

Department of  
**Intellectual &  
Developmental Disabilities**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

A NOTE FROM  
**COMMISSIONER BRAD TURNER**

Now more than ever, I am proud and awestruck by the dedication, compassion, and teamwork of DIDD. In an uncertain and difficult year for us all, the department and its partners have worked hard to not only ensure the continuation of person-centered services at a high level; but also, to push the envelope and improve upon the ways we can support people with disabilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of ingenuity and connection to each other. I'm grateful for all who have come together to keep those we support engaged at home, and safe as they return to work or learn to navigate the new normal in their communities. I'm equally appreciative for the efforts to promote the health and safety of all employees and support staff on the frontlines. It's a battle we could only take on together.

With the development of the Katie Beckett program and onboarding of Tennessee Early Intervention System, our department's responsibilities and reach are greatly expanding. As a father of a daughter with disabilities, it's exciting and rewarding to see how DIDD is now impacting the lives of Tennesseans from birth throughout lifespans. The department always strives to make our state the best place to live and work for people with disabilities, and these monumental transitions are steps in the right direction. I look forward to seeing all that we will accomplish together for the betterment of our state and to break down any remaining barriers for the people we support.

In the year ahead, we will likely face many challenges, as we continue our work to overcome the pandemic and as the department takes on the integration of IDD services under DIDD leadership. I believe in the fortitude of our team and Tennesseans with disabilities. We will persevere and continue to lead the nation in service-delivery fostering inclusion, representation, independence, and opportunity for all.



Brad Turner, Commissioner  
Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



# Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>COVID-19 RESPONSE</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>TENNESSEE EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>KATIE BECKETT PROGRAM</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ENABLING TECHNOLOGY</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>EMPLOYMENT FIRST</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>ACCREDITATION &amp; PERSON CENTERED PRACTICES</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>ECF CHOICES</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>CLINICAL SERVICES</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>STATEWIDE PLANNING &amp; POLICY COUNCIL UPDATES</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	<b>24</b>

# Intro and Recap for the Year

The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) provides community-based services and supports for more than 7,000 Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It currently does this through the operation and oversight of three 1915(c) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers: The Statewide Waiver, the Self-Determination Waiver, and the Comprehensive Aggregate Cap (CAC) Waiver. The department also administers support to more than 4,600 families through the Family Support Program and operates 37 Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID). It provides further support through the Harold Jordan Center and 3 regional seating and positioning clinics and one mobile clinic.

**Mission:** *To become the nation's most person-centered and cost-effective state support system for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.*

**Vision:** *Support all Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live the lives they envision for themselves.*

## FY 2019 – 2020 Recap and the Year Ahead



The global COVID-19 public health emergency directed DIDD's focus toward addressing the immediate health concerns and needs of the population it serves in March 2020. Like many others, the department faced unprecedented hurdles to ensure the DIDD community, staff, and its frontline

workers were safe. It worked closely with the governor's office, state and national health agencies, and providers to issue guidelines and avoid interruption of services during and after Tennessee's Safer-at-Home orders. Despite the challenges the pandemic brought, DIDD eagerly continued to pursue progress for its programs.



Through expanding partnerships and diligence on behalf of statewide employees, DIDD saw exponential growth in the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year. To start, the department's work to improve upon its service-delivery system was marked by securing a 3-year extension through the sunset process in October 2019.

Furthermore, the state took on two major transitions in an effort to better align services for children with disabilities. DIDD partnered with TennCare and families across Tennessee to develop the Katie Beckett Program to offer greater opportunities of support for children with disabilities or complex medical needs and their families. While implementation has not yet begun, efforts to design the program with community input were successful and are ongoing while the department awaits federal approval.



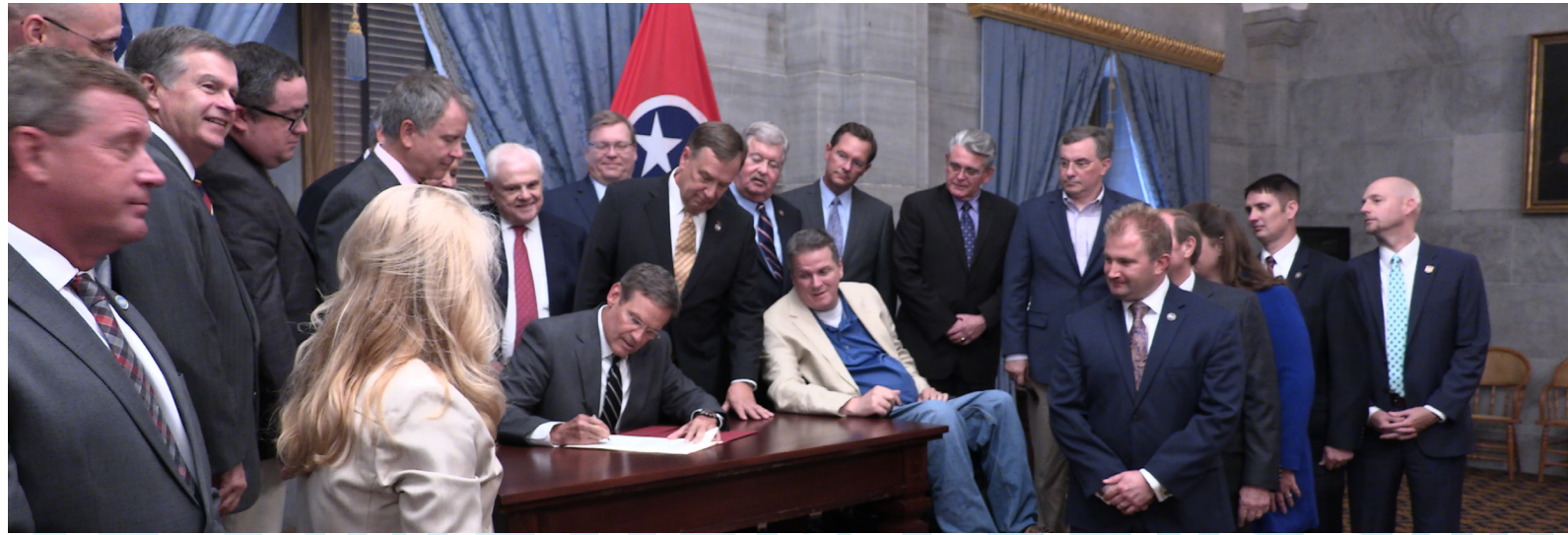
The governor also signed an executive order in December 2019, transferring Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) from the Department of Education to DIDD. TEIS is a voluntary educational program for infants and toddlers with disabilities that supports families through child development resources.

Outside of those areas of expansion, the department built upon its successes in Enabling Technology, Employment First efforts, and maintaining person-centered excellence. Those initiatives included identifying new ways for individuals to access transportation, connect with their communities, and find employment for those who want to work.

These endeavors will persist into the year ahead and the department will see even more growth. In early July 2020, TennCare and DIDD announced plans to reorganize and streamline long-term services and supports (LTSS) for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The IDD Program Integration will place all Medicaid LTSS programs under the direct operational leadership, management and oversight of DIDD. Moving forward, the department looks forward to collaborating with stakeholders to design the single system and continue working earnestly for our mission and vision to support Tennesseans with disabilities to live the lives they desire.







# The department by the numbers

**Total Budget**  
(non-waiver and waiver)

**\$887,751,300**

**Non-Waiver**

**\$158,770,300**

**Waiver**

**\$701,981,000**



**Katie Beckett**

**\$27,000,000**

*Note: KB was not moved to DIDD budget, waiting on CMS approval to transfer from TennCare.*





# COVID-19 and the **DIDD Community**

At the start of the historic COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, older adults and people with underlying health conditions and disabilities were identified early on as a vulnerable population to the disease. The department's quick and efficient response was critical in March as the deadly virus's impact increased dramatically. Following the direction of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the TN Dept. of Health, DIDD implemented social-distancing, temperature checks, mask mandates, halted visitations, and put in place other preventative measures at all of its facilities and offices. It also consistently worked to provide comprehensive and fluid guidance for providers and families as the state and country learned more about Coronavirus and how to stop the spread.



