Carol A. Beatty, Secretary
Anne Blackfield, Deputy Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES

State Disabilities Plan Progress Analysis
2024 Annual Report

Maryland Department of Disabilities
August 12, 2025

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) was created in 2004 under Subtitle 1 of the Maryland Human Services Article. MDOD is the principal Executive Branch agency representing the perspective of people with disabilities in the development, implementation, and enforcement of statewide disability policies and standards throughout State government. In this capacity, MDOD advises the Governor on disability policy and collaborates with federal, regional, and local units of government to enhance the effectiveness of supports, services, and programs for individuals with disabilities.

MDOD also oversees and administers the following programs and units: (1) a constituent services program; (2) the Maryland Assistive Technology Program and the Assistive Technology Loan Program; (3) the Attendant Care Program; (4) the Telecommunications Access of Maryland and Telecommunications Devices and Distribution of Accessible Information for Disabled Individuals programs; and (5) Access Maryland. Additionally, in 2023, MDOD assumed responsibility for oversight of the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy.

Among other duties, the Secretary of MDOD serves as the chair of the Interagency Disabilities Board (IADB), which consists of representatives of a number of State agencies. The IADB's purpose, membership, and duties are outlined in Maryland Human Services Article §§ 7-127 through 7-131. One of the main functions of the IADB is to develop the State Disabilities Plan. A complete list of the required IADB members and the statutory requirements for the State Disabilities Plan can be found in section III of this report.

Under Maryland Human Services Article § 7-113, the Secretary of MDOD is charged with reviewing and approving the State Disabilities Plan developed by the IADB and submitting to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual analysis of the State's progress in implementing the State Disabilities Plan and related performance objectives. This report represents the annual progress analysis required under § 7-113.

a. Relationship to the State Disabilities Plan

This annual progress analysis reflects a period of transition between the conclusion of the previous State Disabilities Plan and the development of a new plan. The prior 2020-2023 State Disabilities Plan addressed reporting periods covered fully or in part by FY 2020 through FY 2024. This year's analysis describes activities that occurred in FY 2024; where possible or relevant, we have included performance data for the lifespan of the sunsetting State Disabilities Plan. This year's analysis will also note areas of focus that we anticipate will be included in the next State Disabilities Plan. Starting in FY 2024, MDOD has been working with partner agencies to create an updated State Disabilities Plan to ensure the plan is consistent with statutory requirements, aligns with the Governor's objectives, and reflects the current needs and priorities of Maryland's disability community. This plan will be in effect during FY 2025.

b. Organization of this analysis

Unless otherwise noted, this analysis provided in section II. of this report aligns with the major outcomes identified in the 2020-2023 State Disabilities Plan, which addressed: (1) community living; (2) housing; (3) transportation; (4) employment; (5) education; (6) financial supports; (7) health and behavioral health; (8) family supports; (9) public safety, emergency response, and emergency management; (10) accessible communication, technology and information technology; and (11) state government accessibility.

The outcomes identified in the 2020-2023 State Disabilities Plan were:
- Outcome One: Improved self-directed supports and services for people with disabilities and their families
- Outcome Two: Improved availability of integrated, affordable, and accessible housing options for people with disabilities and their households
- Outcome Three: Improved reliable transportation options for people with disabilities
- Outcome Four: Improved employment and training options, including self-employment and noncongregant competitive opportunities available in an integrated environment in which there are individuals with and without disabilities
- Outcome Five: Improved educational support services for children, youth, and life-long learners with disabilities
- Outcome Six: Improved financial stability and independence for people with disabilities and their families
- Outcome Seven: Improved physical and behavioral health care for people with disabilities and their families
- Outcome Eight: Improved family and peer support services for people with disabilities and their families
- Outcome Nine: Improved crime control, public safety, and correctional services emphasizing the needs and rights of people with disabilities
- Outcome Ten: Improved accessible and universally designed communication and technology
- Outcome Eleven: Improved disability equity, transparency, and efficiency in state government services
- Outcome Twelve: Improved access to recreational and wellness activities for people with disabilities and their families - *Note, for the purposes of this report, policies relating to recreational and wellness activities were included with health and behavioral health policies*
- Outcome Thirteen: Improved capacity, infrastructure, and coordinated policy implementation in response to and recovery from public health emergencies - *Note, MDOD stopped monitoring policies related to COVID-19 after the formal end of the public health emergency; policies relating to emergency management are discussed along with public safety and emergency response policies*

c. Agency acronyms used in this document

- BHA– Behavioral Health Administration (part of the Department of Health)
- DBM– Department of Budget and Management
- DDA– Developmental Disabilities Administration (part of the Department of Health)
- DGS - Department of General Services
- DHCD– Department of Housing and Community Development
- DHS– Department of Human Services
- DoIT - Department of Information Technology
- DORS– Division of Rehabilitation Services (part of the Maryland State Department of Education)
- DNR - Department of Natural Resources
- GOC–Governor's Office for Children
- MDH– Department of Health
- MDoA– Maryland Department of Aging
- MDOD– Maryland Department of Disabilities
- MDoL– Department of Labor
- MDOT - Maryland Department of Transportation
- MSDE– Maryland State Department of Education
- MTA– Maryland Transportation Administration (part of the Maryland Department of Transportation)
- PSC - Public Service Commission
- WMATA– Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

II.A. COMMUNITY LIVING

MDOD supports community living for people with disabilities through:

- Participation in community living policy activities, *discussed further in this section*;
- Operation of the Attendant Care Program, *discussed further in this section*; and
- Oversight of the Money Follows the Person Peer Outreach and Supports contracts, *discussed further in this section*.

a. MDOD FY 2024 policy activities

Participation in Advisory Boards. MDOD has representation on several advisory boards that provide input on Maryland's home- and community-based waivers, including the DDA Quality Advisory Council, the Autism Waiver Advisory Board, and the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board (which provides some input into the Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver). MDOD was also an active participant in the State Independent Living Council.

b. Attendant Care Program

MDOD's Attendant Care Program (ACP).[1] The ACP provides financial reimbursement to assist individuals with severe chronic or permanent physical disabilities who require attendant care services to direct their own care and select their own service providers. Reimbursement may be available for attendant care services that are provided in the home, school, workplace, or other community locations. The program is open to adult Maryland residents with disabilities who are self-employed, competitively employed, or actively seeking employment; attending a post-secondary, higher education, or apprenticeship program; or are living in, or at risk of placement in, a nursing facility.

