

Ohio's March To Greater Independence

# COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT Q&A



# Answering Your Questions in a Time of Change

Ohio is a national leader in the movement toward greater employment freedom for individuals with developmental disabilities. The old model of the sheltered workshop served us well for years, but it was not without its drawbacks. Primarily, individuals were limited in their choices. Many people who could have thrived in a community setting were never provided that opportunity. For that reason, the move to community employment is critical, and many individuals will benefit from the new model.

However, change can be difficult. Parents and caregivers around the state are concerned about the transition. Many of their loved ones have never known anything but the sheltered workshop system.

The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council has undertaken the task of answering many of your questions about the move to community employment. We have gone around the state to find individuals with years of experience in the field of developmental disabilities to answer those questions.

We also have included two feature stories about individuals with developmental disabilities to explain how they and their families are adapting to the changes.

We hope you find this brochure useful.

# Adam Bailey: Ambassador of Goodwill at Panera Bread

Meet Adam Bailey.

Adam is, perhaps, a shining example of what we hope for all individuals with developmental disabilities seeking employment. He is gainfully and happily employed in a job he loves and in the community where he lives. He is making money and friends, and developing relationships.

It wasn't always that way. For years, Adam worked in a sheltered workshop in Franklin County. He was content in his job. His parents, Steve and Tammy, were happy that he had a safe place to work.

However, his service and support administrator saw more potential in Adam and suggested that they pursue a job in the community.

Steve and Tammy had concerns.

"At first, I thought, 'Why rock the boat?'" said Adam's mother, Tammy. "Adam was doing fine at the workshop, where he had friends. We weren't sure how he would respond to working in the community."

They decided to give it a try, and Adam has succeeded beyond what his parents and others who care about him could have imagined.

Adam began working at a Panera Bread restaurant in Columbus in February 2015. He works from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., four days a week, busing tables, cleaning, and stocking the coffee station. He has



become a recognized ambassador of goodwill with the restaurant regulars, always greeting customers with his trademark, "Welcome to Panera. Thanks for coming."

"Adam is a great addition to the team," said Nina Miller, a Panera manager who hired Adam. "He does a great job. He follows his routine and responds well to coaching."

"When I met Adam, there wasn't any doubt that he would make the transition. I knew Adam would be a good fit for the store. We're very excited to have him."

The job also has made a difference in Adam's personal life.

"Adam's confidence has just swelled since he began working at Panera," Tammy said. "I'm very happy for Adam. He really looks forward to going to work. It has really been a good move."

Q: Why did Ohio enact the  
Employment First legislation?  
Weren't things just fine the way  
they were?

Carolyn Knight,  
executive director of the Ohio  
Developmental Disabilities Council



**A** They were just fine for a few people. However, for the great majority of Ohioans with developmental disabilities, they weren't fine. Too many individuals went to sheltered workshops without any hope of advancement, accepting new challenges, or using their skills to the maximum.

We want people who are disabled to have a full place in our society. The Employment First initiative has given people a lot of opportunities to gain employment outside of a sheltered workshop.

Every day, you see more and more individuals with disabilities working in our communities, which is exactly the way it should be.

