



A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



From the Desk of the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Looking back on 2024, we continue to feel grateful and hopeful. The Council's theme for the 2024 annual report, "A World of Opportunity," captures our mission and the progress we've made towards creating a more inclusive and supportive Indiana for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (ID/DD) and their families.

Considering the progress made through funded programs marks 2024 an incredible and innovative time in the Council's history. The Council's progress towards its vision for Hoosiers with disabilities in Indiana is marked by the establishment of new and innovative programs, while staying committed to strengthening self-advocacy initiatives and our roots in the DD Act. Our continued dedication to elevating the voices of people with ID/DD and their families to live their vision of a good life is stronger than ever. We've explored meaningful ways to engage with our community members, built new partnerships, and continue to look towards the future with hope, determination, and renewed energy.

Highlights of the Year:

- **Advocacy and Awareness:** We've led efforts to protect the rights and dignity of people with ID/DD, ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities they need. The Next-Level Self-Advocacy project used \$247,204 to boost self-advocacy, leadership training, and participation in various committees and community groups by people with ID/DD. The Supporting Whole Family Wellbeing and Advocacy in Indiana project, with \$416,106 in funding, has been key in building strong family advocacy and support.
- **Innovative Programs:** We started several new projects to improve public health research, job opportunities, and social inclusion for people with ID/DD. For example, the 5x5 Public Health Internship project used funding to recruit, hire, and train five rising public health professionals. This project-based internship included training that helped the 5x5 interns learn about policies and programs

that impact on the health outcomes of people with ID/DD, effective ways to engage with the ID/DD community, and how to develop programs that improve policies and services for them.

- **Community Engagement:** Our “Snack Chats” brought together people with ID/DD and their families to discuss what “opportunity” means to them and how to expand those opportunities. These sessions covered practical topics like education, healthcare, housing, and work opportunities, and received positive feedback from participants.

As we look ahead, we are excited about the possibilities that lie before us. “A World of Opportunity” is not just a theme; it is a vision for the future. A future where every individual with ID/DD is valued, included, and given the chance to thrive.

Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication. Together, we are making a difference and opening doors to a world of opportunity for all.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Kate Barrow

GCPD Executive Director



A Letter from the Council Chair

As Chair of the Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities, and a parent of a young adult with a developmental disability, I’m honored to share highlights of GCPD’s important work during 2024. This year, we refined our strategic direction by consolidating five goals into two focused areas: Leadership and Advocacy, and Community Inclusion & Belonging. This move was driven by our desire for greater impact and more meaningful outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

In keeping with our 2024 theme, “A World of Opportunities,” we expanded engagement across Indiana through new partnerships and initiatives. Our work emphasized building authentic connections with individuals and communities, and creating more opportunities for advocacy, leadership and inclusion. We continued to emphasize that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are essential contributors to our communities, not just during Disability Awareness Month, but all year long.

Employment and community involvement remain critical issues, with far too many people with significant disabilities still facing barriers to work and to inclusive engagement in their communities. The release of Indiana’s Employment First plan was a major step forward, and the Council is actively involved in this effort to make competitive, integrated employment the standard expectation for all. Likewise, our travels for “Council in Community” explores opportunities for and concerns of people with ID/DD in the communities where they live. This work will be ongoing as we strive to ensure a world of opportunities for people with IDD and their families in Indiana.

As we reflect on this year, I invite you to stay involved: attend a meeting, join a committee, share your story or advocate for change. Progress is possible when we work together. Thank you for your continued support and commitment to creating a more inclusive Indiana.

Beth DeHoff
GCPD Council Chair

**Visit <https://www.in.gov/gcpd/> to learn how to become involved.
Or email Council at council@gcpd.in.gov.**

Council Members

Citizen Members

Dominick Chase
Beth DeHoff
Casey DePriest
Brandy Dickerson
Andrew Fenker
Ledrena Girton
Kevin McCracken

Jennifer Noffsinger
Chris Ramey
Shawn Rector
Ryan Steiner
Traci Taylor
Jessica Witherspoon

DD Act Partners

Melissa Keyes
Derek Nord

Indiana Disability Rights
Indiana Institute on Disability
and Community

State Agency Representatives

Kelly Mitchell

Indiana Family and Social Services
Administration, Division of Disability
and Rehabilitative Services

Nancy Holsapple

Indiana Department of
Education

Kristi Linson

Indiana Department of
Health, Maternal and Child
Health Services

Staff Members

Kate Barrow
Desirea Island

Executive Director
Program and Policy
Director

Robin Martinez
Ryan Revell
Allison Wymer
Hayden McGough

Office Coordinator
Systems Change Manager
Systems Change Manager
Communications
& Engagement Specialist



From Vision to Action: Anchoring Our Work in Purpose

The Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities (GCPD) is an independent, federally funded state agency established under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act). As part of a national network of Developmental Disabilities (DD) Councils, we work to promote systems change and support programs that increase independence, productivity, and inclusion for people with developmental disabilities (ID/DD).

