

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities

2014 Legislative Agenda

The mission of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities is to bring about social and policy changes that promote opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities and their families to live, learn, work, play, and worship in Georgia communities.

At GCDD, we know that Georgians with disabilities want to live full lives in our communities, and they are fully capable of doing so. **If we, the citizens of Georgia, choose to make positive changes to our system, more and more people with disabilities will be working in our communities, living with their families or their friends or independently as they so choose, and contributing to their communities all across Georgia.** When all our citizens, including those with disabilities, are able to use their gifts and talents and pursue their dreams, it creates a better Georgia for us all.

The items on our 2014 agenda are designed to support that vision. The members of the GCDD public policy team and our statewide network of advocates are eager to work with our legislators toward these goals – please do not hesitate to reach out to us at any time.



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Support & Expand Inclusive Post-Secondary Education

Inclusive post-secondary education provides opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to access higher education. *This education prepares them to live increasingly independent lives and pursue careers of their choice.*

Individuals with intellectual disabilities who receive post-secondary education are *more likely to find paid employment* than those who don't, and their *earnings are 73% higher than peers who do not receive post-secondary education.*¹



Charlie Miller, a first-year student at the Academy for Inclusive Learning at Kennesaw State University, says, "The best way I can explain inclusive learning is it's a chance to fully express yourself out from under your mom and dad's wing, into being a productive person in society." Currently Georgia has one inclusive post-secondary program, with three more aiming to open their doors in the fall of 2014.

- **Support and increase funding for inclusive post-secondary programs by \$200,000.**
- **Increase student access to inclusive higher education through scholarship availability.**

The 2013 graduation ceremony at the Academy for Inclusive Learning at Kennesaw State University.



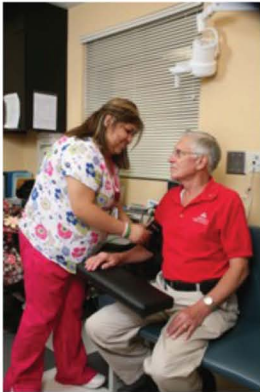
¹Migliore, A., Butterworth, J., & Hart, D. (2009). Postsecondary Education and Employment Outcomes for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities. Think College Fast Facts. No 1. <http://www.thinkcollege.net/publications/fast-facts>.

Support Georgians with Developmental Disabilities who Want to Work

Supported employment assists Georgians with disabilities to find and keep jobs in their communities. *The majority of Georgians with developmental disabilities want to work, but only 14% of Georgians with developmental disabilities are currently employed in the community.* ²

When Georgians with disabilities get the support they need to work, they thrive. **GCDD member Evan Nodvin is one example of a Georgian who is thriving with supported employment - he has been working full-time with senior citizens for the past 13 years and recently received a promotion.**

Not only do Georgians with developmental disabilities want to work, but when they do, it *benefits all Georgia taxpayers*. For every dollar put into supported employment programs in Georgia, taxpayers reap \$1.61 in benefits. ³



- **Increase funding for supported employment so that more Georgians with developmental disabilities can go to work in their communities. \$1,960,000** for supported employment in the DBHDD budget will support approximately **250** more Georgians with developmental disabilities to work in their

An intern in GCDD's Project SEARCH supported employment program shows off her work skills.

Offer Georgians with Developmental Disabilities the Opportunity to Live in Homes of Their Own

Currently, Georgia's developmental disability system will pay for a person to live in someone else's house but will not support that person to live in a home of their own. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities has established a highly successful housing voucher program for individuals with severe persistent mental illness. Right now, that option is not available to persons with developmental disabilities.

- **Provide funding to expand DBHDD's highly successful housing voucher program so it includes individuals with developmental disabilities. \$480,000** will support approximately **100** Georgians to live in their own house or apartment.



Having keys of your own is key to the American dream – and key for individuals with disabilities who want to live increasingly independent lives.

²National Core Indicators 2011-2012. National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services and Human Services Research Institute. <http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/charts/>.

³Robert E. Cimeria (2010) National Cost Efficiency of Supported Employees With Intellectual Disabilities: 2002 to 2007. American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: January 2010, Vol. 115, No. 1, pp. 19-29.

Rebalance Georgia's System from Facilities to the Community: Unlock the Waiting Lists

Virtually all Georgians with disabilities and aging Georgians would rather live in their own homes and communities than go to a nursing facility.

Not only do Georgians want to remain in their communities, there is increasing evidence that *supporting people in the community is significantly less expensive than caring for them in a facility*. The Money Follows the Person Program identifies Georgians in facilities such as nursing homes who want to live in the community and helps them move and get support in the community. *Over the past 5 years, Georgia has saved over \$22 million under Money Follows the Person by moving people out of facility care and into community settings.*⁴

- **Rebalance the system so that more Georgians can get support in the community instead of facilities. Support the full agenda of Unlock the Waiting Lists!** in order to support Georgians with disabilities and aging Georgians who wish to live their lives in the community.

Matthew Harp, who is in his 20's, left a nursing facility to move back home.



Advocate Eleanor Smith knows the importance of being able to live in the community.



Change the Standard to Prove Intellectual Disabilities in Capital Punishment Cases

In 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court said it is wrong to execute a person with intellectual disabilities. But right now in Georgia, it is extremely hard for an individual to prove in court that they have intellectual disabilities. *Georgia is the only one of the fifty states that requires a person to prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" that they have intellectual disabilities in capital punishment cases.*

- **Change the legal standard of proof for proving intellectual disabilities in O.C.G.A. 17-7-131 to "preponderance of the evidence",** which is the standard used in most other states.

Support Georgians who Care for Their Families: The Family Care Act, HB 290

Many Georgians balance their work lives with caring for their families. The Family Care Act would allow Georgians who have earned sick leave to use up to five days of that leave to care for sick or injured members of their immediate family. *The Family Care Act does NOT add any additional sick days or require employers to provide them; it only allows Georgians to use the sick days they've already earned to care for family members.*

- **Support House Bill 290, the Family Care Act, sponsored by Representative Katie Dempsey.**

⁴Georgia Money Follows the Person, Department of Community Health. Sept. 12, 2013.

The Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities is also proud to support...

- **Individual Development Account legislation** that would support Georgians with disabilities as they save for an accessible vehicle, communication devices, investments in their own businesses or higher education, or home modifications
- An **“Employment First” policy** that would make employment in the community the first option for persons with disabilities
- **Changes to Georgia’s high school diploma system** that will give more students with disabilities the opportunity to obtain diplomas and access further career and educational opportunities
- **New Home Access legislation** that would increase accessibility in all new single family homes
- **Expansion of Medicaid** under the Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act
- **A cost-of-living adjustment up to 5%** for providers of services and supports to persons with disabilities



2007 Disability Day at the Capitol

Mark Your Calendar!

**16th Annual Disability Day at the Capitol
Thursday, February 20, 2014**

Join thousands of constituents and advocates from all across Georgia at the state capitol for Georgia’s largest annual advocacy event!

Disability Day always draws a great crowd!

Contact the GCDD Public Policy Team



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