Updates to the Attendant Care Program.[2] During the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed MDOD's departmental bill expanding the purpose of the ACP to include providing financial assistance to an eligible individual for "ongoing additional supports." "Ongoing additional supports" means a continual support that (1) increases an eligible individual's independent performance of an essential activity of daily living, self-care, or mobility and (2) is requested by an eligible individual and approved by MDOD. This expansion of the law governing the ACP will help MDOD better serve current ACP participants and attract new ACP participants by reimbursing other expenses that support people with disabilities to live

---

[1] Information in this paragraph taken from Maryland Department of Disabilities, "Attendant Care Program." Available at: https://mdod.maryland.gov/acp/Pages/Attendant-Care-Home.aspx. Las accessed: December 27, 2024.

[2] See 2024 Maryland Laws, Chapters 34 and 35, codified at Maryland Human Services Article, Section 7-401. Bill text available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/SB0226?ys=2024rs. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

independently. MDOD is in the process of promulgating regulations related to this policy change.

Attendant Care Data. To date, 142 participants have benefited from ACP in FY 2024, with an average reimbursement of $335.93 per pay period (every two weeks). The fiscal 2025 budget includes $1,256,017 for ACP to provide financial assistance to eligible individuals. Beginning in FY 2023, MDOD began publicly reporting data on the number of ACP participants who are working/seeking employment, attending school, or at risk for nursing home placement. In FY 2024, 58% of individuals served by ACP were at-risk of nursing home placement if they did not receive attendant care services, and 42% were employed, seeking employment, or in post-secondary education programs. Additionally, in FY 2024, there were 31 individuals on the waiting list, meaning they had been determined eligible for ACP services and were awaiting available funding. There were 253 individuals on the registry, meaning they expressed interest in ACP but had not yet been determined eligible; this was a large increase from FY 2023, when there were 137 individuals on the registry.

Table A1: Attendant Care Program Data

	FY 2023	FY 2024
Total individuals served by ACP	155	142
Individuals at-risk of nursing facility placement	90	83
Individuals employed, seeking employment, or enrolled in post-secondary education	65	59
Individuals on the waiting list	25	31
Individuals on the registry	137	253

c. Money Follows the Person Peer Outreach and Support

Money Follows the Person (MFP).[3] MFP is a program for Medicaid beneficiaries overseen by MDH. MFP assists individuals with disabilities who have been living in nursing homes or other

---

[3] Information in this paragraph taken from Maryland Department of Health, "Money Follows the Person." Available at; https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/longtermcare/pages/Maryland-Money-Follows-the-Person.aspx. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

institutional facilities move to a home in the community (such as a house, apartment, or small group home). Through MFP, program enrollees are able to access funding for goods and services they need to help them transition into the community, but which may not typically be covered by a home- and community-based services (HCBS) waiver or State Plan option. Once successfully transitioned to the community, MFP participants begin receiving community-based services provided for by a Medicaid HCBS program.

MFP Peer Outreach and Supports (POS). MDOD oversees six contractors that are responsible for providing peer-to-peer outreach and support services to assist individuals who are interested in transitioning from institutional to community-based settings as part of the MFP program. POS activities include sharing one's personal journey with the transition process, increasing awareness of community-based long-term services and supports, making appropriate referrals, connecting individuals to available resources, and fostering successful community reintegration. Services are provided statewide with the exception of the nine counties on the Eastern Shore.

d. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to develop and report on ACP and the MFP POS contracts. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Development of self-directed services in HCBS programs.** MDOD has been monitoring program updates to self-directed services offered as part of the HCBS waivers administered by DDA in FY 2025. MDOD will present additional detail and discussion of these changes, as well as develop metrics to measure any potential impacts of these updates, as part of the next State Disabilities Plan and annual progress analysis reports. Additionally, MDOD will continue to monitor MDH's consideration of the expansion of self-directed services into HCBS programs for people with physical disabilities and older adults.
- **Implementation of new federal Medicaid requirements.** In May 2024, the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released the Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services Final Rule.[4] These regulations will be phased in over the next six years, assuming no significant changes in CMS' relevant policies or priorities under the Trump-Vance Administration. These regulations impact how states are to operate and report on certain aspects of their HCBS waiver programs, including operation of grievance systems, investigating critical incidents, reporting on waiting lists, reporting on wait times for certain services, and payment of direct care workers. MDOD anticipates

---

[4] Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, "Medicaid Program; Ensuring Access to Medicaid Services." 89 FR 40542, May 10, 2024. Available at: https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/05/10/2024-08363/medicaid-program-ensuring-access-to-medicaid-services. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

that these regulatory changes will present opportunities for new analyses and data collection in future annual progress analysis reports.

- **HCBS waiver enrollment and waiting lists.** As part of the next State Disabilities Plan and accompanying annual progress analyses, MDOD anticipates revisiting how HCBS waiver data, including enrollment and waiting lists, are reviewed and analyzed to ensure that the information discussed in these reports is consistent and comparable.
- **Continued progress in nursing home diversions and transitions.** In FY 2025, MDH switched to an electronic system for its Preadmission Screening and Resident Review (PASRR) program, which MDOD anticipates will change how data will be reported in these annual progress analysis reports. Additionally, as part of the next State Disabilities Plan and accompanying annual progress analyses, MDOD also anticipates providing enhanced analysis of the MFP program.

II.B. HOUSING

MDOD supports housing for people with disabilities through:

- Participation in housing policy activities, *discussed further in this section*;
- Operation of the waiting lists and referral process for certain housing programs for people with disabilities, *discussed further in this section;* and
- Maintenance of the Maryland Assistive Technology Program's Home Modifications Directory, *discussed under section II.J. Technology*.

a. MDOD FY 2024 policy activities

Maryland Partnership for Affordable Housing. MDOD continues to work through the Maryland Partnership for Affordable Housing (MPAH) to advance housing public policy and expand affordable and accessible partnerships. MPAH serves as a locus of information for Olmstead inclusion statewide and an incubator for new approaches to integrated community living.

MDOD housing program activities. In FY2024, MDOD strengthened the administration of five jointly run housing programs (HUD 811 Project Rental Assistance, Weinberg Affordable Apartments, Community Choice Homes, DDA Rent Subsidy, and MFP Bridge Subsidy programs). Improvements included: waitlist modernization; enhancements in training for case and property managers; and increasing efficiencies in program referral, eligibility, and leasing up of units. Also in FY2024, MDOD worked on building and strengthening partnerships with public housing authorities (PHAs) and county housing departments, the Maryland Department of Aging (MDoA) and the Department of Health (MDH). In particular, MDOD's partnership with MDoA and MDH enables the cross sharing of housing resources and support at the local and statewide level.

b. Housing program wait list and referral management

In addition to operating the waiting lists and referral processes for the programs described below, MDOD also works with State and non-profit partners to try to identify additional funding opportunities that could help expand these programs.

