

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

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 2023.

## **CURRENT COUNCIL MEMBERS (November 2023)**

Jenny Arndt  
Jason Blomquist Dupree Edwards  
Lisa Gemlo  
Amy Hewitt  
Lisa Jemtrud  
Heather Kainz  
Lesli Kerkhoff  
Joel Liestman  
Elizabeth Marsh  
Abdi Matan  
Katie McDermott  
Chris McVey  
Alan Morrison  
Christine Mueller  
Michael Nichols  
Garrett Petrie  
Jennifer Purrington  
Mary Raasch  
Connie Rabideaux  
Jenny Santema  
Erin Schwab  
Lee Shervheim, Council Chair  
Bonnie Jean Smith  
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 relative to the degree each program contributes to the IPSII outcomes.

## **RESULTS**

In 2023, the Council received \$1,123,234 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Office on Intellectual and Developmental Disability (OIDD). 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**

**Self-Advocates of Minnesota (SAM)**, the statewide self-advocacy network that was founded in 2007, operates in six regions in the state. Through more than 50 local self-advocacy groups and a Leadership Circle of regional representatives, SAM strengthens the personal empowerment of self-advocates, increases disability awareness through public education, makes community changes, and works towards systems change. Self-advocates have been actively involved in the implementation of the Minnesota Olmstead Plan, a cross-disability effort.

Training sessions were attended by 103 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; and the Olmstead Academy (classroom sessions and fieldwork to help lead the state's Olmstead Plan).

Self-advocates evaluated training sessions and IPSII on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest. Across both regions and on average, knowledge gained was 4.3 usefulness was 4.5, and quality of presentations was 4.6. The self-advocates assessed their own Independence at 4.4; Productivity at 4.1; Self-determination at 4.3 and Integration and Inclusion at 4.3.

## **Olmstead Academy**

**Advocating Change Together, Inc. (ACT)** created an *Olmstead Academy* in FFY 2014 and has continued offering the Academy on an annual basis. The Academy includes training sessions on disability rights, leadership skills, the *Olmstead* decision, and Minnesota's Olmstead Plan. Field work consists of community projects that promote full community integration (Disability Integration Projects - DITs). Participants are selected through an application process. The 2024 Olmstead Academy application process begins in November 2023.

### **Testimonials:**

*Carly, who lives in Princeton Minnesota and is a member of the SAM Central region says, "I have more and more urge to do more and be involved in more, at a local level and then bring change across the whole state of Minnesota!"*

*Gail, a longtime self-advocate leader and member of the SAM Northwest region was asked what she has learned from ACT training and programs. She said, "I felt listened to. I felt important. Those things matter."*

### **Supplier:**

**Advocating Change Together, Inc.**

1821 University Avenue, Suite 177

St. Paul, MN 55104

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

## **Ambassadors for Respect**

During FFY 2023, [PeaceMaker Minnesota](#) sponsored [Ambassadors for Respect \(A4R\)](#), a bullying prevention program that supported 48 self-advocates to become trainers for 4th grade students. Seven teams of self-advocate trainers from Focus House, Merrick, Choice, Inc. (2 locations), Focus Beyond, COMPASS transition program, and The BUILD program (Bethel University) participated. All trainers were certified to be *Ambassadors*. A total of 49 training sessions were provided in 19 elementary schools and 49 classrooms, teaching 1,107 4th graders along with their teachers and school principals. Our partners at the Career and Life Transition Program also created A4R messaging buttons featuring original artwork done by their students with developmental disabilities.

After the training sessions, 97% of 4th graders could list three ways to include others, 95% could list three ways to advocate for themselves and others, and 93% indicated they learned how to use Person First Language. Ambassadors also benefited from the program; a total of 98% reported that, due to their participation, they are increasing their advocacy, and 100% reported they are better able to say what they want and what is important to them [self-determination].