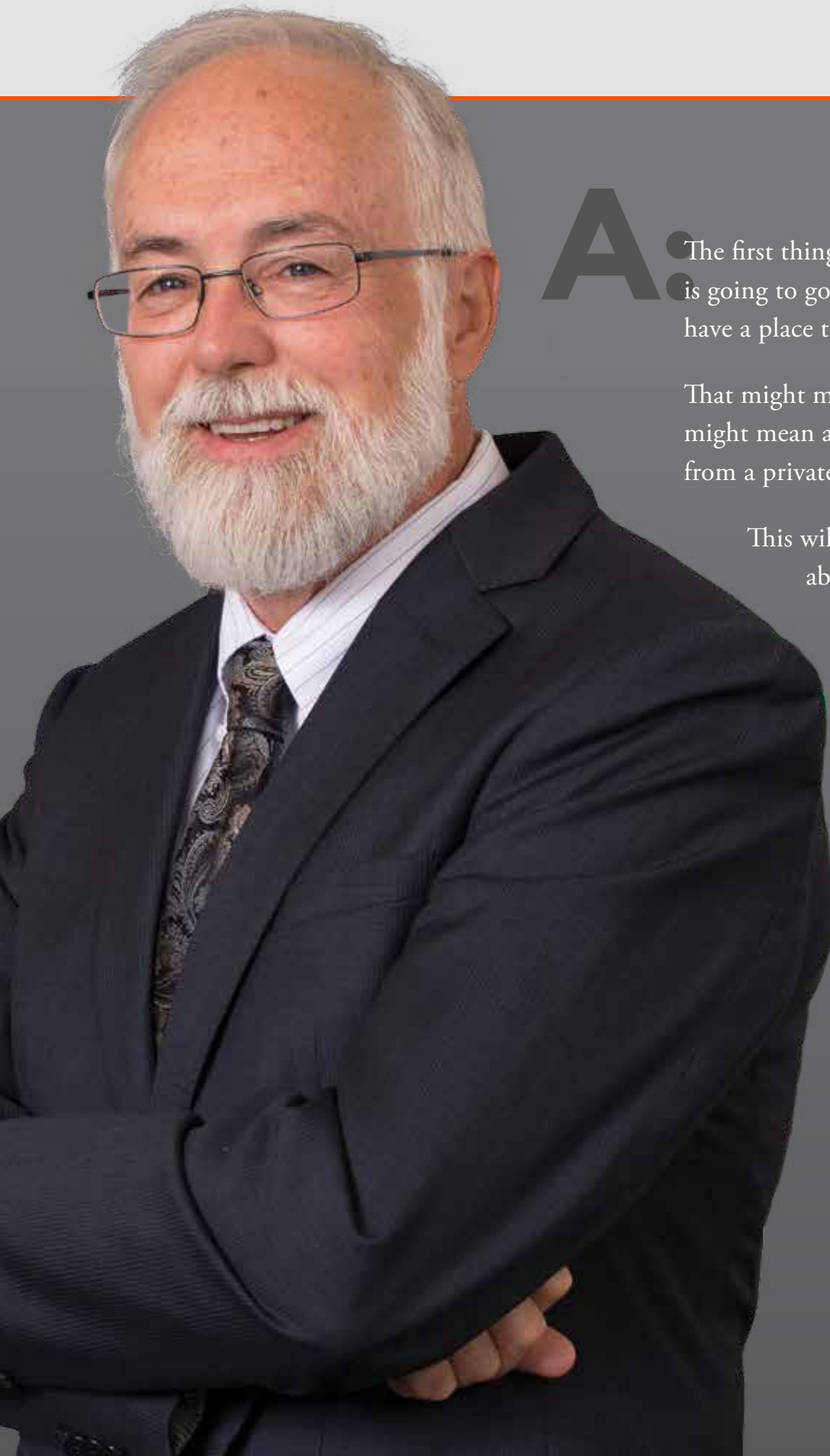
The Employment First initiative is making families happier and allowing people with disabilities to be treated with respect while finding fulfillment in their work.

In the state of Ohio, we are doing everything we can to get individuals with developmental disabilities trained and placed in a job in the community. What could be more important than that?

**Q:** You're going to take my child out of the sheltered workshop, and that's all he's ever known. What will he do?

John Martin,  
director of the Ohio Department of  
Developmental Disabilities






**A:** The first thing you need to know is this: No one is going to go without services. Everyone will have a place to go during the day.

That might mean community employment. It might mean a workshop. Or it might be day hab from a private provider.

This will depend largely on your son's abilities and desires. Remember, this is employment first, not employment only. Simply, we want to make community employment the first choice for individuals with disabilities.