Weinberg Apartments.[5] The Weinberg Apartments started in 2011 with a private-public collaboration among The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, DHCD, MDOD and MDH. The Weinberg Foundation provided funding to support the creation of affordable, accessible and

---

[5] Information in this paragraph taken from MDOD internal data and from a presentation developed by the Maryland Partnership for Affordable Housing and the Maryland Department of Disabilities, "Housing Programs for People with Disabilities." Available at: https://autismsocietymd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MD-Partnership-for-Affordable-Housing-2.11.2020-presentation.pdf. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

integrated apartments restricted for occupancy to people with disabilities with incomes at or below 30% of area median income (such as those receiving SSI or SSDI). Since the program's inception, the partnership provided $4 million, which funded the creation of 46 units. Currently, 38 units are occupied, 8 are in lease-up. At this time, no new apartments are being developed, as the Weinberg Foundation turned its philanthropic efforts towards other projects starting in 2020. MDOD is in the process of identifying other potential philanthropic foundations interested in creating a similar private-public partnership to carry this work forward.

Section 811 Program.[6] The Section 811 program also reflects another partnership among MDOD, DHCD, and MDH. This program makes available specific subsidized rental units that have been set aside for people with disabilities in multi-family housing that was developed with affordable housing funds. The units must be integrated, meaning that no more than 25% of the units in the development can be set aside for people with disabilities. The Section 811 program has been available to Marylanders with disabilities ages 18 to 62 who are Medicaid recipients, eligible for long-term services and supports, and have an income at or below 30% Area Median Income. The Section 811 program is federally-funded. Maryland received its first award of $11 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2013, received a second award of $10 million in 2015 and received a third award of $6.9 million in 2020. Using these funds, Maryland developed 334 Section 811 units as of FY 2024; of these, 313 were occupied at the end of FY 2024. MDOD and its partners continue to monitor for additional federal funding opportunities that would create additional Section 811 units.

Bridge Subsidies for MFP participants.[7] The Bridge Subsidy program has been a partnership between MDOD, MDH's MFP program (described in II.A. Community Living), and the local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). The MFP program funds the participant's rent for up to the first three years of their tenancy. At or before 3 years, the local participating PHA will transition the person to a Housing Choice Voucher or public housing unit, as chosen by the participant. As of FY 2024, there were nine individuals receiving rental subsidies through this program. MDH is finalizing procurement to add additional funding so that additional participants can be enrolled in the MFP Bridge Subsidy program. MDOD will work with MDH and DHCD to maximize new Bridge Subsidy participants with the additional funding.

DDA Rent Subsidy - In FY2024, MDOD began providing technical assistance and waitlist administration to the DDA to implement a rent subsidy program for people receiving services funded by the DDA or on the DDA waitlist. MDOD works jointly with DHCD and DDA to refer qualified individuals to DHCD culminating in the leasing up of units.

---

[6] Information in this paragraph taken from MDOD internal data and from a presentation developed by the Maryland Partnership for Affordable Housing and the Maryland Department of Disabilities, "Housing Programs for People wth Disabilities." Available at: https://autismsocietymd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MD-Partnership-for-Affordable-Housing-2.11.2020-presentation.pdf. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

[7] Information in this paragraph taken from MDOD internal data and from Maryland Inclusive Housing, "Tenant-Based Assistance Programs." Available at: https://mih-inc.org/housing-info/tenant-based-assistance-programs/#Maryland_Money_Follows_the_Person_Bridge_Subsidy_Program. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

Community Choice Homes (CCH) provides affordable rental homes in Montgomery County for people with disabilities who have extremely low income. CCH began in 2018 and is the result of a partnership between the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County (HOC) and MDOD. The program will provide 30 HOC-owned rental units for people with disabilities for a period of 15 years. Using available funding and factoring in escalating housing costs, Maryland developed 28 CCH units as of FY2024; of these, 28 were occupied at the end of FY2024.

c. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to develop and report on its housing program activities. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Ensuring people with disabilities are included in developments of affordable housing units and programs.** As noted above, MDOD will continue to work with partners to ensure that people with disabilities are considered in State planning efforts to expand affordable housing. We anticipate reporting on these efforts in more detail in future annual progress analysis reports.
- **Support of homeownership.** In prior years, MDOD has collected and analyzed data on the use of homeownership loans or tax credits for people with disabilities or families of people with disabilities who are purchasing homes. This data has either been difficult to obtain or has shown extremely low participation in relevant programs. MDOD will continue to work with State partners to identify data related to homeownership supports for people with disabilities, as well as opportunities to expand these programs.

II.C. TRANSPORTATION

MDOD supports transportation access for people with disabilities through:

- Participation in policy and advocacy activities, *discussed further in this section;*
- Monitoring relevant transportation system data and activities, *discussed further in this section;* and
- Providing financial loans for adapted and non-adapted vehicles through the Assistive Technology Loan Program, *discussed in II.F. Financial Managemen*t.

a. MDOD FY 2024 policy activities

Transportation and travel access webinars. In 2024 MDOD started transportation access webinars called "From Here to There" to provide people with disabilities with knowledge and resources about options for traveling using various methods (including public transportation and commercial airlines).

Participation in work groups. MDOD sits on a number of transportation-related committees and councils, including: Maryland Connected and Automated Vehicle (MDCAV); Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (MBPAC); Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB); and the State Coordinating Committee for Health and Human Services Transportation (SCCHHST).

b. Paratransit and other transportation for people with disabilities

MTA paratransit services. Paratransit services are required by law under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates that public transit agencies providing fixed route service must also provide "complementary paratransit" to individuals with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route system due to their disability. Federal guidelines for paratransit require that the paratransit service area be available within ¾ of a mile of public transportation routes. MTA provides a paratransit system known as MobilityLink. MobilityLink operates within three quarters of a mile from fixed route systems (Local Bus, Light RailLink, and Metro SubwayLInk) in Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore counties. MobilityLink is available on the same days and during the same hours as any fixed route service. Customers are typically charged $2.20 per ride.[8]

MTA Call-a-Ride. The MTA Call-a-Ride service is available to certified MTA MobilityLink paratransit customers for travel in the MobilityLink service area. MTA Call-a-Ride is not considered paratransit under the ADA and is not a replacement for MobilityLink service. Call-a-

---

[8] Program description taken from the 2022 MobilityLInk/Paratransit Service Rider Guide released by the Maryland Department of Transportation (Maryland Transit Administration), available at: https://s3.amazonaws.com/mta-website-staging/mta-website-staging/iles/Brochures/Mobility_Riders_Guide_2022.pdf. Last accessed December 1, 2024.