The Council works to build a well-connected system of support that puts individuals with developmental disabilities and their families at the center. This includes making sure they have access to the community services and personalized supports they need to live independently, make their own choices, and lead fulfilling lives.

In 2024, GCPD embraced the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) March Developmental Disability Awareness Month theme, “A World of Opportunities,” and explored leadership development, promoting opportunity, and building community through meaningful engagement. This report highlights the significant progress made this year toward a more inclusive Indiana.

Our Mission & Vision

Mission:

To advance the independence, productivity, and inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) in all aspects of society.

Vision:

For Hoosier communities to be accessible, inclusive, and respectful of all their members.

2022–2026 State Plan Goals

Goal Area 1: Leadership and Advocacy

Increase leadership and advocacy among culturally and linguistically diverse people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) and families.

Goal Area 2: Community Inclusion and Belonging

Systemic barriers are addressed to facilitate increased community inclusion and belonging on the part of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Read our full Five-Year State Plan at

<https://www.in.gov/gcpd/about-council/state-plan/>.

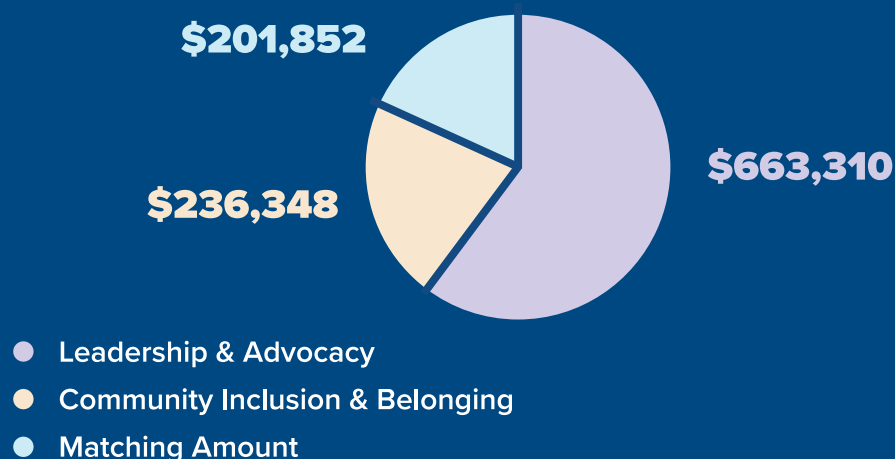




Exploring a World of Opportunities, Discovering Boundless Possibilities

In a world rapidly evolving with new challenges and possibilities, the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities continues to champion a future where every individual can thrive. "A World of Opportunities" reflects not only our vision but also the tangible progress we've made in advancing the goals outlined in our Five-Year State Plan. Over the past year, we've built meaningful momentum—amplifying voices, expanding access, and fostering innovation across communities. From innovative program development to grassroots empowerment, our efforts are opening doors and creating pathways that ensure people with developmental disabilities can live, learn, work, and lead in their communities with dignity and independence. This report highlights the strides the Council has made in 2024 and the opportunities we're creating together— with our community members.

Investment Amount



Investing in Advocacy Across the Lifespan

In 2024, the Council made significant investments to strengthen advocacy for both individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) and their families. Two major initiatives—**Next-Level Self-Advocacy** and **Supporting Whole-Family Wellbeing and Advocacy in Indiana**—advanced leadership, peer support, and systems change across the state.



The **Next-Level Self-Advocacy** project, supported by \$247,204 in funding, trained over 2,100 individuals with ID/DD in leadership and advocacy. Highlights included the launch of a statewide speakers bureau, development of 12 peer-led training curricula, and the creation of a self-advocacy toolkit. Ten self-advocacy chapters and two youth chapters were established or revitalized, with

participants reporting increased confidence, knowledge, and satisfaction. As one graduate shared, “I now have the tools to speak up and help others do the same.”