Your son will be assessed to see if there is a good fit for community employment. If he is not capable of working in the community, we will find other options. Your son will still have a place to go during the day.



Q: Are the  
workshops all  
closing?

Steve Oster, superintendent  
of the Knox County and  
Coshocton County Boards of  
Developmental Disabilities  
and president of the Ohio  
Superintendent's Association





I don't think all the sheltered workshops will close, but they will look different over the next 5 to 10 years.

Here's what's happening: When the sheltered workshops were first opened in 1968, Ohio was an industrial giant. We had a lot of industry, a lot of jobs, and a lot of work to distribute to the workshops. That has changed dramatically. There is less work being funneled to the workshops, and across Ohio there are fewer factory-type jobs available.

As integration into the community and community employment become the norm, more and more individuals are going to leave the workshop to work and/or participate in their community. With fewer people at the workshops, even fewer jobs will come through the door as there won't be enough workers to handle the load. As providers become more creative, there should be many other opportunities for work and integration.

When this happens, some workshops will simply close their doors, others may rent out space to other businesses in their communities, and some will try to maintain what they can to keep their doors open. Creativity is the key to the future.

Right now, it's difficult to predict what the state's workshops will look like in five years. However, it is safe to say that community employment is the future for the vast number of individuals with developmental disabilities seeking work as well as integration into their community.

Q: Why do you want people working in the community? Isn't it safer for my daughter to be in a sheltered workshop?

Kara Brown, superintendent of the Union County Board of Developmental Disabilities



**A:** As we continue to help people with disabilities integrate into their communities, employment is an important factor. This is one way for your daughter and other people with disabilities to become full citizens. In doing so, they earn money, make friends and experience life in the same way as the rest of us.

When we view people with disabilities as needing protection and shelter from the rest of the world, we sell them short and prevent them from being all they can be. Where would your daughter best thrive - in a closed workshop surrounded by other people with disabilities, or working in a grocery store interacting with her community?

Individuals with developmental disabilities want the same things in life as everyone else - a paycheck, a safe place to work, money in their pocket, relationships and security. Community employment is one way to open that door.

When we opened the front door to sheltered workshops, we closed the back door. People were sent to work in workshops and never got the chance to use their full talents. We want to make sure that people who can and want to work in the community receive that opportunity.



Q: If everyone in a sheltered workshop is expected to work in the community, will my daughter have to work 40 hours a week?

Renee Wood, an advocate from Lucas County

**A:** Absolutely not.

No one is going to be forced into a situation where they are not comfortable, including your daughter.

The goal of community employment is opportunity. We are seeking ways to provide the greatest number of individuals with the greatest number of employment opportunities. Ideally, we will be able to customize a job to the needs and abilities of your daughter.

If she can work 40 hours a week and that opportunity is available, perfect. However, maybe 20 hours a week is where she needs to be. Maybe it's eight, or six. Those determinations will be made in consultation with you, your daughter, her job coach or service and support administrator, and the employer.

The last thing we want people to think is that we are closing the workshops and simply shoving individuals into employment situations. That is not how our system works. Simply, let's see where your daughter's interests lie and what jobs we can find to accommodate those interests.

Let me add this: Many parents and caregivers fear changing from the security of a sheltered workshop to community employment. It has been my experience that individuals experience greater freedom, make more friends and find greater job satisfaction when working in the community. Don't fear the change. Ideally, we will find the perfect job for your daughter.

**Q** I want my son in the community, but he's unable to work. Is there going to be a place for him where he can find social interaction?

Mark Seifarth, chair of the Ohio  
Developmental Disabilities Council



**A:** Yes. It is extremely important that we make accommodations for individuals like your son who are unable to work but still crave social interaction. There will be services for those individuals.