Ride services are provided by an MTA contractor utilizing transportation companies. Customers arrange rides directly with the sedan companies. MTA subsidizes fares up to $40. Customers must pay $3.00 per ride and, if the ride exceeds $40, the amount in excess of $40. MTA also cautions that there are a limited number of wheelchair accessible vehicles within the participating transportation companies. Customers may access 62 one-way Call-a-Ride rides a month.[9]

WMATA paratransit services.[10] WMATA provides paratransit services, called MetroAccess, similar to MTA's MobilityLink. MetroAccess is available for residents living in WMATA's service area in Washington, D.C. and the metropolitan areas of Maryland and Virginia.

Paratransit and Call-a-Ride data.

- **MobilityLink data.** Looking at MTA MobilityLink trends during the overall 2020-2024 life of the State Disabilities Plan, it should be noted that while the number of rides decreased during the first years of the COVID-19 pandemic (dropping from 1,706,128 in FY 2020 to a low of 1,030,772 in FY 2022) the number of rides in FY 2024 reached 2,106,767 – apparently doubling in two fiscal years. MTA has an on-time performance goal of 92% for its MobilityLink rides.[11] In FY 2023 and FY 2024 the on-time performance for MobilityLInk rides was at least 94%.
- **Call-a-Ride data.** As with the trend observed with paratransit rides, there were fewer rides provided through Call-a-Ride in the early years of the pandemic, with rides dropping from 799,577 in FY 2020 and reaching a low of 494,533 in FY 2023. However, the number of Call-a-Ride rides nearly doubled between FY 2023 and FY 2024, with FY 2024 rides reaching 899,959. Because it is not a paratransit service, MTA does not collect or report on on-time service for Call-a-Ride service.

Table C1: Paratransit and Call-a-Ride Data from Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of people certified for paratransit	32,462	34,002	34,677	35,809	36,071
Paratransit rides*	1,706,128	1,040,234	1,3031,772	1,913,927	2,106,767

---

[9] Program description taken from the MTA Call-a-Ride policy memo issued by the Maryland Department of Transportation (Maryland Transit Administration) effective October 4, 2021, available at: https://mtacallaride.org/MTA_Call_a_Ride_CAR_Policy.pdf. Last accessed December 1, 2024.

[10] Program description taken from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's Metro Access Paratransit page. Available at: https://www.wmata.com/service/accessibility/metro-access/. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

[11] See on-time performance data for all Maryland Transit Administration services at MTA Performance Improvement webpage available at: https://www.mta.maryland.gov/performance-improvement#:~:text=MobilityLink%20On%2DTime%20Performance,between%2087%25%20and%2093%25. Last accessed: December 1, 2024.

On-time service*	92.691%	74.589%	90.675.9%	93.794.6%	92.194%
Call-a-Ride rides	799,577	537,554	537,554	494,533	899,959

*Paratransit rides and on-time performance data is only for Mobility rides and does not include Call-a-Ride rides

Table C2: Paratransit from the Washington Area Metropolitan (WMATA)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Maryland residents certified for paratransit	21,995	26,607	19,957	N/A	19,192
Paratransit rides provided to Maryland residents	1,182,208	633,042	793,079	N/A	860,241
On-time service (system-wide)	90%	96%	93%	N/A	91.3%

Civil rights concerns with MobilityLink. On June 29, 2023, the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a Letter of Findings to the MTA under Title II of the ADA, notifying MTA that its MobilityLink paratransit service was in violation of the ADA by failing to provide paratransit services at a level of service comparable to the level of service provided to individuals who use the fixed route system. Specifically, DOJ noted concerns with untimely pickups and drop-offs, and lengthy waits for telephone reservation service. To remedy the violations, DOJ made the following recommendations:

- Invest in additional resources, including vehicles and drivers, as well as any other operational improvements necessary, to ensure sustained on-time performance (both pickups and drop-offs) such that eligible riders no longer experience such capacity constraints.
- Revisit performance standards so that MTA MobilityLink accurately identifies and remedies service issues before they rise to the level of discriminatory capacity constraints.
- Provide adequate resources (i.e. lines, equipment) and adequate staffing of the MobilityLink call center to ensure that wait times are not a capacity constraint.
- Track and provide the DOJ more detailed performance metrics.[12]
- Improve MTA's process of reviewing annual MobilityLink demand, such that MTA plans for and provides service each year that is free from capacity constraints.

MDOD notes that the timeframe analyzed by DOJ (2018-2022) covered an extended period of time that included the COViD-19 pandemic, which presented a number of unexpected challenges for the paratransit system. Prior to the issuance of the DOJ findings, MTA had already begun

---

[12] The complete Letter of Findings is available on the U.S. Department of Justice website on the Maryland Transit Administration webpage, available at: https://www.justice.gov/crt/case/maryland-transit-administration. Last accessed: December 1, 2024.

taking actions to improve service, including focusing on workforce development through hiring campaigns and incentives. Beginning in early 2022, MTA implemented new driver operator contracts which included an additional provider (MV Transit).

MobilityLink Paratransit Service Improvements Study. During the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed SB 891, which was signed into law by Gov. Moore. The bill requires the Maryland Transportation Institute at the University of Maryland to conduct a study to identify methods to improve MTA MobilityLink performance, including improvements to on-time performance and customer service. The report is due to the General Assembly July 1, 2025.[13]

c. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the transportation data discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **MobilityLink customer service.** Under the current State Disabilities Plan, MDOD has not been tracking information regarding MTA MobilityLink customer service. In light of concerns raised by the DOJ and the Maryland General Assembly, MDOD will include analysis of customer service data under the next State Disabilities Plan.
- **Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS).** Jurisdictions across Maryland offer ADA/paratransit services or demand response transportation services for people with disabilities.[14] At this time, MDOD does not track data from the LOTS. We anticipate expanding our analysis of LOTS and statewide paratransit ridership under the next State Disabilities Plan.
- **Travel training.** There is no statewide travel training offered through MDOT/MTA at this time. MDOT/MTA is, however, in the process of creating new contracts and curriculum for travel training sessions available to Maryland residents. WMATA does have travel training within the geographical area it serves, which does include some contracts in Maryland.
- **Accessible sidewalks and pathways.** In December 2024, Disability Rights Maryland, Maryland's designated Protection and Advocacy entity, reached a settlement with Baltimore City to bring the city's sidewalks into compliance with ADA requirements.[15]

---

[13] See Ch. 647, available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024RS/chapters_noln/Ch_647_sb0891E.pdf. Last accessed; December 1, 2024.