### **The self-advocates assessed themselves in terms of IPSII:**

- Independence = 4.4
- Productivity = 3.6
- Self-determination = 4.0
- Integration and Inclusion = 4.2

**Testimonials:**

*"I love this project."*

*"It is really interesting, and I learned that when I got bullied, I tell my dad or a trusted adult or I stand up for myself."*

**Supplier:****PeaceMaker Minnesota**

2131 Fairview Avenue North, Suite E

Roseville, MN 55113

<http://www.peacemakermn.org>

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

In FFY 2023, Class 40 of **Partners in Policymaking**<sup>®</sup> (Partners) graduated 13 self-advocates and 16 parents. Participants evaluated themselves at the beginning of the program year on the federal outcomes of IPSII and again at graduation. The following IPSII changes were reported:

- Independence increased from 4.63 to 4.80;
- Productivity increased from 4.13 to 4.60;
- Self-determination increased from 4.44 to 4.60; and
- Integration and Inclusion increased from 3.06 to 4.07.

**Longitudinal Studies**

In FFY 2023, the Odyssey Group also conducted a follow-up survey of Partners graduates from Class 39 and a longitudinal study of Classes 36 through 38.

**Class 39 Follow-up Survey**

Pre- and post-IPSII scores for the 22 Partners graduates indicated an increase in Independence from 4.28 to 4.67; increase in Productivity from 3.83 to 4.61; increase in Self-determination from 4.17 to 4.56; and an increase in Integration and Inclusion from 3.31 to 4.00. The six-month follow-up survey of Class 39 Graduates showed increases in all four IPSII scores with averages of 4.31, 4.23, 4.54, and 4.8, respectively. Additionally, after six months, graduates indicated a 92% level of satisfaction with the Partners program, 92% indicated they were better able to say what services were important to them, and 23% now serve on cross-disability coalitions.

**Classes 36, 37, and 38 Longitudinal Study**

In FFY 2023, the Longitudinal Study surveyed Partners graduates from Classes 36, 37, and 38. Thirty graduates participated in the Study and reported IPSII scores of 4.00 (Independence), 4.12 (Productivity), 4.32 (Self-Determination), and 4.12 (Integration and Inclusion). A total of 92% of the Partners graduates were satisfied with the program; 92% rated the program as good to excellent; 47% are serving on coalitions; 88% are participating in advocacy activities; 96% are better able to say what services and supports are needed; and 100% reported increased advocacy activities as a result of participating in the Partners program.

**Testimonials:**

*“Completely changed my outlook on my children’s lives and what is possible for them, gave me the tools to advocate for them and others like them. I am empowered to help my children meet their full potential and I feel confident in my ability to advocate and make changes in the community that will benefit people with disabilities and increase awareness in society. Partners was an invaluable experience.”*

*“Having the confidence to lead and help people find their own voices to advocate for themselves or their loved ones. It has also helped lift the veil of what goes on at a political level to understand how decisions are made and how I might be able to influence policies going forward.”*

**Supplier:****The Odyssey Group**

1730 New Brighton Blvd, Suite 104 - #237

Minneapolis, MN 55413

<https://www.theodysseygroup.com/>

**EMPLOYMENT**

During FFY 2023, the **MSS employment** project assisted transition students and adults with developmental disabilities. The Discovery Process, an information-gathering strategy that involves seven stages of learning about interest areas and skills, was used to identify individual vocational themes, better match or shape employment opportunities that would be successful and productive and helped individuals prepare for informational interviews with potential employers.

Nine transition students and 16 adults with developmental disabilities were employed during the grant year, working an average of 19 hours a per week, and earning wages averaging \$15.21 per hour.

Through the Discovery Process, 305 businesses were contacted to match job seekers based on their vocational themes. The impact of this approach can be seen with both transition students and adults with developmental disabilities-who were successful in finding jobs of their choosing, increasing their hours or wages, retaining employment, or changing jobs to expand their skills and work in other fields of interest.

**The ratings for IPSII were:**

- Independence = 3.6
- Productivity = 3.9
- Self-determination = 3.9
- Integration and Inclusion = 3.5

**Testimonial:****From a businessperson attending a training session offered by MSS:**

*“For leaders and business owners who want to create inclusive workplaces but don’t have a strategy, this was so valuable.”*

**Supplier:**

**MSS**

900 Ocean Street  
St. Paul, MN 55106

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

## **CULTURAL OUTREACH**

In FFY 2023, the **Cultural Outreach** program provided training programs to 71 participants. The first training program, held in March, was presented in Spanish with 24 participants; four individuals were successful in receiving waiver services. The second training program was presented in the Somali community with 17 participants; and three individuals were successful in receiving waiver services. The third training program was presented in the Latinx community with 13 participants and eight individuals applied for waiver services.

