



**GOVERNOR'S
COUNCIL FOR
PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES**

Council IN Community: We're Here All Year!

Newburgh Summary

COUNCIL IN COMMUNITY: WE'RE HERE ALL YEAR

Summary of Council IN Community- Newburgh, IN

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

Wednesday, May 14, 2025

Abstract

This Council IN Community session, hosted by the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, provided an overview of the Council's mission, State Plan, and the DD act. Participants shared personal strengths and challenges, highlighting the need for greater community education, accessible services, and advocacy. Input from this session will help guide the Council's future State Plan and engagement efforts.

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Why Was **Council IN Community (CINC)** held?

The Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities (GCPD, the Council) wants to connect with people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (ID/DD), family members of people with (ID/DD), professionals and organizations or groups who support them, and the community to:

- Provide training and educational opportunities to learn about the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act)
- Provide information about the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities, Indiana Developmental Disabilities Council, and its role in implementing the DD Act in Indiana
- Engage people with ID/DD, family members of people with ID/DD across the lifespan, and organizations or groups that support them on what makes "good life" in Indiana

Council Member, Casey DePriest (Warrick County) hosted two **CINC** events at Optimal ACCESS in Newburgh, the evening of Tuesday, May 13th and lunchtime on Wednesday, May 14th. Optimal ACCESS provided meeting space, lite refreshments, and shared responsibility for community outreach as in-kind contributions.

Developing a Shared Vision for Indiana

The information collected from every *Council **IN** Community: We're Here All Year!* will be summarized and shared with attendees, posted on the Council's website, and shared with the attendees to make sure GCPD staff have accurately captured the themes, ideas, and outcomes from the learning journey.

The Council will use this information to help shape the goals and objectives for the 2027-2032 State Plan, identify program areas, and develop strategies to increase community capacity so that every Hoosier with ID/DD across the lifespan has the freedom and opportunity to live, work, play, learn, and contribute to this great state.



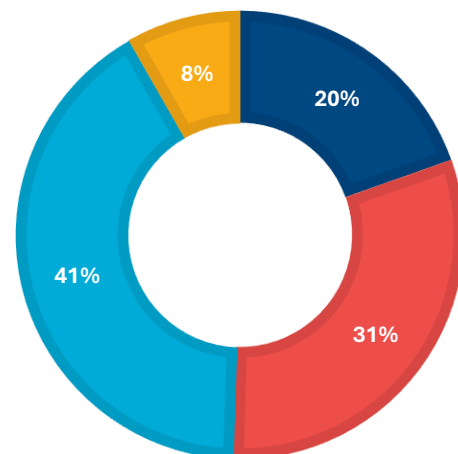
Who Attended?

This event brought together adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (ID/DD), and support-staff to have an open dialog about what a 'good life' in Indiana could look like.

GCPD Council Members and Staff were joined by other adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (ID/DD), family members of people with ID/DD in different life stages, professionals who support people with ID/DD and family members, and community advocates from across Indiana joined one of the two sessions offered in a two-day time period. Some participants identified as "Self-Advocates" and represented Council funded programs. Other participants represented their local communities in leadership roles that shape their community's infrastructure.

REGISTERED ATTENDEES

- Person with ID/DD
- Parent, Immediate Family Member, or Guardian Of a Person With ID/DD
- Professional in the ID/DD Field
- Community Supporter





What Happened at CINC?

Objectives

- Introduce participants to the Council's mission, vision, and current five-year state plan.
- Provide an overview of the DD Act and its significance in Indiana.
- Encourage participant dialogue about personal and community strengths, barriers, and opportunities for inclusion.
- Gather input to inform Council reports, advocacy priorities, and community engagement strategies.

Participant Engagement and Input

Participants contributed valuable insights related to self-determination, dignity of risk, valued roles, strengths, and barriers experienced in daily life and within systems of support for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Participants expressed a nuanced and empowering vision of a good life—one that is rooted in choice, connection, and purpose. Their words highlight both the aspirations and systemic shifts needed to ensure people with disabilities can live fully and authentically in their communities. Highlights of participant input include:

Self-Determination and Voice

Participants strongly emphasized the importance of self-determination and autonomy:

- "Speaking up for myself and others" was described as a critical element of a good life.
- "The voices of people with ID/DD should be prioritized and elevated—even above family members—when making life decisions, as autonomy and lived experience are essential."