## **ADAPTING SERVICES AND VIRTUAL VISITS**

On April 2, 2020, Gov. Lee issued Executive Order 23, implementing a safer-at-home mandate in every Tennessee county to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19. DIDD in collaboration with TennCare developed and submitted an Appendix K waiver amendment to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This temporarily modifies regulatory requirements and other waiver provisions to allow for rapid response in a changing environment and offers flexibility in service provision to allow for people to continue receiving essential supports while being able to practice social distancing standards and observe any stay at home orders issued in their geographic location. Additionally, the Department has worked closely with the governor's office to suspend any rules and regulations that were barriers to the continuation of services and supports to persons with disabilities during the pandemic.

In-person visits and appointments were paused where possible to minimize potential exposure to the population. Virtual visits were then implemented over the phone or through video conferencing to provide a safer option for the continuation of services. Virtual appointments for interactions such as support coordination, teletherapy visits, and telehealth remained an option once the safer-at-home order was lifted, while the state of emergency remained in Tennessee.



## **TESTING**

To better understand the virus's spread in the DIDD community and to support the state's efforts in tracking COVID-19, the department's Clinical Services division led statewide mobile testing in May in partnership with the Department of Health. This effort was established to increase testing accessibility for intermediate care facilities, waiver participants, and members of the Employment and Community First CHOICES program.

The first testing event was held May 15th in Scott County, utilizing DIDD's mobile clinic and nursing staff specializing in care of persons with disabilities. Nearly 5,000 tests were conducted between May and July. A 24-7 hotline was also set up for testing results and guidance was given to providers in case of positive results to understand response requirements, how to care for the individual, and to take steps to protect others living in a home or who may have been exposed. Efforts to test individuals and staff are ongoing for the duration of the public health emergency.



## **PPE, MASK CAMPAIGNS**

Public Health Officials advised one of the best tools to combat the COVID-19 virus was to wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE) when social-distancing was not an option. DIDD collected medical-grade PPE in coordination with Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) to distribute to providers, support staff, and individuals supported when needed. PPE was especially critical as safer-at-home orders were lifted and in-person appointments resumed for medically necessary services and supports.

The department's Seating and Positioning clinics also made hand-sewn cloth face coverings and masks for staff and people living in DIDD community homes in each region of the state. Their efforts and the efforts of other employees to donate CDC recommended supplies were highlighted in the governor's Tennessee Heroes social media campaign.



# Tennessee Early Intervention System

## DIDD WELCOMES TEIS

The Tennessee Early Intervention System (TEIS) was first authorized in 1986 under Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In 1997, it was reauthorized under Part C of IDEA and remains there today. Because of TEIS's governance under IDEA, since its inception, it has been supervised by the Department of Education. In December of 2019, Governor Bill Lee signed Executive Order No. 10 repositioning TEIS under DIDD. The program was officially transitioned on July 1, 2020.

TEIS provides services to children who have a developmental delay or disability, starting at birth until a child's third birthday. Service coordinators meet with families to discuss the families' concerns and priorities, develop functional goals and assess what types of services and support are needed to address the goals. The program offers such services as developmental therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. A child and their family are offered services that will best support the child in reaching their goals and achieving their optimal development. Services and support are offered through the Family Guided Routines Based Intervention (FGRBI) model which aims to include the family in their child's early intervention plan and provides a basis of professional coaching for families and caregivers. Children can receive an assessment, evaluation, and early intervention services at no cost to the family.

After the announcement of the transition in December, DIDD hired Dr. Gabrielle Madison as TEIS Assistant Commissioner. Dr. Madison is an experienced psychologist who seeks to find every infant or toddler that may benefit from TEIS services through improved data collection and implementation. Throughout the early months of 2020, TEIS added 39 positions to the program to lower caseloads, keep up with increased demand, and improve communications efforts to reach families.

## MEETING THE TEAM

With news of the transition quickly spreading across the state, DIDD Commissioner Brad Turner and his Executive Leadership Team committed to visiting all nine TEIS district offices. The team started in December at East Tennessee and then navigated their way through, East, Middle, and West Tennessee ultimately reaching their goal by February. The team of Deputy and Assistant Commissioners spoke on what the transition would mean, what changes to expect, and how their respective departments would be facilitating those changes.

## TRANSITIONING DURING COVID-19

TEIS leaders are appreciative for the combined efforts of DIDD and DOE to make the transition successful, considering the final months of work were conducted remotely. TEIS has been able to continue its work of providing early intervention services remotely through teleservices. The service coordinators, contracted evaluation agencies, and network of providers all worked quickly and efficiently to conduct equivalent services through a teleintervention model. An Early Intervention Resource Agency (EIRA) Council was established to improve communication between the state and our provider agencies, as well as, to focus on issues these agencies may encounter across the state.

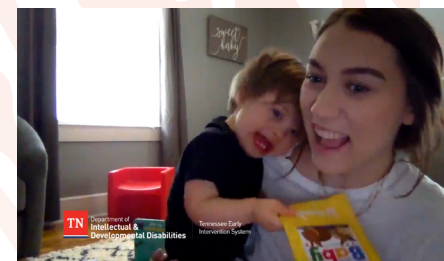
## MOVING FORWARD

TEIS is committed to resuming face-to-face visits when the safety of all parties is ensured. A stakeholder group has been established to carefully examine and assess what that process will look like when the appropriate time comes. Over the next year, TEIS is dedicated to improving outreach with our partners statewide, increasing referral and enrollment numbers, and improving early intervention services for children and families regardless of the mode of service delivery. TEIS is renewing its commitment to provide services through the FGRBI model and will institute professional development opportunities for staff members. The hope for next year is to reach every child that may need the services of TEIS and through that support allow every Tennessee family to live the life they envisioned for their families.

## Welcome, TEIS!

[TN.GOV/DIDD/TEIS](https://tn.gov/didd/teis)

@TEIS\_TN







# Katie Beckett Program

The Katie Beckett program is for children under the age of 18 with disabilities and/or complex medical needs who are not Medicaid eligible because of their parents' income or assets. On July 11th, 2019, Gov. Bill Lee formally signed the Katie Beckett Bill at a ceremony held in the state capitol. The program's creation in Tennessee is the result of a grassroots advocacy effort led by parents who have children with significant disabilities and/or complex medical needs, coordinated by the disability advocacy community. It's also championed by state lawmakers who were committed during the 2019 legislative session to prioritize services for these children and their families within the constraints of a constitutional requirement to balance the State's budget.

State lawmakers approved a budget of \$27.3 million for the program. When matched with federal Medicaid funds, this means Tennessee will have up to \$72 million to spend on services in the program. While the program is not yet approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), work continues in earnest to prepare for implementation.

Tennessee's new Katie Beckett program will have two parts:

- Katie Beckett – Part A will be a more “traditional” Katie Beckett program for children with the most significant disabilities who have very complex medical or behavioral needs. Children in part A will receive full Medicaid eligibility by waiving the deeming of the parents' income and assets to the child, as well as essential wraparound home and community-based services (HCBS).
- Katie Beckett – Part B will be a Medicaid diversion program, offering a capped package of essential wraparound services and supports, as well as premium assistance on a sliding fee scale to a broader group of children with disabilities.

Once Katie Beckett is implemented, DIDD and TennCare hope to serve an estimated 3,000 children, with up to 300 eventually enrolled in Katie Beckett Part A and 2,700 in Part B.