**Success Story:**

*"In March 2023, Raquel attended the training program with hopes of transforming her daughter's life. Raquel approached one of the speakers and shared her daughter's struggles. The trainer took Raquel under her wing and guided her through the process of the IEP, explaining the necessary steps. Despite the daunting nature of the process, Raquel began the journey to secure the assistance her daughter needed. She persisted and her daughter received the personalized help she deserved. Her daughter believed in herself once more. Raquel has now shared her story speaking at local schools and community gatherings to bring greater awareness and understanding."*

**Supplier:**

**Somali Community Resettlement Services (SCRS)**

201 Lyndale Ave S  
Faribault, MN 55021

<https://somalcrs.org/>

## **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 being achieved against those goals. MH Consulting Group assisted in preparation of the federally required Program Performance Report.

During FFY 2023, MH Consulting Group focused on several projects including: the "Treat People Like People – Abuse Stops With Us" Campaign; updated templates that grantees use for federal reporting; verified the Council's FFY 2021 Business Results; assisted with preparation of the FFY 2023 Program Performance Report; created and deployed online customer satisfaction surveys for grantees and GCDD Publications/Website/Online Classes; and produced the 245D Bill of Rights Situational Videos project.

**Testimonials:**

*“These videos [245D Bill of Rights] are really good because of how they were portrayed. It’s exactly how I’ve been treated.”*

*“The videos were very well done. I really liked how many different topics were covered.”*

*“The situations made sense and were teachable moments.”*

*“They [245D Bill of Rights Videos] are a good teaching tool to have discussions with people who need to advocate for themselves.”*

**Supplier:****MH Consulting Group**

1111 3rd Street North

Stillwater, MN 55082

**TRAINING CONFERENCES**

The Council co-sponsored eight **training conferences** during FFY 2023 with 580 attendees including people with developmental disabilities, families, and professionals. The overall satisfaction rating was 93% and 9.1 (ten-point scale). Across the all conferences on a 5-point scale, knowledge gained was rated 4.5; usefulness of the information rated 4.6; and quality of presentations as rated 4.6.

These training events are also opportunities for organizations that are awarded co-sponsorship funds to promote and help recruit applicants for the Partners in Policymaking program.

**Suppliers:**

Accord, Inc.

Autism Society of Minnesota

Choice Inc.

Disability Justice MN

ELAP (SMRLS)

Interact Center

L’Arche

The Arc of Minnesota

The ninth conference (Minnesota Autistic Alliance) will be held during the first quarter of FFY 2024.

**Testimonial:**

*“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! I am a very impressed advocate who works with families and guardians of children, youth, and young adults with all disabilities including developmental disabilities. I have and continues to encourage all advocates and many parents to attend, listen and watch the recordings because of the wonderfully unique comprehensive and law-based approach of the presentations. What I appreciate most is the thoughtful organization of what is an overwhelming amount of information that often takes years and years to grasp. Therefore, the ability to listen, and re-listen will be invaluable over time for many on all sides of these issues. Gratitude and kudos to all involved in creating, presenting, and sponsoring these inspiring trainings. We are all smarter and more equipped because of you.”*

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

The goal of the Council's Publications, Websites, and Online Learning Courses is to provide information, education, and training that increases knowledge, skills, and abilities of end users through a broad range of multiple media formats by:

1. Promoting accurate historical archiving of resource materials.
2. Continuing to adopt the latest technological advancements in communications that may include social networking.
3. Showcasing the positive roles and contributions of people with developmental disabilities.
4. Increasing marketing efforts to ensure accessibility, language translations, and wide dissemination of Council products.
5. Exploring new technology that is focused on the individual and saves the user's preferences and choices and suggests additional resources or learning courses based on those preferences and choices.

As a result of intense and prodigious efforts, outputs exceeded expected targets with over 577,000 visitors and over 2.3 million downloads. The overall satisfaction rating was 9.5 (10 point scale) across all publications by a small sample of end users. A total of 100% of respondents also rated the publications, websites, and online courses as useful.

