

What Are Developmental Disabilities?

A developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability, either mental and/or physical, that starts before the age of 22. A few examples include autism, cerebral palsy, a combination of visual and hearing disabilities, mental retardation, mental illness, traumatic brain injury and epilepsy. Individuals can have developmental disabilities when they are born or acquire them before their 22nd birthday, during "the developmental years." Developmental disabilities usually continue indefinitely and limit a person's participation in three or more of the following major life activities: self-care, mobility, language, learning, self-direction, independent living, and financial self-sufficiency. The term is applied to infants and young children, from birth to age 9, who have substantial developmental delay or a specific condition which probably will result in developmental disabilities if services are not provided.



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learning. living. working.



The Promise: Endless Possibilities.

Every person in America has the right to live in their own home, work at a regular job, seek an education and interact socially. This includes more than 325,000 people with developmental disabilities in the state of Texas. The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD) is committed to making sure each individual is able to enjoy these rights as much as the next person. The Council's mission is to create change so that all people with disabilities are fully included in their own communities and exercise control over their own lives. TCDD is constantly searching for new and better ways to support people in everyday activities and create communities where everyone is valued and belongs.

The Big Picture: Providing Leadership.

TCDD is a state board comprised of 30 members appointed by the governor. The Council works closely with individuals, parents, family members, advocate groups, state agencies, service providers and federal, state and local policy makers to increase individual choice and inclusion. For example, state and federal policies are reviewed and recommendations are made to provide supports and services that Texans with disabilities need and desire. Also, TCDD provides leadership training, technical assistance, demonstration projects, educational videos and other materials and information.

The Way: Essential Training.

Individuals and family members know more about their needs than anyone else. However, many Texans cannot obtain essential services and supports. TCDD provides a variety of leadership programs, advocacy training projects, conferences and materials to help people with disabilities understand the system. Individuals learn how to influence policies and laws and how to obtain quality services for themselves and others. These programs create a productive partnership between people needing and using services and policy makers. In fact, about 450 Texans have already graduated from the Partners in Policymaking program. TCDD also works with disability organizations across Texas to support local and statewide advocacy efforts.

The Means: Using Funds and Resources Wisely.

In everything TCDD does, quality assurance, cost-efficiency and effectiveness are essential components. To achieve these, the Council invests funds in projects locally and statewide. This includes testing new ideas, helping state agencies develop better ways to provide services and ensuring that the state's money and resources are used wisely. About 80 percent of TCDD's budget is used for grant projects. These activities include demonstration projects, training, technical assistance and developing new ways to create and bring together services and supports. Grants address a vast array of topics such as integrated employment, inclusive education, family support, school-to-work transition, transportation, individual-controlled housing, local advocacy networks and family-based alternatives for children living in institutions.

The Brains: Smart Innovations.

TCDD is always thinking of ways to improve services and supports. The Council is constantly developing new products and activities that impact the entire state. Some projects TCDD has funded are: the Texas Information and Referral Network, which provides information statewide on health and human services and resources; a demonstration project for the In-Home and Family Support program; supported employment; and support for the Disability Policy Consortium, a cross-disability coalition of statewide advocacy organizations. TCDD has also demonstrated successful models for personal assistance services, transportation, inclusive child care, health care information and access, and accessible and affordable housing.

The Future: Envisioning What Is Possible.

In this day and age, the technology, skills and expertise exist to include each and every person who has a disability in everyday community life. Children can grow up in families and attend neighborhood schools. Adults can choose what careers they want and where they live. TCDD continues to make progress each year to increase inclusion. The Council constantly examines where we've been, what's working and what should be done next. How well are people's needs being met statewide? What are the effects of TCDD projects and activities? What can be done better? What else is possible?