[14] Information on LOTS can be found on Maryland Department of Transportation (Maryland Transit Administration) Locally Operated Transit Systems webpage, available at: https://www.mta.maryland.gov/lots. Last accessed: December 1, 2024.

[15] Disability Rights Maryland, "Press Release: DRM and partners reach agreement with Baltimore to improve sidewalks and ramps for people with mobility disabilities." December 18, 2024. Available at:

In future annual progress analysis reports, MDOD anticipates monitoring these efforts as well as examining accessibility needs statewide.

https://disabilityrightsmd.org/press-release-drm-and-partners-reach-agreement-with-baltimore-city-to-improve-sidewalks-and-ramps-for-people-with-mobility-disabilities/#:~:text=This%20lawsuit%20aimed%20to%20help,step%20toward%20fixing%20these%20issues. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

III.D. EMPLOYMENT

MDOD supports competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities through:

- Participation in or oversight of policy activities, *discussed further in this section;* and
- Monitoring data and activities related to vocational rehabilitation, general employment services, and the Medicaid buy-in program, *discussed further in this section.*

a. MDOD FY 2024 policy activities

Advisory board and work group participation. MDOD staff participated in a number of workgroups and related meetings. They included: the Advancing Access and Equity Workgroup of the Governor's Workforce Development Board; DDA's National Expansion of Employment Options Network (NEON) team, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy; DORS' Maryland Pathways to Partnerships Advisory Council; MDH's Employed Individuals with Disabilities workgroup, Direct Workforce Professional Workgroup Think Tank; and the Association for Persons in Supported Employment Lunch with Leaders.

State as a Model Employer. The State as a Model Employer (SAME) Initiative is a national movement that ensures that state governments serve as model employers for private-sector business by committing to improve hiring, recruitment, retention, and advancement of people with disabilities in state government workforces. In fall of 2023, a team from Maryland led by MDOD and composed of representatives from Lt. Governor Miller's office, DORS, DBM and Labor were selected by the National Governor's Association (NGA) for an Inclusive Disability Employment Policy Summit focused on SAME. In January 2024, Maryland submitted and was selected again by the NGA to receive more intensive support to develop an action plan in support of Maryland's SAME effort. Work on this plan continued through FY 2024.

Application for U.S. Department of Education DIF grant funding. In FY 2024, MDOD led the submission of an application for federal funding through the U.S. Department of Education's Disability Innovation Fund (DIF). Under this project, MDOD would lead a collaboration among MSDE's Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services, DORS, DDA, local education agencies, the University of Maryland, and Parents Place of Maryland to develop, pilot, and evaluate a tool for sharing student-level data that improves linkages, service coordination, and measurement of post-school employment outcomes. Award announcements will be made in Fall 2024.

b. Public vocational rehabilitation services

DORS' Vocational Rehabilitation Services.[16] The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) is the largest Division of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). DORS oversees the public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, commonly referred to simply as "DORS." DORS provides vocational training and education for disabled individuals who want to explore career pathways, go to work or want to continue to be able to work. DORS also provides Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities prior to high school completion, and independent living services to individuals who are 55 or older and who are blind or have a vision impairment through the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program.

Individuals served by DORS in Federal FY 2024.[17] Because so much of DORS' funding is from the federal government, it is common to analyze data based on the federal fiscal year. DORS began the 2024 Federal Fiscal Year (October 2023) with 7,989 adults (ages 25 or older) and 5,375 youths (ages 14-24) enrolled in employment services; by the end of the fiscal year (September 2024) DORS had increased this to 10,124 adults and 6,999 youths. There was more modest growth in Pre-ETS during FYo 2024, with 6,204 youths served in Pre-ETS at the beginning of the fiscal year and 6,660 at the end of the fiscal year. The Independent Living Older Blind program also showed growth, with 710 individuals being served at the start of the fiscal year and 883 at the end of the fiscal year.

Table D1: Individuals Served by DORS in FY 2024

Month	Adults (25+)	Youth (14-24)	Pre-ETS	ILOB	Total
Oct. 2023	7,989	5,375	6,204	720	20,937
Nov. 2023	9,222	6,410	6,229	748	22,609
Dec. 2023	9,185	6,440	6,279	748	22,650
Jan. 2024	9,186	6,446	6,285	744	22,661
Feb. 2024	9,170	6,471	6,336	758	22,735
Mar. 2024	9,310	6,583	6,424	773	23,090
April 2024	9,501	6,659	6,599	782	23,541
May 2024	9,501	6,659	6,599	782	23,541
June 2024	9,186	6,446	6,285	744	22,651
July 2024	9,823	6,917	6,897	856	24,493
Aug. 2024	9,901	6,937	6,879	864	24,591

---

[16] Information in this section comes from: Choudhury, M. Maryland State Department of Education. "Overview of MSDE's Division of Rehabilitation Services." May 23, 2023. Available at: https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2023/0523/DeepDive-DivisionRehabilitationServices-DORS.pdf

[17] Data in this section and Table D2 below were taken from monthly data sheets posted to: Division of Rehabilitation Services, "DORS Caseloads." Available at: https://dors.maryland.gov/consumers/about/stats/Pages/default.aspx. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

| Sept. 2024 | 10,124 | 6,999 | 6,660 | 885 | 24,668 |

Individuals on the waiting list and new referrals in Federal FY 2024.[18] Because so much of DORS' funding is from the federal government, it is common to analyze data based on the Federal Fiscal Year. At the start of the 2024 Federal Fiscal Year, there were 2, 237 individuals on the waiting list and a similar number, 2,330, at the end of the year. However, DORS was able to reduce the waiting list to below 2,000 most months between December 2023 and June 2024. The number of new referrals was 2,298 at the start of the fiscal year and was very similar at the end of the year, with 2,274 new referrals. However, the number of new referrals climbed to over 2,700 in March, April, and June 2024.

