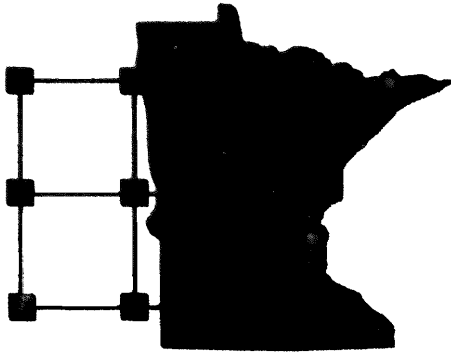


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THE MINNESOTA STATE COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

ANNUAL REPORT - 1990

Gregg Asher, Chair

**Clell Hemphill,
Executive Director**

INTRODUCTION

The Legislature created the Minnesota State Council on Disability in 1973 as the primary public agency to recommend and advocate for programs and legislation that will improve the quality of life and promote the independence of persons with disabilities in Minnesota.

The agency strives to fulfill its mission through a combination of activities; the agency maintains an organized information and referral database for dissemination throughout the state. The agency takes the lead in assuring improved physical and programmatic accessibility and provides technical consultation. Careful research, community involvement, and interaction with other government agencies results in the development of position statements on the delivery of services to persons with disabilities.

The Legislature gave many specific duties and powers to the Council. Among the most important are:

- . Advising the Governor, the Legislature, and state agencies on matters pertaining to public policy and programs, services, and facilities for persons with disabilities.
- . Encouraging and assisting with the development of coordinated inter-departmental goals and objectives as well as the coordination of programs, services, and facilities for persons with disabilities.
- . Serving as a source of information to the public on matters pertaining to disabilities.
- . Researching, formulating, and advocating plans, programs, and policies to serve the needs of persons who are disabled.
- . Initiating or intervening in administrative or judicial proceedings which directly affect the legal rights of persons with a disability.

The Council is composed of 21 members appointed by the Governor for a term of three years. A majority of them must be disabled themselves or must be parents or guardians of persons with a disability, and at least one member must be from each of the eleven development regions of the state. In addition, the Council has a number of ex-officio members representing state agencies that have programs affecting persons with disabilities. Council members establish policy for the Council and an annual work plan, both of which provide a focus for the daily work of the Council's ten full-time staff positions.

The Council's constituency is the largest minority group in our society. It is estimated that 14.9% of the state's population - over 650,000 Minnesotans - have one or more functional limitations. This number represents a wide range of disabilities. Services for persons with disabilities depend, to a great extent on the age of the person. The graph below illustrates the relative proportions of persons with disabilities in three age groups:

Although there is considerable overlap certain issues or services of particular importance for each group.

0-19 Habilitation Service Needs

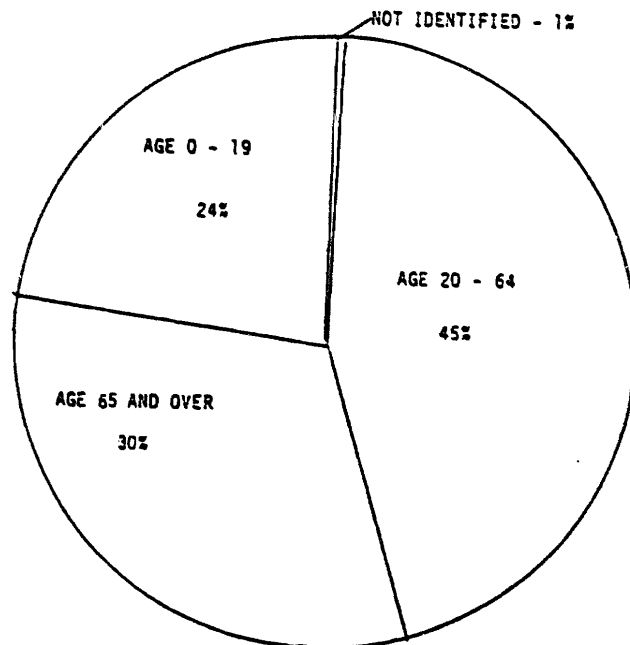
- Education
- Support home based services
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Medical
- Language development

20-64 Rehabilitation Service Needs

- Supported work
- Standard employment
- Developmental Achievement Centers
- Medical intervention and support
- Transportation
- Living arrangements

65-100 Supportive Needs

- Medical
- Live in programs
- personal care attendants
- Senior activities
- Retirement funds
- Nutrition sites and programs
- Transportation



Disabled persons identified in this study tended to be older than the general population. The average age of the disabled person identified in this study was 45.5 years. The average age of the general population was about 32 years. These figures are from the 1978 publication of the then Department of Economic Security, The Assessment of Disability in Minnesota.

