

Summary of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000

Updated February 14, 2025 – Summary written by Jesse Suter

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Introduction and Context

Recent directives from the White House have raised questions about what can and cannot be done by those receiving federal funding. For example, on January 20, 2025 an [executive order was issued to end federally supported diversity, equity, inclusion programs](#).

As shared previously, the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion (shortened to CDCI) does receive federal funding to operate our Center. While we work with our state and national partners to get more information, it is important to review one of the unique aspects of our Center: There is a federal law that authorizes our Center and directs many aspects of what we do.

The DD Act

The law is [Public Law 106–402 the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000](#) (shortened to DD Act).

The purpose of the DD Act is to make sure people with “developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life, through culturally competent programs authorized under this title.”

The focus of the DD Act is on people with developmental disabilities and their families. The law allows UCEDDs and other DD Act programs to engage in activities that support people with developmental disabilities AND people with other disabilities.

In the law, several specific programs are named including University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (shortened to UCEDD and pronounced “you-said”). CDCI is Vermont’s UCEDD.

DD Act Principles

All programs, projects, and activities receiving assistance under the DD Act, must be consistent with the following principles:

1. All people with developmental disabilities are capable of self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in community life, and often need services and supports.
2. People with developmental disabilities and their families have skills and goals that should be recognized and supported. Help should be given in a way that matches their unique strengths and needs.
3. People with developmental disabilities and their families should make the main decisions about the services and support they get, including where they live. They should also have a role in making decisions about policies and programs that affect their lives.
4. Services and support should be given in a way that respects each person's dignity, preferences, and cultural differences.

5. Specific efforts must be made to ensure that people with developmental disabilities from minority backgrounds and their families have the same chances to use community services and support as others.
6. More people from minority backgrounds should be recruited to work in fields related to developmental disabilities to provide the right skills and role models for a diverse population.
7. With education and support, communities can be accessible to people with developmental disabilities and their families, and everyone benefits from their full participation in community activities.
8. People with developmental disabilities should have the support they need to be part of community life, have relationships, live in homes and communities, and contribute to their families and society.
9. Efforts to provide community living options for people with disabilities should be checked to make sure they have access and that quality standards are met.
10. Families of children with developmental disabilities need safe, appropriate, and integrated child care and before- and after-school programs to help the children take part in community life.
11. People with developmental disabilities need access to public transportation to be independent and take part in community life.
12. People with developmental disabilities need access to recreational, leisure, and social opportunities to be part of community life.

Definitions

The DD Act defines several key terms used in the law. Several are highlighted below.

Word	Definition
Culturally competent	Services, supports, or other assistance that is conducted or provided in a manner that is responsive to the beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes, language, and behaviors of individuals [...], and in a manner that has the greatest likelihood of ensuring their maximum participation in the program involved.
Developmental disability	<p>A severe, chronic disability that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • due to mental, physical, or a combination of impairments • starts before the age of 22 years; • is expected to continue indefinitely; • results in substantial functioning in 3 or more major life activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-care ○ Communication ○ Learning ○ Mobility ○ Self-direction ○ Independent living ○ Economic self-sufficiency • Reflects a need for ongoing individualized and coordinated services.

Word	Definition
Inclusion	<p>Acceptance and encouragement of the presence and participation of individuals with developmental disabilities, by individuals without disabilities, in social, educational, work, and community activities, that enables individuals with developmental disabilities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (A) have friendships and relationships with individuals and families of their own choice; • (B) live in homes close to community resources, with regular contact with individuals without disabilities in their communities; • (C) enjoy full access to and active participation in the same community activities and types of employment as individuals without disabilities; and • (D) take full advantage of their integration into the same community resources as individuals without disabilities, living, learning, working, and enjoying life in regular contact with individuals without disabilities.
Integration	<p>Exercising the equal right of individuals with developmental disabilities to access and use the same community resources as are used by and available to other individuals.</p>
Unserved and underserved	<p>Includes populations such as individuals from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, disadvantaged individuals, individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals from underserved geographic areas (rural or urban), and specific groups of individuals within the population of individuals with developmental disabilities, including individuals who require assistive technology in order to participate in and contribute to community life.</p>

Recruiting Center Staff, Faculty and Community Advisory Council

There are explicit conditions in the DD Act related to who works for and advises CDCI.

We are required to “take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities...” In addition, our UCEDD consumer advisory committee must have membership “that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the State.”

Need More Information about the DD Act?

The [Administration on Community Living hosts a website about the DD Act](#) including the full text, summary, Spanish translation, and a history of the act.

Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000, 42 U.S.C. § 15001

et seq (2000). <https://www.congress.gov/106/plaws/publ402/PLAW-106publ402.pdf>