THE IOWA DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL BELIEVES ALL IOWANS WITH DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THEIR FAMILIES, SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNITIES WHERE THEY CHOOSE TO LIVE.

TO ACHIEVE THIS VISION, WE WORK WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES TO GIVE THEM A VOICE ABOUT THE TYPES OF SUPPORTS THEY NEED AND MAKE SURE THEY RECEIVE THESE SUPPORTS.

OUR WORK INCLUDES ADVOCACY, POLICY IMPROVEMENTS, AND EFFORTS TO MAKE THE COMMUNITY STRONGER. WE CREATED A STATEWIDE NETWORK OF ADVOCATES CALLED IOWANS WITH DISABILITIES IN ACTION TO HELP US REACH OUR VISION. TOGETHER, OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WE PLAN TO CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGHOUT IOWA.
OUR MISSION
TO CREATE CHANGE WITH AND FOR IOWANS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SO THEY CAN LIVE, WORK, LEARN, AND PLAY IN THE COMMUNITY OF THEIR CHOOSING

9400+ IOWANS MAKE UP THE IOWANS WITH DISABILITIES IN ACTION NETWORK
ADVOCACY GOAL

DEVELOP STRONG ADVOCATES & LEADERS WHO CREATE THE CHANGE THEY WANT

OBJECTIVE 1
Annually increase the number of Iowans with disabilities and family members who engage in the civic and political decision-making process.

OBJECTIVE 2
Annually increase the number of Iowans with disabilities—including young adults and their family members—who lead and mentor others and take on leadership roles in projects, coalitions, councils and boards that increase the inclusion of people with disabilities in community living.

OBJECTIVE 3
By 2026, increase the number of Iowans with disabilities who successfully advocate for their own health care needs.
OBJECTIVE 1
Annually increase the number of Iowans with disabilities and family members who engage in the civic and political decision-making process.

OUR PLAN

1. Host local Capitol days and town hall meetings.
2. Provide advocacy trainings and advertise our ability to offer this assistance.
3. Provide voter trainings and advertise that we can offer this to both community and facility sites.
4. Host and support Make Your Mark! and other self and family advocacy conferences.
5. Educate and inform the public through infoNET, social media posts, and emails.
6. Increase the number of advocates connected to the Iowans with Disabilities in Action network.

“It was encouraging to be reminded individuals with disabilities can navigate their own lives and make their own choices when the needed supports are in place.”

“Attending the MYM! Conference made me realize the everyone can be a leader, you just need to find your opportunity.”
OBJECTIVE 2

Annually increase the number of Iowans with disabilities—including young adults and their family members—who lead and mentor others and take on leadership roles in projects, coalitions, councils and boards that increase the inclusion of people with disabilities in community living.

OUR PLAN

1. Prepare self-advocates to train others to register to vote and vote.

2. Support self and family advocates, and Council members by hosting town hall meetings and other public events with local and state leaders in their communities.

3. Support peer mentoring programs such as Community Ambassadors.

4. Support the mentoring program in the Iowa Talent Bank (Iowa’s State and Local board and commission application site) to increase the number of people with disabilities on boards and commissions.

5. Host outreach and awareness campaigns about opportunities available on commissions and boards at the local and state level.

6. Create an intern position within Iowans with Disabilities in Action for a person with a disability to assist with training and projects. Work with Realizing Educational and Career Hopes (REACH), Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC), and VR.

7. Continue partnerships to provide the Youth Leadership Academy.
8. Work with Developmental Disabilities (DD) network partners including University of Iowa Center for Disabilities and Development, ASK Resources Center and Child Health Specialty Clinics to develop youth councils at the local level.

9. Work with DD network to train and mentor people with disabilities on how to be effective members of boards, councils, and commissions.

10. Work with boards, councils, and commissions to share ways they can be more inclusive of people with disabilities.

120+ ADVOCATES in our network reported that Iowans with Disabilities in Action helped them encourage another person to register, vote, or get involved in the election process.
OBJECTIVE 3
By 2026, increase the number of Iowans with disabilities who successfully advocate for their own health care needs.

OUR PLAN

1. With the DD network and other state partners, develop a resource toolkit to provide health and health care advocacy education for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and those supporting them.

2. Work with the Special Health Care Needs advisory group to educate Emergency Medical Services (EMS) workers.
IMPROVE POLICY & PRACTICE THAT POSITIVELY IMPACTS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

OBJECTIVE 1
Annually, target at least three key policy proposals (e.g. legislation, executive orders, or regulations being announced) to identify opportunities to educate policymakers about the impact of specific policies and make recommendations to ensure policies align with the principles of the Developmental Disabilities Act and the legislative priorities of the DD Council.