Table D2: Individuals on Waiting List and New Referrals in FY 2024

Month	Waiting List	New Referrals - VR (all ages)	New Referrals - Pre-ETS	New referrals - ILOB	Total New Referrals
Oct. 2023	2,237	1,539	626	134	2,298
Nov. 2023	2,158	1,741	604	153	2,498
Dec. 2023	1,992	1,701	569	160	2,430
Jan. 2024	1,998	1,691	569	162	2,422
Feb. 2024	2,041	1,882	631	175	2,628
Mar. 2024	1,858	1,953	666	172	2,791
April 2024	1,948	1,934	630	182	2,746
May 2024	1,948	1,943	630	182	2,746
June 2024	1,998	1,691	569	162	2,422
July 2024	2,245	1,628	188	195	2,011
Aug. 2024	2,273	1,642	235	200	2,077
Sept. 2024	2,330	1,619	459	196	2,274

Ensuring State matching funds.[19] Under federal regulations (34 CFR § 361.60), the federal share of funding to a state's public VR program is 78.7%; thus, in order for a State to receive its fully allotted share of the federal vocational rehabilitation grant, the State must contribute 21.3% in funding for the vocational program. The state must also maintain at least its prior year funding amount for the program in order to attain its fully allotted federal share (34 CFR § 361.62). In 2023, the General Assembly passed legislation authorizing the Governor to include in the annual

---

[18] Data in this section and Table D3 below were taken from monthly data sheets posted to: Division of Rehabilitation Services, "DORS Caseloads." Available at:
https://dors.maryland.gov/consumers/about/stats/Pages/default.aspx. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

[19] Information in this section comes from the legislation and the fiscal and policy note for 2024 Maryland Law, Chapters 168 and 169, available at:
https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb1163?ys=2024RS&search=True. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

budget bill an increase in the general fund appropriation to ensure the State's share of funding under the federal rehabilitation acts for DORS is met. The bill took effect July 1, 2024.

Pre-Employment Transitioning Services impact on VR funds.[20] When the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program was reauthorized by Congress in 2014, Congress made a major change, creating a second program that all states' VR programs must administer, called Pre-Employment Transitioning Services (Pre-ETS), which is focused strictly on students with disabilities, (using a broader definition of eligibility significantly increasing both the potential pool and demand), who are between the ages of 14 and 21. Congress also mandated existing resources be shifted, including funding and staff, to administer Pre-ETS. As a result of the tremendous growth of Pre-ETS since 2014, DORS has had to shift staff from the VR program to the Pre-ETS program. This has caused a reduction in the available staff and resources allocated to the adult VR program, which in turn has resulted in an increased waiting list for the VR program.

Waiting list and order of selection.[21] In part due to the resource limitations described above, DORS does not have sufficient staff or resources to provide services to all individuals with disabilities who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. Federal law requires that DORS' VR program must serve people with the most significant disabilities first. To comply with this law, DORS counselors determine the severity of the disability of individuals who are eligible for services, as follows:

- Category 1: Most Significant Disability
- Category 2: Significant Disability
- Category 3: Non-Severe Disability

DORS is required to make an eligibility decision on everyone who applies for services, regardless of whether they have a disability or not. DORS is required to determine eligibility even if it does not have the capacity to provide all eligible individuals with services.

- For individuals found to be in Category 1 ("most significant disability") DORS currently has resources to begin providing VR services more or less right away, assuming staff are available. This is subject to change based on Federal funding and other resources.
- Individuals determined to be in Category 2 ("significant disability") are placed on a waiting list and served as resources allow. DORS has had to maintain a waiting list for

---

[20] Information in this section was taken from: Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, "The Waiting List." Available at: https://dors.maryland.gov/consumers/Pages/waiting.aspx. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

[21] Information in this section was taken from: Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, "The Waiting List." Available at: https://dors.maryland.gov/consumers/Pages/waiting.aspx. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

people in Category 2 since 2014, when it was required to reallocate some federal funding (and staff) to Pre-ETS eligible youth.

- Individuals determined to be in Category 3 ("non-severe disability") are not served, nor are they placed on the waiting list, as DORS does not anticipate having resources to serve people in this category in the foreseeable future. DORS has not been able to serve people in Category 3 since the 1990's. Maryland's Category 3 is considered "closed."

Comparison to other states.[22] Although DORS and partner agencies have continued to work to improve VR services, Maryland's VR system is not performing as well as programs in other states.

- Unlike in Maryland, a majority of states are able to serve people in all categories. In 2023, for instance, 18 states (including Maryland) had at least one category closed.
- According to the most recent data from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration, which funds VR, as of November 18, 2024 only seven states (including Maryland) had at least one category closed.[23]
- As of May 2023, the DORS VR waitlist was the largest and longest wait time in the nation.
- Nationally, the average caseload for VR counselors is 80 to 100 cases per counselor. As of May 2023, DORS counselors had an average caseload of 139 cases per counselor. The top three counselors at DORS had caseloads of 438 cases, 334 cases, and 244 cases.

Maryland VR does pursue additional grants and resources. As noted above, DORS collaborated with MDOD in an application for grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration, Maryland Pathways to Partnerships in 2023. This 5 year grant is for $9.9 million. However, this federal funding does not allow DORS to serve individuals on their wait list.

c. Access to general employment services

The Maryland Workforce Exchange.[24] The Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE) website is an online job seeker/workforce services system operated by the Maryland Department of Labor.

---

[22] Information in this section comes from: Choudhury, M. Maryland State Department of Education. "Overview of MSDE's Division of Rehabilitation Services." May 23, 2023. Available at: https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2023/0523/DeepDive-DivisionRehabilitationServices-DORS.pdf

[23] Rehabilitation Services Administration, "Order of Selection Information." Available at: https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/vocational-rehabilitation-state-grants/order-of-selection-information. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

[24] Information in this section is from: "Maryland Workforce Exchange (MWE)." Available at: https://opendata.maryland.gov/stories/s/Maryland-Workforce-Exchange-MWE-/r28t-qrih/. Last accessed:

The MWE was designed to be a user-friendly tool that assists job seekers, employers, students, case managers, training providers, workforce professionals, and others.

Job seekers with disabilities in the MWE.[25] The MWE is open to all job seekers in Maryland. Job seekers with disabilities are encouraged to voluntarily self-identify as having a disability for data collection purposes. Starting in 2024, MDOD began collecting data on how many job seekers (with or without disabilities) are registered in MWE in order to determine the percentage of MWE job seekers who have disabilities. In 2024, there were 129,752 job seekers in the MWE of these, 9,767 (8%) self-identified as having a disability. In 2024, MDOD and the Department of Labor began collaborating on the development of marketing campaigns and other strategies to increase MWE's use by job seekers with disabilities. Updates on this collaboration will be reported in the next annual progress analysis.