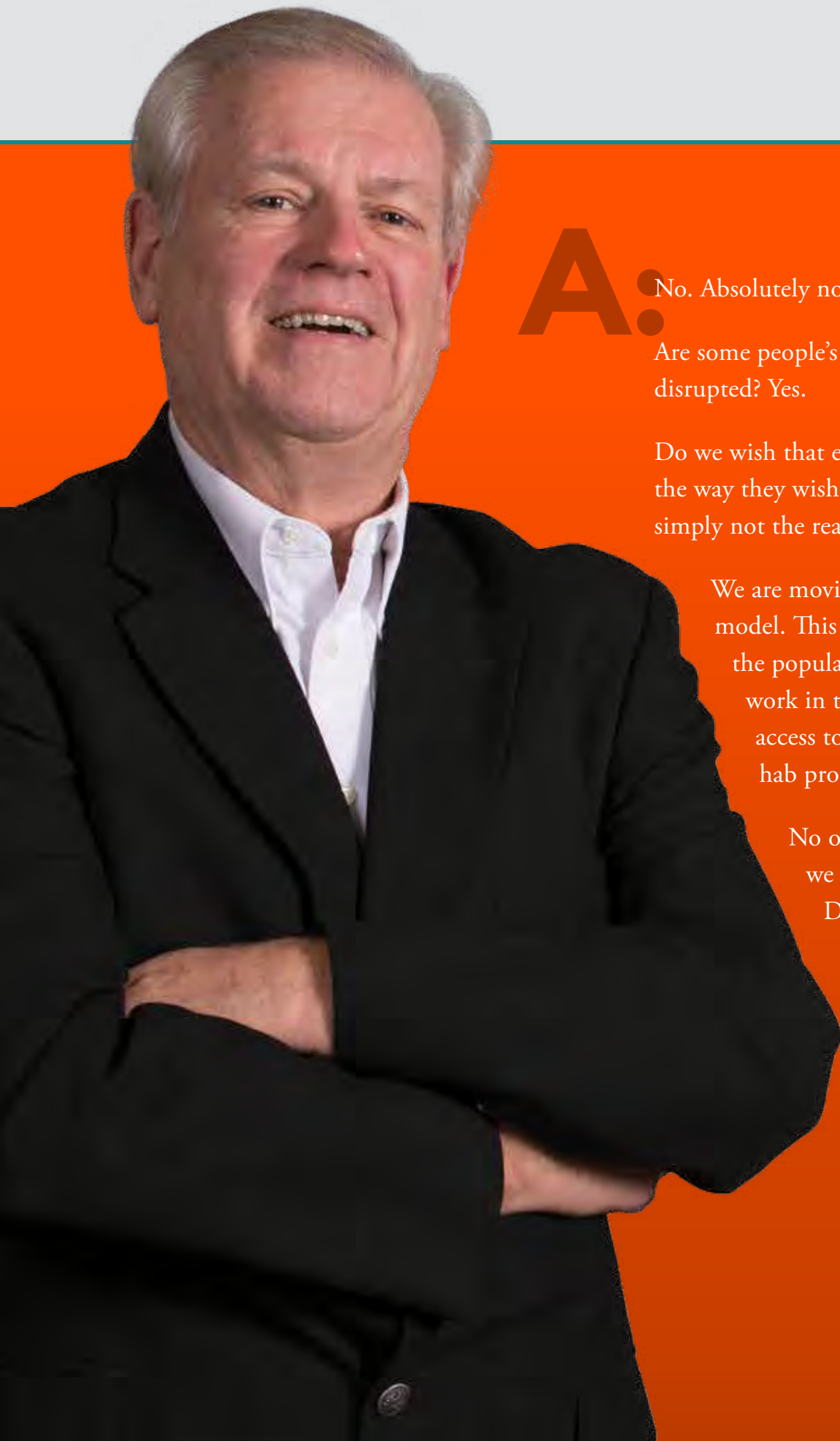
We must be creative in how we look at individuals who are severely disabled. In spite of their disability, they still want, and are entitled to, social interaction and human contact.