A desire to support others in expressing their needs was also named:

- "Helping people say what they want and need."

Communication access was a priority, especially for those who use alternative methods:

- "Avoid getting left out (as a person who uses other types of communication)."
- "Have ways to communicate and share voice – sometimes with support."





- "Establishing and honoring the individual's preferred formal communication method fosters more effective collaboration and inclusion."

Belonging, Inclusion, and Respect

Participation in school life and community events, such as:

- "Getting a class ring, yearbook,"
- "Special Olympics," and
- "Playing sports, going to games – basketball, baseball, football."

Several individuals expressed the importance of being seen as smart and capable:

- "Smarter, know more than you think – just be more differently, not dumb."

Dignity of Risk and Purposeful Learning

Participants voiced the value of dignity, growth, and taking risks to build independence.

- One reflection focused on shifting how behaviors are interpreted:
 - "Understanding protest behaviors as a sign."
- Another emphasized the need for growth mindset and self-belief:
 - "Take a growth mindset."
- A participant described the impact of disability-related learning:
 - "CRP: Change in perspective after learning training; learning added meaning and purpose."

Opportunities for Growth and Contribution

Participants shared outside interests, as well as expressed an interest in continuing to be productive members of society:

- "Poet, writer."
- "Dancing, geocaching, acting."
- "Gamer, hard worker, pop-culture knowledge."
- "Artistic, creative."

Employment, independent living, and daily responsibilities were noted:

- "Independent living with fiancé/bowling."
- "Pay bills, go shopping."
- "PAC hours, DTI individual class hours in the building."





Valued Roles and Support

Participants saw value in being part of a supportive community and emphasized the importance of trained, respectful support:

- "Training for support staff to help the individual make choices for a self-determined life."
- "Supporting people with disabilities to live a self-determined life – align with lived experiences"
- "Staff training should include support for individuals with specific disabilities such as epilepsy, understanding of state and federal regulations, and mental health needs."
- "In some cases, higher-trained staff may be necessary to meet the complex support needs of individuals with ID/DD."

Challenges and Barriers

In addition to interpersonal and systemic challenges, participants identified several key barriers that impacted their well-being, advocacy, and access:

Accessibility Issues

Many participants noted barriers that prevent them from living their vision of a good life:

- "Places aren't accessible."
- Participants highlighted:
 - "A lack of staff and opportunities in rural areas, such as Gibson County, to participate in programs like Special Olympics."

Lack of Support and Resources

There was concern about harmful societal messages:

- "Wrong ideas taught in society."
- "Society takes a deficit approach instead of strengths."
- "Provider is short-staffed."

Many participants noted barriers around waiver services and systems navigation:

- Participants noted the need for waiver services that include mental health support and that navigating these systems often requires legal assistance.
 - "Securing SSI or managing CIC Waiver applications."
 - "More clarity and assistance are needed around understanding and using PAC and DHI hours."
 - "CIH Waiver: Caregiver age barrier."
 - "Wait times."





Some participants expressed concerns about financial constraints for family caregivers:

- "Funding for family caregiver training often does not include compensation or recognition for the individual with the disability who is helping in that process."

Misplaced Focus

One person expressed that the focus is often misplaced when interacting and working with individuals with ID/DD:

- "Cultural expectations often emphasize managing behavior without understanding the individual's needs, identity, or expression. This deficit-based interpretation can cause harm."

Transportation Barriers

- "Transportation limitations restrict participation in community events and services, especially in rural areas."

Barriers Outside the Disability Community

There were concerns of personal, professional, and environmental barriers:

- Participants recognized the value of building friendships and support systems outside of disability-focused environments. However, participants noted during the discussion: "Boundaries (or lack of)" and "Harder to connect with people outside."
- A need for improved vetting and training: "Training for staff on different disabilities." And "No vetting system for speakers."

Connect & Contribute

To continue to foster community input and collaboration into Council work; the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities frequently hosts virtual and in-person learning and discussion opportunities across the state. Participants are encouraged to read and share this Council **IN** Community session summary and, if interested, connect with Council Members and staff for more information about other Council funded programs and activities.