Table D3: Job seekers with disabilities in the Maryland Workforce Exchange

Year	Job seekers with disabilities in the MWE
2020	7,124
2021	6,878
2022	10,178
2023	7,598
2024	9,767

American Job Centers.[26] Maryland American Job Centers (AJCs) provide free employment-related assistance to job seekers. Job seeker services include: career exploration assistance, referrals to training programs, placement services, résumé preparation assistance, and workshops to enhance job seeking skills and work readiness. AJCs also provide job seekers access to computers, printers, photocopiers, fax machines, telephones, and a variety of job search resource

---

December 15, 2024. The Maryland Workforce Exchange website is at: https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/default.aspx.

[25] Data in this section and the related data table were collected by MDOD as part of the Department of Budget and Management's Managing for Results (MFR). MFR reports can be found at: Department of Budget and Management, MFR Annual Performance Report page, available at; https://dbm.maryland.gov/pages/mfrperformancereport.aspx. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

[26] Information in this section is from: Maryland Department of Labor, "Maryland's American Job Centers - Workforce Development and Adult Learning." Available at: https://labor.maryland.gov/county/. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

materials. Additionally, AJCs have Business Services to help businesses with recruitment and retention strategies.

Access to AJCs by job seekers with disabilities.[27] AJCs are available to any job seekers, including job seekers with disabilities. According to data reported to MDOD by the Department of Labor, the number of people who have self-identified as having a disability who have used the Maryland AJCs has declined steadily between 2020 and 2024. Reportedly, 293 people with disabilities used AJC services in 2024, down from 490 in 2020. MDOD and the Department of Labor will work to identify the causes of the low rate of utilization of AJCs by people with disabilities, including any potential barriers related to technology access, staff training, and public awareness of AJCs.

Table D4: Job seekers with disabilities using American Job Centers

Year	Job seekers with disabilities using AJCs
2020	490
2021	408
2022	340
2023	316
2024	293

d. Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program

Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program updates.[28] MDH operates a Medicaid buy-in program that allows workers with disabilities to remain enrolled in Medicaid when they would otherwise be ineligible for Medicaid because of their work earnings and assets. On January 1, 2024, changes to the EID program went into effect, including: eliminating the maximum income eligibility cap; no longer counting assets owned solely by the worker's spouse; lowering the eligible age to 16; setting premium payments based on income; and allowing use of Independence Accounts.

---

[27] Data in this paragraph and the related data table were collected by MDOD as part of the Department of Budget and Management's Managing for Results (MFR). MFR reports can be found at: Department of Budget and Management, MFR Annual Performance Report page, available at; https://dbm.maryland.gov/pages/mfrperformancereport.aspx. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

[28] Information in this paragraph is from Maryland Department of Health, "Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program." Available at: https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/eid/pages/home.aspx. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

EID Program updates and reporting.[29] In the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed SB 790, which codified many of the program changes described above. Additionally, MDH was required to, by December 1, 2024, submit a report to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Health and Government Operations Committee on the fiscal and operational impact of (1) implementing an EID program that serves individuals aged 65 and older, including options of eliminating or increasing the age cap with enrollment and (2) establishing a premium contribution for EID program services that is based on an applicant's earned and unearned income. MDOD will monitor potential impacts on the EID program as a result of this legislation as part of future annual progress analysis reports.

Participation in EID. As reported to MDOD by MDH, participation in the EID program has remained relatively stable since the start of the last State Disabilities Plan in FY 2020. In FY 2020, there were 1,027 people enrolled in the program. By FY 2024, this enrollment had grown slightly to 1,055.

Table D5: Participation in the EID Program

	People participating in the EID program
2020	1,027
2021	999
2022	1,032
2023	1,050
2024	1,055

e. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the employment data and activities discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Implementation of the DIF Grant.** On October 1, 2024, MDOD was awarded a $9,496,534.78 Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. (See description of this grant earlier in this section.) The grant funding is for a 5-year project that will initially be piloted in Charles County and Baltimore City. MDOD

---

[29] Chapter 845 of 2024, amending Maryland Health-General Article, Section 15-138. Bill text available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024rs/Chapters_noln/CH_845_sb0790e.pdf. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

has begun implementing this grant and will report on activities and outcomes from this work in future annual progress analysis reports.

- **The Maryland Disability Employment Tax Credit.**[30] The Maryland Disability Employment Tax Credit (MDETC) is a Maryland State tax credit that allows employers to claim credit for employees with disabilities hired on or after December 31, 2014. This tax credit has not been widely used. MDOD is monitoring the Department of Labor's efforts to better publicize this tax credit and anticipates including discussion of this effort in future annual progress analysis reports.

---

[30] Maryland Department of Labor, "Maryland Disability Employment Tax Credit - Workforce Development and Learning." Available at:
https://www.labor.maryland.gov/employment/mdetc.shtml#:~:text=For%20each%20taxable%20year%2C%20for,first%20two%20years%20of%20employment.. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

II.E. EDUCATION

MDOD supports education access for people with disabilities through:

- Participation in education policy activities, including policies relating to students' transition out of K-12 schools, *discussed further in this section*;
- Monitoring relevant education and transition data and activities, *discussed further in this section;* and.
- Providing short-term device loans and demonstrations of assistive technology needed to support education for people with disabilities, *discussed in II.J. Technology*

a. MDOD FY 2024 policy activities

Participation in the Blueprint Special Education Work Group. As required under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (discussed in greater detail below), MSDE created a Commission on Special Education which met regularly in FY 2024 to discuss and refine recommendations to improve special education in schools. MDOD participated in these meetings.

Application for U.S. Department of Education funding. As also noted in section II.D. (Employment) of this report, in FY 2024, MDOD led the submission of an application for federal funding through the U.S. Department of Education's Disability Innovation Fund. Under this project, MDOD would lead a collaboration among MSDE's Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services, DORS, DDA, local education agencies, the University of Maryland, and Parents Place of Maryland to develop, pilot, and evaluate a tool for sharing student-level data that improves linkages, service coordination, and measurement of post-school employment outcomes for transitioning youth. Award announcements will be made in Fall 2024.

Support of endorsements. MDOD had previously supported MSDE in development of Endorsements for students receiving MD Certificate of Program Completion in the areas of 1) Post-Secondary, 2) Career & Work Readiness, and 3) Community & Citizenship. MSDE has begun piloting with a plan for statewide implementation within 3 years. MDOD facilitated several presentations and meetings in partnership with MSDE to raise awareness within the disability community of these changes, and also regularly attends meetings with MSDE and local education transition coordinators.