Because the Council has been given a very broad mandate, it has become involved over the years in issues that affect all of these groups. In fact, one of its major challenges is choosing those issues which will have the greatest overall impact on persons with disabilities.

1990 COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Americans With Disabilities Act

On a statewide level, the Minnesota State Council on Disability played a central role in the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) which is the major civil rights legislation for persons with disabilities. During the intense period when the bill was being considered by the U. S. House and Senate, the Council was in close communication with Washington, D. C. and routinely initiated action alerts, telephone trees and letter writing campaigns in support of the ADA.

After the bill was signed into law by President Bush, the Council on Disability took the lead to educate employers, business owners, individuals with disabilities and service providers on the new civil rights language. To this end, the Council on Disability developed a brochure and workshop manuals on the ADA. The Council organized several ADA workshops throughout the state and presented at approximately fifty workshops which were sponsored by other organizations.

Currently the Council on Disability is involved in the development of regulations which will implement the ADA. In addition to providing both written and verbal testimony to the U. S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, the Council on Disability is actively encouraging representatives from the disability and business communities to express their support for strong, comprehensive regulations to enforce the ADA.

Transportation

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), after a delay of several years, is finalizing new operating standards for special transportation services for elderly and disabled persons. These new standards are a result of legislative requirements imposed because of the Council's past legislative advocacy. The Council continues to work with Mn/DOT to assure that the new standards will provide the appropriate level of protection for elderly and disabled riders.

The Council is also working to improve transportation for disabled persons in the Twin Cities metropolitan area through membership on the Regional Transit Board's Transit Access Advisory Committee. The three major areas of involvement have been: (1) improving the quality and safety of Metro Mobility, the Twin Cities paratransit system for disabled persons; (2) advocating for accessible light rail transit vehicles and facilities; and (3) working toward increased accessibility of regular route bus service.

Accessibility - Access '92

The Minnesota State Council on Disability has long been a leader in the area of architectural and program access. The ACCESS '92 project was initiated in 1983, when the Council on Disability along with the Governor's Office and the Legislature became critically aware that discrimination was occurring because of a lack of physical access to many of the state owned buildings and facilities. Although the original goal of ACCESS '92 was to make state owned facilities physically accessible by 1992, the amount actually appropriated for this effort has been minimal.

During the past year the Council on Disability has been actively involved in designing a more comprehensive survey tool, training architects on access, and providing technical assistance to surveyors and state agencies.

Earlier in the year the Department of Jobs and Training announced its intention to colocate its Jobs Service offices and those of its Division of Rehabilitation Services. This presented many accessibility problems. The Council on Disability took up this issue and received a commitment that these offices would be accessible. The Department of Jobs and Training subsequently hired an individual to do accessibility studies of their offices.

Information and Referral

A popular service of the Minnesota State Council on Disability is our state-wide information and referral system. Each year thousands of people throughout the state call for information on a variety of topics to help them meet the specialized needs of persons with disabilities.

MSCOD's information and referral system served 9,000 persons during 1990. The information and referral system is staffed by professionals with a broad background in services to people with disabilities; the agency provides back-up support to these people with other staff who are experts in transportation, physical access, community development, public awareness, discrimination and legal concerns.

In addition to voice callers, the information and referral line also handles calls from people who are deaf or hearing impaired through the use of a telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD).

Information and referral calls range from giving the caller a name and phone number to extensive research on their questions. As an example, recently a hunter who is disabled wanted changes in the law so he could hunt from his all-terrain vehicle and not have to keep his firearm secured, which he felt did not give him the same opportunity as a hunter who could walk. He was given a copy of the statutes which apply to his situation and a suggestion on language to amend the statute; he is currently pursuing a change in the statute.

The Minnesota State Council on Disability also worked with the centers for independent living to develop a statewide computer data base network to better serve persons with a disability in the Greater Minnesota area.

Health Care Issues

The Minnesota State Council on Disability issued a position paper on health care issues for persons with disabilities. Subsequently, the Council took a lead role in establishing a coalition of organizations dealing with disability to develop a position on health care issues for input to the Minnesota Health Care Access Commission (MHCAC), to agree on legislative positions, and otherwise advocate for persons with disabilities.

The Council and the coalition monitored the work of the Minnesota Health Care Access Commission and presented testimony at their hearings regarding health care issues as they apply to persons with disabilities. The coalition also had many contacts with the MHCAC regarding the benefits package of their health care proposal in an effort to make their plan as acceptable as possible to persons with disabilities.