OBJECTIVE 2
With the use of DD Council resources, people with disabilities and/or their family members will annually propose new legislation and/or policy changes or improvements about an issue important to them.

OBJECTIVE 3 (TARGETED DISPARITY GOAL)
In collaboration with our DD network partners the DD Council will establish relationships with underserved populations of people with disabilities living in rural communities to increase those that use our DD Council tools and resources to advocate for priorities that address the needs in their communities.
OBJECTIVE 1

Annually, target at least three key policy proposals (e.g. legislation, executive orders, or regulations being announced) to identify opportunities to educate policymakers about the impact of specific policies and make recommendations to ensure policies align with the principles of the Developmental Disabilities Act and the legislative priorities of Council members.

OUR PLAN

1. Research state/federal public policies and trends.
2. Facilitate strong relationships with community organizations.
3. Collaborate with DD network partners (Disability Rights Iowa and the Center for Disabilities and Development) to identify issues and needs.
4. Foster relationships with policymakers to influence policy.
5. Participate and provide public comment in commissions and council meetings (Mental Health Disability Services, Medical Assistance Advisory Council, the Autism Council, the Brain Injury Council, and the Olmstead Task Force), and before administrative and legislative committees.
6. With Council members and DD network partners, develop an annual list of policy priorities that increase community living for people with disabilities.
7. Educate policymakers and other state leaders about the importance of gathering input from people with disabilities and sharing information in plain language.
8. Educate policymakers and other state leaders on how to gather input from people with disabilities.
OBJECTIVE 2

With the use of DD Council resources, people with disabilities and/or their family members will annually propose new legislation and/or policy changes about an issue important to them.

OUR PLAN

1. Use infoNET to inform Iowans with disabilities and their families about policies that impact community living and inclusion.

2. Share grassroots success stories of people advocating for themselves locally and at the state and federal levels.

3. Support and collaborate with the Iowa Family Leadership Training Institute to help families advocate for themselves and others.

4. Host regular (at least monthly) policy calls with advocates and stakeholders during the legislative session for discussion and questions about proposed legislation.

4200+ IOWANS RECEIVE INFO NET
OBJECTIVE 3

In collaboration with our DD network partners the DD Council will establish relationships with underserved populations of people with disabilities living in rural communities to increase those that use our DD Council tools and resources to advocate for priorities that address the needs in their communities.

OUR PLAN

1. With the assistance of Council members, seek out opportunities in Council members’ communities to host and/or sponsor community conversations and awareness initiatives.

2. Partner with the Department of Human Rights and local community organizations to host events in other rural communities.

3. Continue to sustain relationships developed by adapting DD Council tools, training and resources so people can better advocate for their needs and stay engaged and informed.

4. Host targeted voter trainings, local capitol days and town hall meetings for people in underserved communities.
STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

OBJECTIVE 1

Through annual training, technical assistance, and resources, the DD Council will collaborate the DD network, state agencies, and community programs to improve competitive integrated employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

OBJECTIVE 2

By September 30, 2026, the DD Council will partner with the DD network, state agencies, and/or other community programs to invest in at least two projects to demonstrate new approaches to direct services, enhance systems, respond to emergent issues, or eliminate barriers to access and use of community services (such as transportation, housing, assistive technology, health, education, and emergency preparation).
OBJECTIVE 1

Through annual training, technical assistance, and resources, the DD Council will collaborate the DD network, state agencies, and community programs to improve competitive employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

OUR PLAN

1. Partner with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation, the Iowa Coalition on Integrated Employment, and our DD network to provide training opportunities to community rehabilitation providers.

2. Through infoNET and Iowans with Disabilities in Action, promote National Disability Employment Awareness Month with various activities with local and state officials and legislators.

3. Share employment success stories, with advocates, stakeholders, legislators and community businesses.

4. Sponsor and collaborate with DD partners (the Autism Society, Association of People Supporting Employment First, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation, and others) to host employment-specific conferences for people with disabilities and their families.

“I get a lot of information from infoNET resources to share with my legislators. It’s also important to continue urging and inspiring persons with developmental disabilities to take action and become more involved.”
OBJECTIVE 2

By September 30, 2026, the DD Council will partner with the DD network, state agencies, and/or other community programs to invest in at least two projects to demonstrate new approaches to direct services, enhance systems, respond to emergent issues, or eliminate barriers to access and use of community services (such as transportation, housing, assistive technology, health, education, and emergency preparation).

OUR PLAN

1. Work with community partners to host community conversations to identify emergent issues that could be addressed through new initiatives supported by the DD Council.

2. Develop and communicate informational briefs on lessons learned.
If you would like to provide feedback about our plan, please contact us by email at stateplan@iowaddcouncil.org or by phone at 800-452-1936.