Simultaneously, the Council launched the **Supporting Whole-Family Wellbeing and Advocacy** initiative with an initial \$416,106 investment. This project focused on building a network of family-led and family-supporting organizations, increasing culturally responsive engagement, and identifying capacity-building needs. Through statewide summits and fireside chats, over 400 families shared their experiences and helped shape a shared vision for family advocacy in Indiana. Facilitators provided affirmation, skill-building strategies, and peer connection to help families find their voice and influence systems that impact their loved ones.

Together, these initiatives reflect the Council’s commitment to building a world of opportunities—where individuals with ID/DD and their families are equipped, empowered, and engaged in shaping their futures.



Key accomplishments and highlights:

- **2,110 individuals with ID/DD trained or informed** in self-advocacy.
- **12 training curricula** developed, including peer-led modules.
- **Family Wellbeing Project** launched to build family-led advocacy networks.
- **“Snack Chats” and “Coffee Chats”** engaged over 120 individuals and families in virtual discussions on advocacy, inclusion, and community living.



Impact:

- People with ID/DD identifying as self-advocates took on more leadership roles, including one seasoned leader becoming the Self-Advocates of Indiana Administrator for 2025, an employment role traditionally held by a person without a disability.
- **10 self-advocacy chapters** established or re-established.
- **2 youth self-advocacy chapters** were created.
- Families reporting an increased confidence in navigating systems and advocating for their loved ones.
- The Council’s **Whole-Family Wellbeing and Advocacy** initiative engaged over **400 diverse families** in shaping future support strategies.

“ Before the training, I struggled to express my needs. Now, I’m mentoring others in my community.”

– Alex, Self-Advocate

Boundless Possibilities for Community Inclusion & Belonging

This powerful statement, shared during Disability Pride Month, captures the heart of the Council's work in 2024 to foster inclusion, dignity, and belonging for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD). Throughout the year, the Council led initiatives that elevated lived experiences, addressed systemic barriers, and expanded access to community life. From public health partnerships to statewide engagement events, these efforts created meaningful opportunities for individuals with ID/DD and their families to shape the systems and spaces that impact their lives.

During National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), the Council highlighted the voices of Indiana state employees with disabilities, whose stories challenged workplace stereotypes and emphasized the need for respect and accommodations. One participant shared, "People think 'developmental disability' means 'low functioning.' I have a master's degree. It was a struggle to earn it, but I did it." Another added, "Don't treat us like we're trying to get out of work when we ask for accommodations... Respect that we work full-time on top of having a disability—we don't have the energy to fight battles for basic needs."

Building on the theme "A World of Opportunities," the Council hosted "Snack Chats" and "Coffee Chats" with over 110 participants, including people with ID/DD and their families. These sessions explored what opportunity means—from choosing where to live to earning a dignified wage—and identified barriers like transportation, healthcare access, and school support. As one attendee put it, "Opportunity means working a job that is interesting and meaningful to us and makes use of our talents." Another shared, "When people listen to us, trust us, and believe they can learn from us—that's when opportunity grows."

Participants praised the sessions for their relevance and authenticity. One remarked, “Thanks for doing these sessions,” while another said, “The speaker and their real-life experiences kept me engaged.” These conversations continue to inform the Council’s work to build more inclusive, responsive systems across Indiana.



Key accomplishments and highlights:

- **363 individuals** participated in Council-hosted webinars and engagement events.
- **228.8% increase** in social media engagement.
- **New partnerships** formed with the Department of Corrections, United Way of Central Indiana, and others.



Impact:

- Interns produced white papers on topics like **hypertension and ID/DD, accessible communities**, and **justice-involved self-advocacy**.
- Community members reported increased awareness of disability rights and inclusion.
- Exploring a World of opportunities during March Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month shared powerful stories of identity and resilience.

“ Disability pride means living your true, authentic, and bada self!”**

– Participant, Disability Pride Month

Indiana's Five-by-Five Public Health Internship

Expanding the Public Health Workforce within the Disability Network

With funding from the Administration on Community Living (ACL) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA), the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities (GCPD, the Council) designed and implemented a project-based learning internship for five rising public health professionals, called the 5x5 Public Health Internship. This program, a 10-week project-based learning internship, recruited and trained five rising public health professionals. Based on their interests and areas of experience, each 5x5 Public Health Intern was assigned to one of the five Social Drivers of Health (SDOH), where they collaborated with state agencies, DD Act partners, and community organizations to explore the intersection of public health, disability, and home and community-based services (HCBS).