Each county will be addressing those issues on an individual basis. Let me emphasize that it is important for you to stand up for your loved one. If you do not believe enough is being done to meet the needs of your son, make sure your county board of developmental disabilities is aware of your concerns.

Q: What happens if a child is unable to work in the community and my workshop closes? Will they have to stay home?

Neil Castilow, member of the Ohio  
Developmental Disabilities Council





**A:** No. Absolutely no one is going to be left behind.

Are some people's situations going to be disrupted? Yes.

Do we wish that everyone could be served exactly the way they wished? Of course, but that is simply not the reality.

We are moving toward an employment-first model. This will best serve the majority of the population. For those who cannot work in the community and don't have access to a workshop, there will be day hab programs from providers.

No one will have to sit at home, and we have the assurances of the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities that no one will be left behind.

## A Place for Matthew

# A Mother Seeks Alternative Avenues for Her Son

Like any mother, Kimberly Crishbaum has dreams for her son. Her dreams, however, are modest by comparison to most mothers of 20-year-olds.

She would like to see him in a structured day program a couple of days a week. Perhaps he can receive aquatic therapy, attend a sporting event or meet friends at the park.

However, at times even those modest dreams seem out of reach.

Kim is an electronic design specialist for the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council. She also is the mother of a son with severe disabilities.

“As we move away from sheltered workshops and traditional day services, I worry about where my son will go and what he’ll do during the day,” Kim said. “There need to be programs for people like him.”

Matthew McConnell was just 11 months old when he slipped in his high chair at a babysitter’s house and his neck was pressed against the tray. His brain was oxygen-starved. It was a miracle that he survived, but Matthew’s spirit prevailed. In fact, he recently completed high school.

“He thoroughly enjoyed school because he had a lot of social interaction,” Kim said. “But he’s incapable of working in the community and as sheltered workshops disappear, there seem to be few options for him.”

As the system currently works, Kim worries that there are no alternatives for Matthew to continue to experience a meaningful connection to his community.

Enter Kurt Smith, director of special projects for the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Kurt and his team have been working to make sure Matthew, and individuals in his situation, are not left behind.

“I wince a little when I hear someone say they have a child who can’t work, because that depends on your definition of work,” Kurt said. “We need to look at an individual’s ability to contribute. Matthew is not going to be an eight-hours-a-day, punch-the-clock worker. However, we believe everyone is able to contribute and work to whatever degree they can.”

Kurt is working on a pilot project that will benefit individuals like Matthew. The program involves a wide exploratory process designed to find a niche for every individual.

“We are focusing on students transitioning from school to adulthood and taking those individuals through the discovery process. We spend a lot of time with them and have brainstorming sessions with the individual, their family members and



friends to find out what's important to the individual. We look at their personal interests, interests in the community, vocational interests - anything that they might like to do.”

Kurt said another part of the discovery process involves a thorough observation of the neighborhood in which the individual lives.

“We want to see the places they like to go and observe them in their various environments - church, the YMCA, the coffee shop down the street. This will help us understand what vocations they might want to pursue. We're looking to break out of the traditional day-services, sheltered-workshop mold.”

Kim says the Franklin County pilot project has left her more hopeful than worried.

“When you're the mother of someone like Matthew, his welfare is never far from your thoughts,” Kim said. “He's very social and loves people. I want him in an environment that is welcoming and one that makes him comfortable. I'm confident this program is going to have a positive impact on Matthew's life.”



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The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council is one of a national network of state councils, committed to self-determination and community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities.

The Council consists of at least 30 members appointed by the governor. Members are people with developmental disabilities, parents and guardians of people with developmental disabilities, representatives from state agencies, and representatives from nonprofit organizations and agencies that provide services to people with developmental disabilities.

One of the Council's goals is to educate and inform how state and local government services and policies can be improved, expanded or strengthened on behalf of people with disabilities.