## DESIGNED WITH FAMILIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

DIDD and TennCare are committed to ensuring families of children who would be served by the new program have an important role in helping to inform the design. Stakeholder input sessions were conducted in each of Tennessee's three grand divisions during May and July of 2019. With the assistance of The Arc Tennessee, the first session was in Nashville at the 2019 Tennessee Disability Mega Conference. By taking advantage of this annual event which draws self-advocates and families from across Tennessee, the State was able to gather input from the largest number and most diverse group of stakeholders. At the request of the advocacy community, additional sessions were held in Knoxville and Jackson in early July 2019.

Over the past year DIDD and TennCare have worked hand-in-hand to develop integral business and technical aspects of the Katie Beckett program, including the development of specific intake, assessment, enrollment, service authorization, payment and data exchange processes. In anticipation of CMS approval, DIDD has initially hired 30 Katie Beckett Case Managers who will perform all intake functions for the Katie Beckett program and will provide ongoing case management for persons enrolled in Part B of the program.







## DIDD & TN**Heroes**





# Enabling Technology

Enabling Technology is an ever-expanding enterprise for the department as it provides various personalized supports for individuals to meet their goals for independence, social interaction, and employment. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic caused many challenges to our waiver services, but it also allowed us to accelerate our plans for transforming the state-funded Enabling Technology Pilot Program into a waiver service using federal funds through the approval of Appendix K. It is now part of our action plan to transform Enabling Technology into a long-term waiver funded service so that more people supported can experience the possibilities technology can offer for their lives. As of July 2020, 118 people supported are actively using Enabling Technology as a natural alternative support within their waiver services. There are another 34 people supported who are in the person-centered planning process for acquiring and using Enabling Technology solutions.

## INSTALLATIONS AMIDST COVID-19

As restrictions surrounding COVID-19 are enforced, the Enabling Technology program and its Technology Partners continue to make the health and safety of people supported our top priority. We have created new expectations and guidelines for the installation of technology including; confirmation of zero COVID-19 symptoms, wearing of PPE throughout the duration of the install, abiding by social distancing rules, and providing necessary technology training through virtual learning. The department's Technology Vendors have created these new expectations and guidelines for installing technology so that they can remain committed to providing innovative solutions that empower independence.

DIDD also began beta testing of a tech-enabled pre-employment software application that is designed to guide people with IDD toward the type of work they would enjoy. Job Quest is a self-directed career exploration and assessment system and thereby offers exposure to different jobs in a safe, COVID-free environment. Current plans include trialing AbleLink's Job Quest software program with two provider partners, CORE Services and Emory Valley Center, with 45 participants planned. DIDD is exploring the value of offering this to all interested people, both adults and students in transition.

## 2019 ENABLING TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT

The third annual Enabling Technology Summit was the department's largest yet with speakers and attendees joining from across the nation. Self-advocates, technology creators and experts, families, and even virtual, international presenters shared their experiences, challenges, and best practices when utilizing Enabling Technology supports. Gerald, a person supported by St. John's Community Services in Martin, TN, explained the impact of Enabling Technology on his life best at the latest summit saying, "It's given me lots of freedom!"



While the 4th Enabling Technology Summit has been postponed because of coronavirus concerns, DIDD looks forward to hosting the next event in 2021 to continue gaining knowledge that can be applied locally and share successes on technology supports for people with disabilities in Tennessee.

## CHATTANOOGA TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

The Chattanooga Technology Supported Community Inclusion initiative was designed to remove transportation barriers for people with cognitive disabilities in Hamilton County by seamlessly incorporating enabling technology into their daily routines. DIDD partnered with the City of Chattanooga, CARTA, Orange Grove Center and AbleLink Smart Living Technologies, LLC, to develop and unveil the initiative in February 2020.



Kenny Pittman was the first person to be trained and utilize AbleLink's WayFinder SMART Travel system mobile app to navigate the CARTA transit system in Chattanooga. Kenny works at Barger Academy and desired to go to and from his job without the support of staff. Five others, also supported by the Orange Grove Center, plan to use the application on CARTA buses with the goal of living and working more independently. The department hopes to expand these types of opportunities to people supported statewide.



## EYEDRIVOMATIC

DIDD's Enabling Technology and Seating and Positioning teams began a joint project with Eyedrivomatic in 2019 to provide Tennesseans with disabilities access to eye-gaze technology for improved mobility and independence. The Eyedrivomatic is an application that pairs with an eye-gaze system to turn eye movements into commands. These commands can support someone to speak through a digitized voice from a computer or tablet and move a wheelchair or activate wheelchair functions.

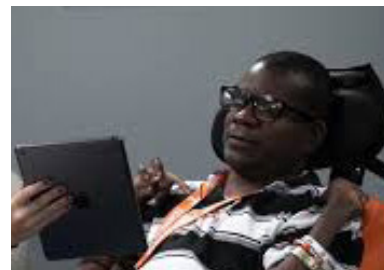


Beth Campbell and her parents live in East Tennessee. They're one of multiple families testing and providing feedback on the technology to help advance the technology's capabilities. Beth is using the eye-gaze technology to move her power chair, gain comfort, and communicate with the world. The department looks forward to continued work toward the growth of these technologies so that they can become more accessible to people with disabilities nationwide.

## VOICEITT

Voiceitt, in partnership with DIDD and The Arc Tennessee, began beta testing their speech recognition app in Tennessee this fiscal year. The application is designed to support people with varying speech types to communicate and help others understand their style of speech.

Twenty people participated in the Voiceitt beta testing last fall and were paid for their continued participation and feedback towards improving the speech recognition software. Users in the project utilized Voiceitt for many different areas of communication, with most users prioritizing communicating desires for different foods, introducing themselves to new people, conversing in work-related topics, and expressing daily wants and needs. Overall, the Voiceitt application has proven to be a useful part of the state's Enabling Technology toolbox in supporting people to overcome speech-related obstacles and empowering them to communicate with others.



## ENABLING TECH APP EVALUATION PROJECT

The Arc Tennessee, in collaboration with Vanderbilt University and DIDD, designed the Enabling Tech App Evaluation project with the goals to download, use, evaluate, and rate a series of apps that could support people with IDD. Each app was rated according to four different dimensions: Content, Usability, Individualization, and Overall Impression. The results of the project concluded that, "given the proliferation of apps and other technology, DIDD can capitalize on computer-based advances to help foster more independence among adults with IDD." DIDD's Enabling Technology program will continue in their efforts to educate and train people supported in using apps towards more independence with everyday routines and activities.

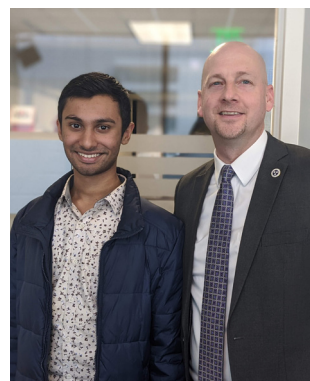
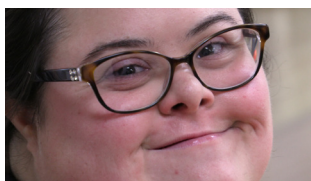
## FUTURE ENDEAVORS: TECH FIRST PROVIDER ACCREDITATION

Tennessee is positioned to be the first state in the nation to offer Technology First Accreditation to its statewide provider and support coordination network. Plans are underway to roll out 2-year accreditations. This initiative is foundational to supporting the expanded utilization of Enabling Technology throughout the state and to continue offering people with IDD the opportunity to gain the independence they desire.

## Remote Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)

The beginnings of a newly defined role called the Remote DSP is taking hold that offers a multitude of benefits. Remote supports of people via Enabling Technology offers greater independence; moreover, the advent of the Remote DSP role within provider organizations creates a new career ladder and wage structure for DSPs. For providers, it enhances their bottom line. At least one provider has already begun piloting their remote support DSP model for two of their individuals. DIDD will continue working with providers to promulgate this promising organizational movement and opportunity for multiple stakeholders.