Of the five interns, two were recruited from and provided housing and transportation support from The Gregory S. Fehribach Center at Eskenazi Health, a program designed to foster opportunities for independence, employment, and civic engagement for college graduates with physical disabilities. All the interns shared a personal connection to the disability community, from direct personal lived experience to indirect lived experience.

Throughout the duration of the 10-week program, interns worked alongside partners such as the Department of Corrections, Department of Education, Office of Special Education, Office of Community and Rural Affairs, Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health, to develop projects that address real-world challenges and contributed to systems change efforts aligned with the Council's State Plan.



Project proposals developed included:

- Youth Self-Advocacy in the Corrections System.
- Community Inclusion Evaluation for Indiana Main Streets Grant Recipients.
- Integrating Charting the LifeCourse Framework in Youth Employment Transition Services.

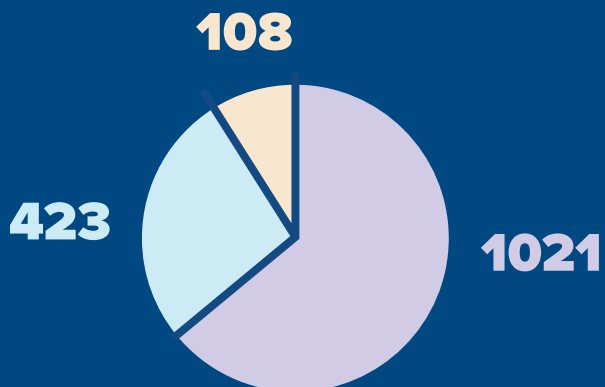
The program was shared with national leaders at the 2024 NACDD Annual Conference, where interns represented Indiana, networked with other Councils, and engaged with national leaders on disability policy and advocacy. The 5x5 initiative not only strengthened cross-sector partnerships but also expanded awareness of disability-inclusive public health practices across Indiana.



Measuring the Impact Beyond the Dollar

Through its initiatives, the Council demonstrates the real-world impact by capturing the number of people with disabilities and their families that participate in Council funded projects and programs. As a result of efforts in 2024, the Council made significant strides in cultivating opportunities to connect, collaborate, and lead.

Number of People Participating in Council Funded Programs in 2024



- Number of People with ID/DD
- Number of Family Members
- Other




An Opportunity for a Community Conversation

The Council invites its supporters, people with disabilities and their families, providers and policymakers to take part in meaningful dialogue with one another using the key questions from “A World of Opportunities” as conversation starters.

Connections Matters

Connection between community members helps reduce loneliness, isolation, and mental health challenges while building resiliency, compassion, and healthier outcomes for all. Explore a world of possibility and opportunity while connecting with friends, family and neighbors over a shared meal, light snacks, or a calming cup of tea. These cards can be used to help people with and without disabilities, their families, and the professionals who support them build and strengthen new and existing connections, whether in-person, on the phone, or online.




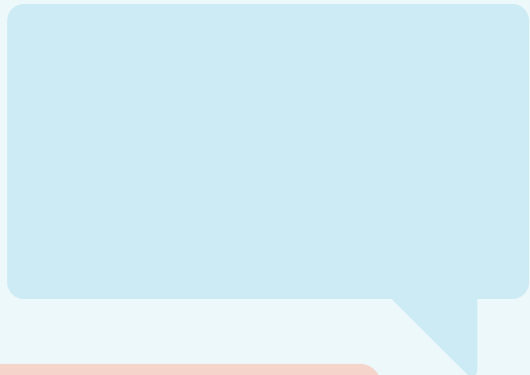


Think about a time someone really listened to you. How did that make you feel?

If you could plan your perfect day—with the help, money, and freedom you need—what would you do?

Choosing where and how we live is a big deal. What's important to you about your home and who you live with?

Sometimes people don't agree with our choices. Why is it still important to make our own decisions?



Who are the people that make you feel safe and accepted? How have they helped you feel proud of who you are?



Indiana Government Center South, Room E145
402 West Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Phone: 317.232.7770

E-Mail: council@gcpd.in.gov