Demographics

There is a great demand for accurate basic demographic information on persons with disabilities in Minnesota and on service needs. Unfortunately, the most reliable data available is from a study conducted by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (now Division of Rehabilitation Services) in 1976. Recognizing the need for regular statistical research in this area, a group of interested professionals from several agencies that could use this type of data has been working to develop a mechanism to meet this need. The Council has been chairing this group - called the Minnesota Disability Information and Statistics Committee (MnDISC) - for a year and a half. MnDISC has explored several possibilities and is presently planning a presentation to agency and department heads to elicit broad support for such a research mechanism.

Employment

In 1988, legislation was passed allowing up to 50 state positions to be included in a supported work program. It further allowed that each full-time position could be filled by up to three supported work employees and a job coach. However, only a very few positions have been filled by supported workers, and none has been filled by several workers sharing the position. The Council has contacted the Department of Employee Relations (DOER) with its concerns, and at the Council's urging DOER has convened a meeting of concerned parties to see how to maximize this employment opportunity for persons with disabilities who require a supported work program. The Council will continue to work with DOER and advocate to resolve this issue.

Education

The Council has followed with interest the development of Federal and State government rules and policies impacting on students with disabilities. The Council has worked to ensure that disability awareness is included in school curricula which are being developed as a result of the Minnesota Board of Education's "Inclusive Education Program" curriculum rule.

The Minnesota State Council on Disability worked with the Department of Education on an accessibility plan for the 435 school districts in the state. This project included designing a survey form, presenting at ten training programs throughout the state, and assisting in the development and support of legislation.

Other Activities

The Council devoted considerable time to studying and evaluating proposed Department of Human Services (DHS) rules on case management for persons with mental retardation. Both DHS staff and advocates were invited to discuss these proposed rules with a Council committee. The result was a position paper setting forth the Council's stand on a number of case management issues dealt with in the rules.

The Minnesota State Council on Disability publishes a newsletter, "The Connector," with a circulation of 8,500. This publication concentrates on information of special significance for persons with disabilities. It is sent to organizations dealing with disabilities, to individuals with disabilities and to other interested individuals.

"Employment And People With Disabilities" was published by the Minnesota State Council on Disabilities. It deals with issues affecting employment such as attitude, awareness, discrimination, transportation, financial disincentives, accessibility, education, training, etc. This booklet was sent to legislators, disability advocates, The Division of Rehabilitation Services and others.

The State Council on Disability provides general supervision and oversight for the Governor's Advisory Council on Technology for People With Disabilities, which is housed with the State Planning Agency.

The Council participates on the State Transition Interagency Committee, which is a catalyst to state and local systems serving persons with disabilities in transition from school to community living and employment.

Each year the Council has a booth at the State Fair. We receive numerous inquiries at the fair, which particularly increases our contacts with persons in Greater Minnesota.

Members of The State Council and Staff Serve on These Interagency Committees:

- . Caregiver Support Project Task Force
- . Access Club
- . Courage Center Public Policy Committee
- . Independent Living Council (DRS)
- . KARE 11 Minority Advisory Council
- . Mental Retardation and Related Conditions Advisory Committee (DHS)
- . Motion / Vision Impaired Consumer Advisory Panel (U S West)
- . Statewide Affirmative Action Committee (SWAAC)
- . Title XIX Citizen's Advisory Committee
- . Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC)
- . UHF Access Committee

The Chair of the Minnesota State Council on Disability is a member of the President's Committee on Employment of People With Disabilities, which is an advisor to the President and an advocate for policies and practices urging the rights of persons with disabilities to equal employment opportunities.

Considerations For The Governor and Legislature

This is a summary of recommendations suggested to the State Council on Disability from hearings and discussions with persons with disabilities during 1990.

Recommendations

1. The Department of Human Services, the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the State Council on Disability could identify and address, through a plan of cooperation, the service needs of constituencies with disabilities who are currently unserved or under served.
2. The Legislature may need to authorize and provide funding for a legislative study to determine which agencies in Minnesota are responsible for providing and coordinating comprehensive services for all persons with disabilities.
3. The Legislature could require that all State and local agencies which receive public funds establish and maintain waiting lists of people requesting services who are not being served or who desire additional services in order to provide data for planning, evaluation and program development activities.
4. The Legislature could provide funding to establish and maintain a coordinated statewide data base on disability information. This base of information must include extensive data about the characteristics and service needs of persons with disabilities; included should be detailed information about relevant programs and services, including employment, which are provided by State and local agencies.
5. Minnesota could require all State and Federally assisted programs in the state to adopt and uniformly operate with a consistent definition of services and eligibility criteria for disability programs.
6. The Legislature could formally delineate the responsibility of all existing State and Federally assisted agencies and programs to accommodate persons with disabilities with appropriate services and support.