# Employment First

Employment First means real jobs, real talent, and real wages for people with disabilities who want to work. The state is consistently recognized at a national level for its work to support persons to gain and maintain competitive, integrated employment opportunities in a variety of occupations. The department has been an active participant and leader in the governor's Employment First Task Force since its creation in 2013 to address barriers and create solutions for Tennesseans with disabilities in the workforce.

## OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Department spent the first part of the fiscal year preparing for implementation of Employment and Day Services changes in the 1915c waiver programs. These changes were developed with intentions to increase opportunities for employment and community participation, and to further align waiver day and employment services with federal and state policy, including the HCBS Settings Rule and Governor Haslam's Executive Order on Employment First. Furthermore, the changes were to create more flexibility for people utilizing these services as well as to the providers delivering them. They were implemented on January 1, 2020.

Just two months into waiver change implementation, the department and its approved Provider network had to readjust in order to continue operations during various natural disasters and states of emergency. The Appendix K waiver amendment was submitted and adjustments were made to ensure persons in the DIDD waiver who would typically spend their days at a job or in their communities, could stay at home and practice safe social distancing, while addressing provider operational and financial concerns.

## TEFLI

With the curriculum established, training complete and the new Tennessee subject matter experts equipped to now operate independently, the TEFLI program was determined to be complete for the current iteration. Realizing budgetary challenges and with input from TEFLI subject matter experts and other stakeholders, the decision was made to temporarily pause the program and to focus the next phase of transformation which involves building on the principles embedded within the employment and day services waiver amendments effective January 1, 2020. With training complete and transformation under way, TEFLI providers are now positioned to provide consultation and mentorship within their own agency as well as to other agencies across the state.

## EXPECT EMPLOYMENT REPORT PRESENTATION 2019

The sixth annual Expect Employment Report was presented to Gov. Bill Lee by the Employment First Task Force at West Tennessee Healthcare at Jackson Madison County General Hospital in September 2019. The governor, DIDD commissioner, and other stakeholders toured and met several interns who participated in Project SEARCH at the hospital. Project SEARCH is a national internship model offered at 15 sites across Tennessee and has led to the employment of many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the conclusion of their internships. The annual report details progress made across the state of Tennessee towards closing the employment gap for people with disabilities by 5 percent by 2023, expansion of Project SEARCH sites, launch of the alternate academic diploma, and a sharp increase in the use of Pre-Employment Transition Services.

## DEPARTMENT AS A MODEL EMPLOYER

The department's communications division hosted two more interns and students with disabilities in partnership with Lipscomb University's postsecondary program for the 2019 Fall and Spring 2020 semesters. Saul Buda is passionate about photography and provided great support for capturing our events during his semester. Hassun Syed's semester was cut short because of the pandemic but he was able to significantly contribute to our protection from harm team's data entry efforts. Both students graduated from Lipscomb in a virtual celebration in May 2020.





DIDD also participated in the governor's and Department of Human Resources Career Explorers Pilot Program, which began on January 14th, 2020. Students from Vanderbilt University's Next Steps Program and Lipscomb University's IDEAL program rotated between positions in the governor's Office, Department of Economic and Community Development, Department of Education and DIDD. These rotations allowed the students to gain a quick snapshot of the various career fields and opportunities available within state government.

### STATEWIDE EMPLOYMENT EFFORTS

DIDD's Regional Offices developed ways to highlight employment retention and build job skills for people supported. The Middle Tennessee Regional Office (MTRO) hosted an Employment Retention Award Ceremony to recognize several people who have been employed for 5-10 years or more. The first ceremony was held in fall of 2019, however the East and West Tennessee Regional Offices (ETRO and WTRO) ceremonies were postponed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The events will be rescheduled as soon as it is safe to do so.

In the in the fall of 2019, WTRO worked with The University of Memphis Institute on Disability, to host a Transition Resource Fair. The fair highlighted community and employment resources available to help people with disabilities obtain employment and skill building in order to become more independent.

Additionally, the Regional Employment Coordinators have spent time partnering with the DIDD Enabling Technology team in order to explore ways to improve employment services and help provide new job opportunities for people supported through the use of enabling technology.

### MARIO'S STORY

In an effort to empower others and highlight the major contributions Tennesseans with disabilities provide to the workforce, the department highlights several stories throughout the year of people supported who have gained employment and are thriving in a variety of career settings. Mario's story is just one example of the many Tennesseans with disabilities who remained on the frontlines as an essential employee during the public health emergency.

Mario has received services from SRVS for more than 23 years. Although he started in the SRVS Workshop, he was determined to find competitive, integrated employment. With the support of a SRVS Job Developer, Mario found his first job at Home Depot and worked there successfully until his position was eliminated due to budget cuts. Despite the setback, Mario wasn't deterred, and he kept pushing forward. Soon after, Mario landed a job at Canteen Vending as an inventory clerk.



At Canteen, Mario is thriving, according to his mother, and has made several new friends. He also has become more sociable because he's proud of his accomplishments.

Due to Mario's desire to become more independent, he was selected to participate in the DIDD Enabling Technology initiative. Mario now uses a mobile device that provides verbal and visual prompts, which enable him to work with reduced job coaching support. The job coach fading plan now includes Mario working without direct support, which didn't seem likely prior to receiving his device.

Per Mario's supervisor, he has worked diligently and safely during the health crisis, serves as a motivational team member within the organization and has not missed a day of work.

# Person-Centered Excellence Network Accreditation



DIDD received Person-Centered Excellence (PCE) Network Accreditation from the Council on Quality and Leadership (CQL) on January 15th, 2019. This began the 2nd Accreditation term for DIDD with CQL and initiated a continuing journey toward supporting Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live the lives that they choose. Maintaining its status as the first state service-delivery system in the nation to receive Person-Centered Excellence Network Accreditation from CQL requires partnership with people supported, families, advocacy organizations, the provider network, and DIDD employees.

## DATA COLLECTION AND PERSONAL OUTCOME MEASURES

Data collection and analysis are an important component of the Accreditation work. They guide the development of Accreditation plans that impact statewide and regional initiatives. Data is collected through:

- Personal Outcome Measures© Interviews with people supported
- Basic Assurance© Reviews, which examine the systems and practices of the provider network
- Focus groups with people supported, direct support professionals, and family members

For Fiscal Year 2019-20, the Accreditation team completed 162 Personal Outcome Measures© interviews and 16 Basic Assurance© Reviews. Due to Stay at Home Orders and associated Covid-19 precautions the mechanisms for collecting this essential data changed. The Accreditation team developed systems to complete Virtual Personal Outcome Measures© interviews and Basic Assurance© Reviews. Of the 162 Personal Outcome Measures©, completed 42 of them were completed virtually. In addition to the 16 Basic Assurance© reviews completed from July 2019 to February 2020 completed in person, the team completed 4 additional reviews virtually.

## Personal Outcome Measures Highlights



This data collection indicated that DIDD has made the largest improvements in the Basic Assurance© factors of Rights Protection and Promotion, and Basic Assurance© Systems. Personal Outcome Measures© data indicated improvements in multiple indicators, as noted in the chart.

Statewide and Regional Person Centered Excellence (PCE) Plans were developed in 2018 with the help of self-advocates, providers, and state employees. Over the 2019-2022 Accreditation term, DIDD is working to improve how it supports people in the areas of:

- Person-Centered Assessment and Discovery
- Person-Centered Planning
- Supports and Services
- Community Connections
- Workforce
- Quality and Accountability

These plans have led to new initiatives that support the growth of people supported by DIDD in their participation in the person-centered planning process, as well as make informed choices about their lives and services.

The plans also support learning and expanding resources to address the concerns and needs of the direct support professional workforce in Tennessee. DIDD continues its efforts ensuring the principles of Accreditation are fully embedded throughout DIDD's service delivery system. This includes Provider Manual and Policy updates, and ongoing training focused on the Personal Outcome Measures© and Basic Assurances©.