The Council has built a solid reputation through this goal by not only supporting and maintaining main website, but also administering several other websites including **Partners in Policymaking®**; Minnesota **Project SEARCH**; **Disability Justice** Resource Center; and **Disability Minnesota, the one-stop center of over 100 Minnesota state agency programs, products, and services.**

The Council also provides five free online courses through the Partners website to increase the knowledge, skills, and abilities of visitors who take advantage of this learning experience. All online courses were updated and streamlined during FFY 2021 and FFY 2022. Spanish translations of the courses were tested at the end of September 2022 and released in FFY 2023.

### **Comments from Facebook:**

*"I LOVE this hip hop song by Dupree Edwards about the Bill of Rights."*

*"We are an amazingly diverse human family, and our differences should be celebrated."*

### **Supplier:**

#### **Mastcom**

5775 Wayzata Boulevard, #700

St Louis Park, MN 55416

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

## **Treat People Like People**

During FFY 2023, the *Treat People Like People* public awareness campaign to prevent abuse and neglect was updated and enhanced. Over 40,000 Treat People Like People items were distributed at the Minnesota State Fair. Focus groups were conducted and the Russell Herder agency is in the process of co-creating new content with individuals on the home and community-based waiver.



**Supplier:****Russell Herder**

275 Market Street

Suite 319 International Market Square

Minneapolis, MN 55405

<https://russellherder.com/>

**CUSTOMER RESEARCH****Employer Study**

In FFY 2023, MarketResponse International conducted two studies. The first study focused on employers and qualitative interviews were held with six subject matter experts including VRS staff and 10 interviews with employers.

The survey was then tested, and 201 employers were selected to participate including retail, manufacturing, healthcare, finance, IT, scientific, construction, hotel and food service, education, transportation, warehouses, etc.

Companies that employ people with disabilities tend to be much larger, and more likely involved in retail trade or manufacturing, compared to almost half of the companies (47%) that do not currently employ people with disabilities in the fields of professional, scientific, and tech services.

- Employers are equally satisfied with their employees with disabilities as they are with their employees without disabilities, but for different reasons.
- Employees with disabilities are valuable. They bring a lot to the job including work ethic, attitude, and loyalty.

Compared to current employers of people with disabilities, the *non-employers* were more attracted to the idea that people with disabilities could fill positions when there is a shortage of workers in Minnesota.

Of those employers that do-not currently employ people with disabilities, 72% would likely pursue the possibility of hiring a person with a disability if contacted by DEED or one of its partnering organizations.

Over half of the businesses that employ people with disabilities (57%), were assisted by Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) from the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and 97% were satisfied with VRS services.

Results were reported in April 2023 and are available online.

**Intersectionality Study**

The second study was a baseline survey of intersectionality and the promise of One Minnesota.

This survey was completed in September 2023. A total of 593 respondents were divided into four groups by race and ethnicity, and disability status. Study findings and baseline survey results revealed the following:

- Individuals with disabilities from racial and ethnic communities are more likely to report negative experiences in public situations; less likely than all other groups to feel welcomed in public serving businesses; and more likely to experience negative treatment in financial dealings.
- White individuals with disabilities are most likely to feel unfair treatment, barriers, and restrictions from privileges; are more likely to report negative experiences in dealings related to healthcare and health insurance; and gave the lowest rating to the One Minnesota promise of any group.

**Quotes from the Employer Study:**

*“Employees with disabilities bring a lot to your team. The employees motivate our other team members, and our guest experience has been elevated. Individuals bring up the whole team and that increases repeat business.”*

*“The most amazing thing that I saw was that complaining almost stopped. It was unbelievable because they got to see how important work was to someone else. It changed the whole attitude, people became more accepting, forgiving and understanding. It was amazing to see how people changed for the better.”*

**Supplier:**

**MarketResponse International**

<https://marketresponse.com>

**For more information, please contact:**

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This document is available in alternative formats for individuals with disabilities by contacting the Council office at the address above, by calling 651-296-4018 or through a preferred telecommunications provider, or by email at [admin.dd.info@state.mn.us](mailto:admin.dd.info@state.mn.us)

**Disclaimer:**

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**November 20, 2023**