmental disability, 84% indicated that they were increasing their advocacy; 83% can say what is important to them; 79% are participating in advocacy; 25% are serving on coalitions, boards, and councils; and 96% expressed satisfaction with the conferences or training events. For family members, 89% are increasing their advocacy; 93% can say what is important to them; 81% are participating in advocacy; 63% are serving on coalitions, boards, or councils; and 93% expressed satisfaction with the conferences or training events.

The sponsors included:

Accord

Association of Residential Resources Minnesota

Autism Society of Minnesota

Frogtown Tuned-in

L'Arche

MSS

Partnership Resources, Inc.

SMRLS (The Education Law Advocacy Project)

Special Olympics

The Arc Minnesota

## **CUSTOMER RESEARCH**

During FFY 2025, the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities (The Council) conducted its five-year Quality-of-Life Assessment Survey (QOLAS) to measure how people with developmental disabilities perceive their Independence, Productivity, Self-Determination, Integration, and Inclusion (IPSII).

The purpose of this study is to guide the Council's next Five-Year Plan. Three hundred fifteen individuals completed the survey, with a higher proportion of self-advocates participating compared to previous years. This change in respondent demographics is essential to consider when analyzing the results. Overall, the survey showed both promising progress and ongoing challenges faced by people with developmental disabilities and their families.

There is a strong sense of empowerment, momentum, and unity within the disability community. Notable areas of progress include increased legislative support, such as higher pay mandates for service providers, increases in disability waiver rates, expanded employment supports, and waiver reforms. There has also been greater public awareness and acceptance of people with developmental disabilities, improved access to technology that enhances communication and Independence, and stronger social interactions and community engagement, as reported by Council members and community leaders.

Despite these improvements, significant obstacles remain. Many respondents expressed worries about potential federal policy shifts and funding reductions, which could seriously affect the availability and quality of services. Moreover, respondents highlighted several urgent issues that require immediate attention, including transportation, employment, education, access to services, staffing shortages, increasing inclusive spaces, and funding concerns.

Although overall agreement with positive statements about quality of life is high, strong agreement is notably low in key areas—especially regarding community Inclusion and financial security, such as "I have enough money to live on." This shows that while progress has been made, there is still room for growth, particularly in creating a more inclusive, sustainable, and equitable future for people with developmental disabilities. Moving forward, the findings highlight the importance of continuing grassroots advocacy to raise awareness and improve public perception, as well as of pushing for systemic reforms, especially in transportation and service access, to better support full community Inclusion and Self-Determination.

### **Supplier:**

MarketResponse International

<https://marketresponse.com>

## **PUBLICATIONS, ONLINE LEARNING, AND WEBSITES**

The Council has built a strong reputation by supporting and maintaining the main website and managing several other sites, including Partners in Policymaking, Minnesota Project SEARCH, and the Disability Justice Resource Center. The Council also offers five free online courses on the Partners website to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of visitors participating in this learning experience.

During FFY 2025, 634 people were enrolled in the online courses. There were 3,564,410 downloaded reports and PDFs from the Council's main website and Partners in Policymaking website; 1,333,252 visits to both sites, 1,018,874 visitors to both sites, 2,358,816 page views to both sites, and 89,993 videos viewed (from the website, YouTube, and Vimeo). The Council also distributed 571 print publications, which are regarded as an alternative format to digital versions.

The Council has produced two apps: the emergency planning app for individuals with autism had 24,155 downloads, and the Telling Your Story app had 1702 downloads. Since its release, the emergency planning app has had 217,514 downloads, and the Telling Your Story app has had 14,107. The Council sponsors the Project SEARCH website, which had 2539 visitors. The Disability Justice website had 67,041 visitors, and the Minnesota Disability Gov (one-stop website) had 100,945 visits, 59,885 visitors, and 264,943 page views. The Council's Facebook page has 4,149 followers (September 2025), 823,306 page views, 12,201 interactions, 7,949 link clicks, and 11,559 page visits.

The overall average numeric satisfaction score was 8.6 out of 10 across all publications, based on a small sample of end users. Of the 52 individuals and family members sampled, 94% found the reports, websites, and online courses helpful. 94 % were satisfied with the publications, websites, and online courses. 94% reported that the publications were useful or helpful. There were 634 people registered for the online courses. New methods for evaluating websites have been introduced. SiteImprove can locate broken links, misspellings, and accessibility problems. The dissemination of information can be handled efficiently with tools such as GovDelivery, which had over 16,037 subscribers during this reporting period, an increase of over 6,000 from last year. These tools enable the Council to apply promising practices across all products and services, increase efficiency, and enhance information dissemination.

### **Supplier:**

Mastcom

5775 Wayzata Boulevard, #700

St Louis Park, MN 55416

[www.mastcom.com](http://www.mastcom.com)

## **Treat People Like People**

The Treat People Like People campaign was launched in 2019 and was spearheaded by the Office of Ombudsman for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. This campaign was in response to the Olmstead Subcabinet adopting a Prevention of Abuse Plan. The Plan called for a public education campaign co-created with people with disabilities. The Council was a key supporter for the past six years and helped raise funding to sustain the campaign. The Russell Herder agency provided a summary of data for the Council, and 6.9 million people viewed social media posts; 5,328,260 people viewed TPLP ads; 2,914,347 people watched the TPLP videos; 216,538 people clicked on ads; more than 200,000 branded items were distributed; 144,775 people visited the website; and 2520 are followers on social media.

### **Supplier:**

Russell Herder  
275 Market Street, Suite 319  
International Market Square  
Minneapolis, MN 55405  
<https://russellherder.com>

## **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

Enacted in 2010, the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act (GPRAMA) requires federal agencies to set performance goals that deliver results for the American people, establish management processes to review progress, and regularly communicate progress toward those goals.

During the past reporting year, MH Consulting Group concentrated on several projects: verifying the Council's FY2024 Business Results, developing independent surveys for two program goals, and assisting with the preparation of the 2025 Program Performance Report (PPR). In Year 4 of the Five-Year Plan, every subgrantee must be surveyed and asked questions about lessons learned and reasons for continued funding. MH Consulting conducted this independent survey to gather input for the 2025 PPR. MH Consulting Group, applying a person-centered approach, developed additional training materials for persons receiving waiver services called the 'Minnesota Waiver Bill of Rights Training Package.' The group also gathered user feedback to inform ongoing improvements to the supplemental materials. The enhancements were incorporated into the 245D Bill of Rights Training Package, and two new workbooks were released. Over 4000 people used the new training packages.

At the end of FFY 2025, MH Consulting Group launched a new initiative by conducting a user-centered qualitative study to review Minnesota K-12 Social Studies Standards and explore community perspectives on Disability History education in Minnesota. The goal was to gather insights from individuals with disabilities, their families, and advocates to inform the development of meaningful curriculum additions. Overall, the panel

discussions revealed several themes and topics that participants felt were most important and relevant to be included in schools. Key themes and priorities centered around curriculum content, instructional tools, and systemic barriers. Participants emphasized that the history of disability should be integrated into general education to foster empathy, understanding, Inclusion, and social change. They expressed great enthusiasm for the project and lamented that the history of disability has not received the attention it deserves. This study clearly demonstrates that Disability History education is vital for creating more inclusive schools and communities. It must go beyond surface-level awareness to challenge systemic barriers, affirm the rights and dignity of people with disabilities, and empower all students to become allies and advocates. The insights from this study lay a strong foundation for developing a comprehensive, equity-driven Disability History curriculum. The results will be shared with other state agencies interested in helping K-12 teachers learn about disability history and how to teach the disability rights movement across grade levels.

**Supplier:**

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