In addition to the collection of data and supporting Accreditation work plans, the Accreditation Team provides support to all CQL Accredited Organizations in Tennessee. This number has increased from 3 providers at the time of DIDD's initial Accreditation to 12 providers currently supporting people throughout Tennessee. These providers commit themselves to quality enhancement chosen from CQL's Person-Centered Excellence goals.





## PERSON-CENTERED PRACTICES

One of the primary goals of DIDD is to be a person-centered service-delivery system. This is achieved by working with the people receiving supports and the provider network through Person-Centered Practices (PCP). PCP's goal is to encourage a new way of thinking and to inspire a change in the people DIDD supports and the providers they choose to support them.



Many providers across Tennessee accepted the challenge of becoming a Person-Centered Organization (PCO). The PCO project is a partnership with the Council on Developmental Disabilities and DIDD. All PCOs commit to create policies promoting change and align with person-centered values. These organizations follow expectations as recommended by DIDD that are tailored to align with the department's mission and vision and support the achievement of organizational outcomes as well. With the assistance of the Person-Centered Practices Unit (PCPU), the PCOs have quarterly Leaders and Coaches meetings to pursue their vision in being more person-centered. DIDD currently supports 16 PCO's as they continue their growth in Person-Centered Practices.

## SELF-ADVOCACY

Self-Advocacy is the action of representing yourself and your interests. An integral goal for DIDD is to grow and promote self-advocacy for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities across Tennessee. DIDD has increased its efforts to make sure the people that they support are equipped to speak up for themselves, direct their person-centered planning meetings, and make choices in all areas of their lives. Over 2,200 people took part in DIDD Self-Advocacy initiatives this year-- an increase of 11%.



## DISABILITY DAY ON THE HILL:

A group of DIDD Self-Advocate Mentors (SAMS) from West Tennessee travelled to the Tennessee State Capitol this year to join the discussions at Disability Day on the Hill (DDH). DDH is an opportunity for legislators to hear from advocates and learn about the things that matter the most to them, other self-advocates, and their families as the General Assembly is meeting in session. Commissioner Turner and other department leaders and self-advocates also sat on a panel at DDH to inform attendees on the state of disability services in Tennessee.

## SELF-ADVOCACY VIDEOS:

DIDD released several videos this fiscal year featuring Self-Advocate Mentors (SAMS) from across the state. In each of the videos, the SAMs highlight the importance of their advocacy and express their interests and values of priority. Topics included their employment, relationship goals, rights and responsibilities, and work with DIDD on outreach.

## STATEWIDE SELF-ADVOCATE OUTREACH OPPORTUNITIES:

Customer Focused Services Focus Groups give people supported statewide the opportunity to receive education to strengthen themselves as self-advocates. Some examples of the information presented this year are Rights & Responsibilities, Successful Citizenship, Positive Social Skills, Suicide Awareness, and Enabling Technology. From July 2019 to June 2020, 1,772 people participated in these groups until forced to postpone in March 2020 due to Covid-19. New efforts to enhance people's opportunities to learn and grow in self-advocacy were expanded to encourage opportunities in rural communities and smaller metro areas beginning in 2019. These activities include Self-Advocate Mentor meetings that focused efforts to educate people about their rights and share other statewide initiatives, Peer Groups that give opportunities to share experiences receiving services, and Virtual Social Hours that connected people supported across the state to learn and support each other through the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 2,200 people took part in these initiatives this year.



### **ADVOCATES IN MOTION:**

Advocates in Motion (AiM) is a one-day workshop for self-advocates to learn more about the person-centered planning process. The AiM workshop is facilitated by people supported for people that also receive supports. The interaction between the trainers and people supported provides a powerful dynamic.

DIDD and the Council on Developmental Disabilities work in partnership with 8 AiM trainers across the state. During the 2019-20 fiscal year, 50 participants attended AiM workshops and are now speaking up and speaking out for the lives they desire. After the workshop, participants have a completed written plan to take home to show others how to support them in a more person-centered way.

### **THE POWER IN ME:**

The Power in Me Mentor training was developed as part of the West Regional Accreditation Plan in the Spring of 2019. It was developed due to the identified need for training to assist people supported to facilitate their Individual Support Plan (ISP) meetings. The first Mentor Program training occurred in the West Region in July 2019. At this initial training, nine people supported were present. Since then, a total of 48 people supported have participated in this Power in Me training. It began being offered in all three regions in February 2020. Increasing the number of trainers from 6 to 12 statewide. Due to Covid-19, these training efforts were paused, the first virtual opportunity will occur in August 2020.

### **NCI DATA:**

DIDD completed the National Core Indicators (NCI) Survey 2019 Staff Stability (SS) survey along with 26 other states and the District of Columbia. DIDD providers returned surveys at an 81% return rate, with an increase of 8% over the previous year's 73%. The information provided is vital for a true picture of the staffing situation currently in Tennessee.

The survey results are used by DIDD and providers to monitor the current DSP staffing situations within the state. A few critical data points:

- Tennessee data report reflected Tennessee providers reported a 51.8% turnover rate, with the NCI National Average being 51.3%.
- Tennessee data reflected the average overall Direct Support Professional (DSP) Rate was \$10.28 while the National rate was \$12.26.
- Tennessee data reflected the average overall Direct Support Professional (DSP) Overtime rate paid was 13.5% while the National rate was 9.8%.

DIDD also completed the National Core Indicators (NCI) 2018-19 In-Person Survey. The NCI In-Person Survey is completed with adults with IDD age 18 and older receiving at least one paid service (in addition to case management) from DIDD. The survey instrument includes a "Background Information Section," which gathers data about the person from the provider and support coordination records, and an in-person survey that is conducted face-to-face with the person receiving services. Indicators address key areas of concern such as employment, respect/rights, service planning, community inclusion, choice, and health and safety.

One of the critical measure questions summarizing the lives of people with disabilities reflects do people feel they have the services and supports to live a good life. Tennessee participants answered yes with a 97% average, with the national average being 92%.

### **FUTURE ACCREDITATION AND PERSON-CENTERED PRACTICES INITIATIVES**

In the 2020-2021 fiscal year the Accreditation and Person-Centered Practice Unit will focus on assuring efficient and effective educational opportunities are available to people supported, stakeholders, the provider network and DIDD staff. It will also continue its efforts to evaluate and align DIDD with Person-Centered and Accreditation standards and grow the self-advocate community and empower them to direct the work of self-advocacy. Moreover, the evaluation of the Tennessee disability case management systems to initiate alignment efforts and create an integrated system to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities statewide will be a focus for the year ahead.



# Employment and Community First CHOICES

The Employment and Community First Choices (ECF CHOICES) Program was launched in 2016 through TennCare. The services are to support people of all ages who have an intellectual or developmental disability to gain as much independence as possible. DIDD currently contracts with TennCare, through an interagency agreement, to perform three main functions within the ECF CHOICES program: intake and enrollment for non-Medicaid individuals, Critical Event Management, and quality monitoring survey reviews of ECF CHOICES providers.

## INTAKE

TennCare's Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Quality and Compliance Unit conducted a routine audit in February 2020 of DIDD's performance of specified functions relating to Referral Assistance with Screening, Intake, and Enrollment for Employment and Community First CHOICES. DIDD was 100 percent compliant with all files reviewed.

Approximately 698 referrals were received by DIDD during the fiscal year. The department assisted hundreds more people with Medicaid to connect with their Managed Care Organization at the point of contact with our department. DIDD continued biennial outreach for over 2,000 non-Medicaid persons on the ECF CHOICES referral list to collect recent information regarding the specific circumstances of each person.

As of June 30, 2020, 3,206 people have been enrolled in ECF CHOICES since program inception.

Beginning in July 2019, ECF CHOICES began providing expanded service options to include Benefit Groups 7 and 8 for people with significant behavioral and/or mental health support needs. Group 7 is targeted primarily for children living at home with parents who need more intensive in-home supports, while Group 8 is for adults with significant behavioral and mental health support needs who are transitioning into residential supports from institutional or other settings. Both groups 7 and 8 provide intensive services initially until the person is able to be successfully transitioned into other existing ECF benefit groups.

## QUALITY MANAGEMENT

DIDD proceeded its work cooperatively with the Division of TennCare to fully implement the quality monitoring process that was developed for many of the services provided under the ECF CHOICES program. Throughout the year, the ECF Quality Monitoring team conducted 16 consultative surveys and 47 annual surveys for a total of 63 ECF CHOICES quality monitoring surveys. The purpose

of the consultative surveys is to offer providers and Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) an opportunity to use the initial survey as a learning experience that allows them to become familiar with the ECF quality monitoring tools, process, and expectations. The quality monitoring surveys measure the quality of service beyond the required compliance standards, which are reviewed and measured by the MCOs. The surveys provide a preferred provider rating based on performance.

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECF CHOICES quality monitoring surveys were suspended during March and April of 2020. The surveys resumed in May 2020 in a slightly modified, remote survey process to conclude the fiscal year.

During the fiscal year, DIDD and TennCare began collaborating to develop a process to implement CHOICES CLS/CLS-FM quality monitoring surveys in conjunction with the ECF CHOICES surveys. This process is projected to begin in October of 2020.

## ALIGNMENT OF PROTECTION FROM HARM

TennCare and DIDD have been working together with partner providers to create a single, new reportable event management system to be implemented across Medicaid HCBS programs. These changes will streamline the process in tracking, reporting, and preventing critical incidents that put the health and safety of individuals in our programs at risk. This includes but is not limited to those events which rise to the level of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This will include those served in TennCare's long-term services and supports programs: CHOICES, Employment and Community First CHOICES, and the Section 1915(c) home and community-based services waivers operated by DIDD. The development stages of the reportable event management system are ongoing with the expectation of implementation by early 2021.

## IDD PROGRAM INTEGRATION

DIDD and TennCare announced a bold plan in July 2020 to create a more person-centered system of service delivery for Tennesseans with disabilities by aligning and integrating Medicaid long-term services and supports programs for people with disabilities under DIDD's leadership. This effort was put in motion to improve services for those we support and their families by ensuring programs work together under a managed care model, and better informing citizens about the services available to them. Input from families, person-supported, and stakeholders are being collected to support the initial design of the single, seamless program. Implementation of the IDD Program Integration plan is expected on July 1, 2021.

# Clinical Services Division

## CLINICAL CONSULTATION NETWORK

Every Tuesday  
@ 12:30 pm CST

Visit to join:  
[bit.ly/DIDDCCN](https://bit.ly/DIDDCCN)

The Division of Clinical Services seeks to holistically empower the personal growth and wellness of Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Such a broad goal requires a multi-pronged strategy of dissemination and service delivery across multiple clinical disciplines.

### CLINICAL CONSULTATION NETWORK

The Division has significantly advanced clinical education during FY 20. The Clinical Consultation Network is a one-hour weekly podcast hosted by Dr. Bruce Davis with the assistance of the entire clinical services team. Each week a team member arranges for a guest from their discipline to discuss a topic or case example that illustrates important aspects of clinical work. The goals of the CCN are to disseminate important clinical information, engage in collaborative problem solving, and facilitate partnerships across systems. During FY 20, the Division of Clinical Services produced 55 podcasts with advocates, psychologists, direct support professionals, provider executives, medical professionals, and more. These podcasts have become a major vehicle for clinical education in Tennessee and the Clinical Services Division will continue producing them in FY 21.

### CLINICAL INTERNSHIPS

The Clinical Services Division continues to support post-secondary students to complete required clinical fieldwork experience in a variety of disciplines including occupational therapy, nutrition, nursing, social work, speech language pathology, and physical therapy. In the fall of 2019, DIDD was successful in executing a clinical education fieldwork contract with the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR), consolidating previous TBR contracts and adding all TBR schools, bringing our total number of contracted colleges and universities to 48. Students working within DIDD during this past fiscal year included those in social work, occupational therapy, nursing, and speech language pathology programs. In nursing alone, 40 Licensed Practical Nurses were supported in completing their internships through the Department. An additional 15 were slated to complete internships in FY 20, but internships were suspended at the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Such internships are of significant value in preparing professionals for a potential career in IDD services.

### TELEHEALTH

The Division of Clinical Services has worked diligently to expand the availability of telehealth services in Tennessee. Providing better access to healthcare for persons with disabilities who live in rural areas is a primary aim of this effort. The COVID19 pandemic has increased motivation to make telehealth services available because the risk of exposure increases when people go to medical settings and attend healthcare appointments. Among the most innovative services is one offered by a company named StationMD. StationMD offers telehealth services with a physician 24 hours, 7 days a week for a per person, per month fee and have shown the ability to divert many emergency room visits by providing this service. Because of the potential of this service, the Division of Clinical Services has initiated a telehealth pilot in DIDD's state-run Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) Community homes. The pilot was initiated in May 2020 and will continue for one year. Initial results have shown that the service is efficient and useful but use of the service must be increased to fully evaluate its effectiveness.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the governor issued an executive order that allowed health service providers to use telehealth services as an alternative to traditional, in-person services. The division is also using this opportunity to expand telehealth and remote service provision in several areas, including finding ways to better support people in rural areas.

### THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Therapeutic service providers support people to be as healthy, safe and independent as possible while going about their daily lives. Services provided include audiology, nutrition, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility, physical therapy, speech language pathology, specialized medical equipment, and home accessibility modifications. During FY 19-20, six new providers were brought onboard to provide an array of services with over half of them providing in rural areas of the state.





Statewide projects accomplished in the past year focused in part on developing stakeholder training on key health issues pertinent to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities including choking prevention, managing swallowing difficulties, aspiration and gastroesophageal reflux disease, the importance of ensuring homes are accessible and safe for people with mobility challenges, and fall prevention. In addition, a statewide database to track and trend information surrounding incidents such as choking, falls, and aspiration pneumonia was developed and initiated.

Therapeutic services help many persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities to experience a greater quality of life with increased mobility and less pain. These services offer people with disabilities the opportunity to achieve and prosper in ways that might otherwise be unimaginable. The therapeutic services arm of DIDD's Clinical Services Division is using technology to provide more innovative and effective services to persons with IDD. This drive for innovation keeps therapeutic services at the forefront of the Clinical Services Division of DIDD.

## **NUTRITION**

Occupational Therapists work with DIDD registered dietitians to support Tennesseans with disabilities to meet and maintain their goals for diet and exercise to improve overall health. The department shared a video highlighting one person's success this year in drastically improving her heart health and increasing her mobility by changing her activity and diet routines. Trish, supported at Rhea of Sunshine, Inc, lost more than 100 pounds, is no longer bedridden, and is gradually walking more and utilizing her wheelchair less.

## **SEATING AND POSITIONING CLINICS**

The DIDD Seating and Positioning Clinics provide personalized, custom equipment and seating systems that promote the health, safety, and comfort of the people we support. This year, the clinics saw approximately 240 individuals for multiple appointments per person. The clinics were closed due to the pandemic from mid-March through June, except for emergencies. Throughout the last year, the staff continued to market to and grow in their ability to serve new clientele, including toddlers and children, as well as adults with disabilities who are not supported through the DIDD system but need the services of the clinics. Efforts at increasing in-network participation with insurance companies continued.



## **NURSING**

The Nursing department utilizes evidenced-based practice for the promotion of optimal health, wellness and safety of individuals supported through health care surveillance, education and training, systemic development, direct clinical consultation and person-centered nursing interventions. Perhaps there is no area in which nursing services have been more important than in the Department's response to the coronavirus pandemic. During the public health emergency, nurses were consistently on the frontlines leading DIDD's response in every corner of the state.

Throughout the fiscal year, the nursing services section developed several training resources. One such resource was a training for staff who accompany people to medical appointments titled Today's Visit Form. This training helped the trainees structure their communication with health care providers so that people can receive optimal treatment. The "visit form" was taken from the Vanderbilt Kennedy Centers IDD Toolkit, which DIDD's own Dr. Tom Cheetham helped to create prior to his passing in 2018. Nursing also collaborated with therapeutic services to publish a series of trainings on health conditions that can be fatal to those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, otherwise known as the Fatal Five.





### **NURSING** *continued...*

The nursing section manages and oversees the DIDD Medication Administration Program which provides initial certification and renewal for direct support professionals to administer medications statewide. Throughout FY 20, they worked diligently to create modules that will eventually allow for online renewal of medication certification without having to attend in-person classes. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, in-person medication administration classes had to be canceled. This left a gap for new employees who were unable to administer medications for persons supported. Nursing services quickly implemented changes to the DIDD Medication Administration Program and developed guidelines and training for remote medication administration assistance that has been used by 64 agencies; 1,185 direct support professionals have completed the training since March 2020.

Among the most important functions of the Clinical Services Division is mortality review. The department maintains a database of information related to deaths that occur throughout the year. Mortality nurses monitor death review reports and complete Comprehensive Death Summaries (CDS) and Comprehensive Death Reviews (CDR) for a sample of deaths that occur within the Home and Community Based (HCBS) Waiver programs. CDSs are thorough reports of factors surrounding the death. CDRs are online or in-person meetings to review the CDS by a panel which includes a physician and other state and private stakeholders. The goals of these reviews are to identify factors which may have contributed to death, recommend necessary preventive measures, and improve supports and services for all persons in the system. DIDD uses information generated by the death review process to project future training and policy needs.

### **PSYCHIATRY**

DIDD Psychiatric Services serves many functions across the state, including providing direct psychiatric treatment for persons supported in DIDD's East and Middle TN Homes, and the Harold Jordan Center. These services also conduct consultation for persons supported who receive 4 or more psychotropic medications or 2 or more from the same medication class. In these consultations, a Regional Psychopharmacology Review Team (RPRT) makes recommendations for consideration by service providers, including the practitioner prescribing the psychotropic medications. During FY 20, 36 RPRT consultations occurred across the state with 12 occurring in each region. Before March 2020, these meetings were always conducted in-person. In April, arrangements were made to complete the RPRT consultations via telehealth. RPRT participants have had to go through a learning curve to use technology effectively to conduct these consultations. However, 11 of the 36 consultations completed occurred via telehealth during the April through June timeframe. These consultations have often made a significant difference in prescribing practices of psychiatric providers and provide a much needed second opinion by a professional with experience in treating persons with co-occurring intellectual disability and mental health disorders.

### **BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

DIDD employs or contracts with behavioral and mental health clinicians to provide behavior services to persons supported. During FY 2019-2020, DIDD has continued to provide leadership and accountability for these professionals. This included holding monthly Statewide Behavior Provider Meetings to provide collaboration, education and resources, as well as aligning departmental procedures to reflect changes in licensure and certification requirements. Through clinical support, education activities, and quality reviews of behavioral interventions, the Behavioral and Mental Health Services program continues to work to ensure that persons supported through DIDD receive appropriate and effective behavior services.

In March 2020, COVID-19 Guidance for Community Providers of Clinical Service was issued to permit and provide guidance regarding telehealth services. Statewide Behavior Provider meetings were held to review guidance and provide information and resources pertaining to telehealth services. On April 3, 2020, DIDD teamed up with Vanderbilt Kennedy Center to co-host a webinar on ethical considerations in providing behavior services via telehealth. Responding to the coronavirus pandemic has been challenging, but DIDD has ensured that behavior service providers are well-informed and prepared to carry out appropriate safety measures.



## **CRISIS AND FORENSIC SERVICES**

The Division of Clinical Services has had an active year in the area of Crisis and Forensic Services. DIDD received approval to establish Assessment and Stabilization Teams that will fill gaps in the current crisis system for persons with IDD across the state. These teams will respond to crisis situations and use partnership agreements with other providers to ensure people with IDD receive the mental health services they need. A primary aim of the teams will be to prevent inappropriate psychiatric hospitalizations and facilitate hospitalizations when appropriate. These teams will also seek to prevent overutilization of emergency departments and unnecessary involvement by law enforcement. Teams will accomplish these goals through inter-agency crisis stabilization planning, providing clinical education to community partners, formal network building, and promoting effective communication within the service system. DIDD has received a grant from the Council on Developmental Disabilities that will allow our Assessment and Stabilization teams to receive training from the Center for START Services (CSS). CSS is national leader in developing systemic and therapeutic programs for crisis intervention. The Division of Clinical Services has targeted January 2021 for implementation of the program.

The division also facilitates evaluation and training for people with IDD who are facing felony charges. Courts may order competency training to help a person with IDD participate in the legal process or request evaluations of the need for commitment to the forensic assessment unit at Harold Jordan Center. Courts submit requests for these services to the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS). When needed, DMHSAS submits an IDD Assist request to DIDD. DIDD then assigns a trainer or evaluator to carry out the requested services. At times, direct negotiations with courts have resulted in referrals without an IDD Assist request.

DIDD has received an average of 30 referrals per fiscal year since FY 14, so the number of referrals for FY 20 is up by 40% at 46 referrals. A possible reason for the increase is that DIDD's mission has shifted from serving only people with intellectual disabilities to also serving people with developmental disabilities. Court referrals that DMHSAS might have previously responded to are now referred to DIDD. Future data collection efforts will focus on determining the defendant's diagnoses to assist in analyzing referrals.

# Planning and Policy Councils

The Planning and Policy Councils are made up of healthcare professionals, providers, families, and advocates who are committed to improving the quality of life for people in Tennessee living with a disability. Established in 2011, the councils allow for public collaboration on issues affecting the department and those in DIDD services.

## **THE STATEWIDE PLANNING AND POLICY COUNCIL (SPPC)**

The Statewide Planning and Policy Council (SPPC) collaborates on issues affecting the department, providers, families, and advocates. Recommendations were submitted to the department surrounding issues that face those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including but not limited to finding solutions to the ongoing DSP workforce crisis, the expansion of Enabling Technology, transportation, and affordable housing.

Dr. Arie Nettles accepted Gov. Bill Lee's reappointment as chair of the SPPC in December, effective January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2021. The department has continued to ensure stakeholder involvement from all programs by appointing a Tennessee Early Intervention Systems (TEIS) stakeholder to the SPPC. In addition, an ex-officio member from the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse serves on the council collaborating with the council and department to ensure supports are available for people with I/DD and co-occurring mental health diagnosis. The Department of Labor and Workforce Development also holds an ex-officio seat on the council to collaborate on Employment First initiatives.

The SPPC has played an important role in the development and improvement of DIDD programs and policies. Therefore, the council will be an important voice in assisting the department in creating and developing IDD Program Integration as a feedback stakeholder group.

## **THE WEST REGIONAL PLANNING AND POLICY COUNCIL (WPPC)**

For the past two years, the WPPC has focused its efforts on developing a Residential Resource Manual to serve as a tool for persons and their families as they navigate the various residential options that may be available to them. Additionally, the Residential Resource Manual can serve as a tool for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) as they work to support people with disabilities to understand their options, rights, and responsibilities. DIDD has published the resource manual on the DIDD website and is working to promote its availability.

The WPPC is shifting its focus to strategies for both rural and metro transportation. They will explore and develop efforts that will increase access to transportation for persons living with disabilities in Tennessee, especially those in rural communities.

## **THE MIDDLE REGIONAL PLANNING AND POLICY COUNCIL (MPPC)**

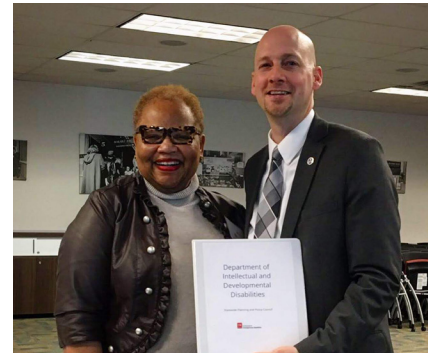
The MPPC completed work on developing an official definition of a Direct Support Professional (DSP) for the department to adopt.

Direct Support Professional is defined as follows:

1. Has completed all initial training mandated by the State of Tennessee,
2. Completes and maintains ongoing training as required by the State of Tennessee,
3. Responsibilities to people with disabilities include compassionate support and inclusive interaction in the home and community settings.

The council also continues to work with the department on a World Café event for discussions to generate ideas to improve recruitment, retention, and advocacy of DSPs. Additionally, the MPPC has begun work on exploring Enabling Technology and the different areas the department should expand and utilize technology to help Tennesseans with disabilities connect with their communities, natural supports, and find independence many did not think was previously possible.





### **THE EAST REGIONAL PLANNING AND POLICY COUNCIL (EPPC)**

The EPPC compiled many resources to share as a toolkit designed for DSPs. The toolkit serves as a reference for DSPs when considering a career supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It also encompasses several resources for current DSPs and leadership.

In addition to continuing to expand the DSP toolkit, the EPPC has begun work creating a toolkit surround employer engagement strategies and “The Business Case for Employment First”.

### **THE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES PLANNING AND POLICY COUNCIL (DDPPC)**

The DDPPC is making headway in its focus around identifying students exiting the school system who may need future services. The council has also served in assisting the department in the development of outreach strategies for the Katie Beckett Program.

In response to recommendations from the SPPC, DIDD has appointed a TEIS stakeholder member to the council and upon program implementation, a Katie Beckett stakeholder will also be appointed to the DDPPC so that stakeholders from all programs are represented within the Planning and Policy Councils.

### **TENNESSEE COUNCIL ON AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

The Tennessee Council on Autism Spectrum Disorder (Council on ASD) continues to gain momentum and make progress on its outlined goals in the legislation with which it was created. Findings from the Centers for Disease Control's Community Report on Autism 2018 and the Tennessee Autism and Developmental Disability Monitoring Network (TN-ADDM) now show that 1 in 64 children in Tennessee are born with autism spectrum disorder.

The governor-appointed members of the Council on ASD work to establish a comprehensive statewide long-term plan for a system of care for people with autism spectrum disorder and their families. It operates through four working committees: Information/Resources for Individuals and Families; Early Intervention/Education; Health Care; and Aging/Adulthood. Council and community members make up each committee.

This year, the Council on ASD collaborated with and actively supported the programmatic changes at Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, as they embark on an upgrade of their system and plan to develop an autism pathway as a pilot/model on their database.

The council also supported and disseminated information to support early identification and intervention for children. It worked on the collaboration between TEIS with Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorder (TRIAD) in rolling out the telehealth, tele-diagnosis, and tele-treatment of autism spectrum disorder. This resulted in research that demonstrated a significant improvement in lowering the age of diagnosis and initiation of treatment in areas where services were limited and waiting times for assessments were long. Furthermore, the council supported the newly implemented Community Health Access and Navigation in Tennessee (CHANT) program of the Tennessee Department of Health. This newly established program provides care coordination in all 95 counties in Tennessee and assists families with accessing local and statewide resources. The Council recommends collaborating with the CHANT program on early identification of children at risk for autism and connection to care and local resources.

To work toward improving and expanding provision of services, the Council on ASD's requested Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provide Tennessee statistical data to aid in making recommendations. This data showed that more than 99% of individuals were receiving services using the existing Order of Selection process. While encouraging, the Council continues to recommend policies and funding to serve all individuals in need of services.

# Social Media



The department's social media presence has always been a critical tool to reach the people we support, their families, and staff across the state; but this year, its importance was even more evident during the COVID-19 state of emergency. While safer-at-home orders were in place and Tennesseans were away from work and school, many turned to social media and other online methods to remain connected to the community and find the information they need on health and safety.

Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter users increasingly turned to DIDD's accounts to receive updates on our response to the crisis and to help spread guidance and resources for the most vulnerable populations. The department's social media collectively reached more than 3 million users nationwide and grew by thousands of followers. Through stories of essential workers with disabilities, photos of employees working well from home, and video messages directly from the Commissioner, the department was able to provide consistent updates on response and continue to highlight how employees and people with disabilities are making meaningful contributions across the state.

## VIDEOS

Throughout the year, Enabling Technology remained at the forefront of DIDD's storytelling. The department's videos showcased the various ways Tennesseans with disabilities are utilizing technology to engage with and navigate their communities, gain new avenues for independence, and receive necessary services and supports when in-person visits aren't possible. These videos have consistently supported DIDD's efforts to expand Enabling Technology efforts by showcasing the endless possibilities technology can provide for people with disabilities and their families.

The department's videos garnered more than 250 thousand total views this fiscal year, including stories highlighting people with disabilities at work, improving health outcomes, and advocating for themselves. Videos from Commissioner Brad Turner addressing the DIDD community and the heroes working on the frontlines during the pandemic were among the most-watched content on the department's Facebook this year. These videos will continue into the new fiscal year to offer transparency and dialogue with DIDD's leadership as we continue to face these unprecedented times.

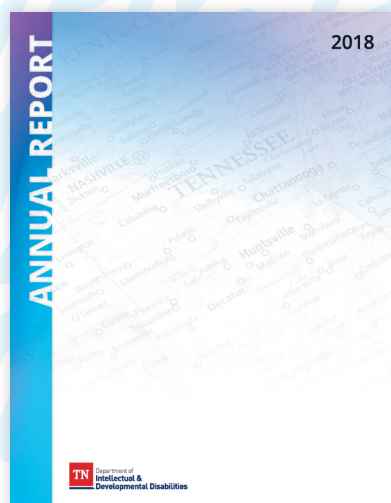
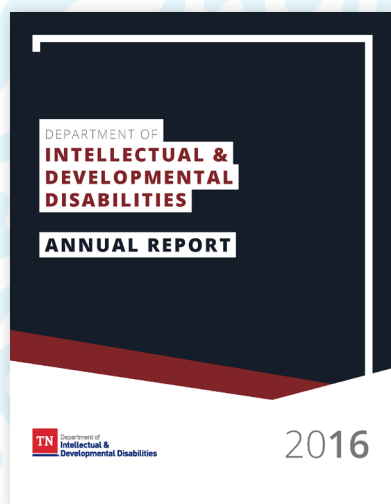
## CAMPAIGNS

This year, the department created a new social media campaign to draw attention to the dedication and compassion of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and our appreciation for their vital role in the lives of Tennesseans with disabilities. The #DSPsofTN campaign spotlights one DSP a month who has been nominated by an employee or provider agency for going above and beyond to support individuals to reach their goals for independence, wellness, and engage in their communities.

The department also participated in the governor's #TNHeroes campaign which recognized the frontline workers and neighborhood heroes across the state who stepped up to aid other citizens in need during the COVID-19 public health emergency. DIDD featured nurses, seating and positioning clinic staff, and providers that sewed face masks, donated food, or innovated ways to assist the people they support in maintaining their physical and mental health. These campaigns not only spread the word on the states' collaborative service-delivery, but it also tells the stories of the employees working tirelessly around the clock and behind the scenes to ensure Tennesseans with disabilities can live the happy, healthy, and independent lives they envision for themselves.







VIEW OUR **ANNUAL REPORTS** FROM PREVIOUS YEARS  
BY VISITING OUR SITE:  
[tn.gov/didd/annual-reports](https://tn.gov/didd/annual-reports)