State Agency Transition Collaborative (SATC). MDOD also continued to support the work of the State Agency Transition Collaborative and led creation of a Transition Checklist which is updated and distributed annually to MSDE to share with local transition coordinators and others to facilitate access to key information needed for transition planning.

b. Special Education and Supports for Students with Disabilities

Special education and accommodations in K-12 schools. There are several federal and state laws that are intended to support education for students with disabilities from birth through high school graduation or transition at age 21. One law is the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires all children receive a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). The IDEA sets out requirements regarding special education services and the creation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Additionally, Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in programs that receive Federal funding, including public schools. Under this law, students may receive accommodations through "504 plans" if they need in-school supports other than, or in addition to, the special education supports and services included in an IEP. It is important to note that not all students with disabilities have an IEP or 504 Plan. This could be because the school is unaware that the student has a disability, or because it has been determined that the student can participate in education without special education or other accommodations.

Data on students with disabilities.[31] According to MSDE's analysis, as of September 30, 2023, 118,413 of 866,169 Maryland students were receiving special education services, or 13.3% of Maryland's students ages 3 through 21. The report from MSDE noted that, in 5-year comparisons, the number of students receiving special education has increased. In 2018, by comparison 12.2% of students were receiving special education, and in 2013 this number was 11.8%.

Data on high school completion of students with disabilities.[32] In the 2022-2023 school year, MSDE indicated that of the approximately 11,000 students ages 14-21 who exited special education programs: 10.2% returned to general education; 46.5% left high school with a diploma; 6.9% left high school with a certificate; 0.5% left school due to reaching the maximum age of 21; and the remainder left school for other reasons, such as moving to a different school. No student was recorded as having dropped out, although this may have been reflected under other miscellaneous categories. According to the 2024 Report Card released by MSDE in early December 2024, overall graduation rates of students with disabilities continues to be lower than

---

[31]Maryland State Department of Education, "Maryland Early Intervention and Special Education Services Census Data & Related Tables, 2023-2024 School Year." Available at: https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20232024Student/2023-Census-Publication-Formatted-A.pdf. Least accessed: December 27, 2024.

[32]Data in this paragraph is from Maryland State Department of Education, "Maryland Early Intervention and Special Education Services Census Data & Related Tables, 2023-2024 School Year." Available at: https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20232024Student/2023-Census-Publication-Formatted-A.pdf. Least accessed: December 27, 2024.

the graduation rates for all students; while the 4- year graduation rate of all students was 85.8% and the 5 year graduation rate of all students was 87.5%, the 4-year graduation rate for students with disabilities was 69.51% and the 5-year graduation rate of students with disabilities was 73.5%.[33]

Data on use of least restrictive settings.[34] The purpose of the IDEA is to ensure that students with disabilities receive supports so they may be educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and, to the extent possible, alongside their peers who do not have disabilities. Compared to other states, Maryland historically has had a high rate of educating students with disabilities in segregated settings. The rate of including students with disabilities in general education classrooms has increased over time in Maryland, but it is important that progress be shared equally among students in different underserved communities and across all of Maryland's schools. According to MSDE's snapshot data for October 1, 2023, of the 105,692 students ages 5-21 receiving K-12 special education services, 73.4% received services in general education classrooms alongside non-disabled peers more than 80% of the time; 9.3% received services in general education classrooms 40-79% of the time; and 11.2% received services in general education classrooms less than 40% of the time.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint). The Maryland State Department of Education, in collaboration with many partners and stakeholders, is in the process of implementing the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint), which is a sweeping, multi-year plan to improve the quality of education for all children in Maryland, especially those who have been historically underserved. A key goal of the Blueprint is that students, with or without disabilities, will exit school ready for college and/or a career. Additionally, the Blueprint includes a focus on addressing many of the concerns identified by families of children with disabilities regarding special education, including the need for more special education teachers, additional resources and support, and improving the consistency and quality of IEP and transition plans.

The Access to Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for Special Education Program.[35] In the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation creating the Access to

---

[33] Maryland State Department of Education's 2024 Maryland Report Card data available at: https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/ReportCards/ReportCardSchool/1/E/1/99/XXXX/2024. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

[34]Maryland State Department of Education, "Maryland Early Intervention and Special Education Services Census Data & Related Tables, 2023-2024 School Year." Available at: https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20232024Student/2023-Census-Publication-Formatted-A.pdf. Least accessed: December 27, 2024.

[35] 2024 Maryland Law, Chapters 170 and 171, amending Maryland Education Article, sections 8-405 and 8-413. BIll text available at:

Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for Special Education (AAACSE) Program administered by the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS). The bill also created the AAACSE Fund, administered by MSDE. The AAACSE Program directs resources and services to eligible students to provide access to legal, advocacy, and consultant services. Eligible students are those with a disability whose parent has (1) a household income not more than 150% of the MVLS guidelines and (2) made at least one attempt to resolve a disagreement with a public agency regarding the child's special education services or program. Beginning in FY 2026, the Governor must include $1 million to the AAACSE Fund in the annual budget bill.

c. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the education data and activities discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Implementation of the DIF Grant.** On October 1, 2024, MDOD was awarded a $9,496,534.78 Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. (See description of this grant earlier in this section.) The grant funding is for a 5-year project that will initially be piloted in Charles County and Baltimore City. MDOD has begun implementing this grant and will report on activities and outcomes from this work in future annual progress analysis reports.
- **Implementation of endorsements.**[36] Students who exit high school with a certificate of program completion have historically had fewer post-secondary options. However, to improve post-secondary opportunities, MSDE developed a framework for what are known as "endorsements." An endorsement for high school students is a recognition or note added to their diploma or certificate of program completion that shows the student has abilities and met standards in the areas of college, community, and career readiness. These endorsements were proposed following extensive research, stakeholder engagement, and recommendations from the Maryland High School Graduation Task Force and the Maryland Certificate of Program Completion Task Force. Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, students will have the opportunity to earn various endorsements, including diploma endorsements for College and Career Readiness and Career and Technical Education, as well as specific competencies for students completing

---

https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/sb0797?ys=2024RS&search=True. Last accessed December 27, 2024.

[36] Maryland State Department of Education, memoranda from State Superintendent Dr. Carrie M. Wright to the Maryland State Board of Education, "Update on Diploma and Certificate Endorsements," June 25, 2024. Available at; https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2024/0625/Endorsements-A.pdf. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

a certificate program. MDOD anticipates providing updates on this initiative in future annual progress analysis reports.

II.F. FINANCIAL STABILITY

MDOD supports financial stability for people with disabilities through:

- Participation in financial stability policy activities, *discussed further in this section*;
- Operation of the Assistive Technology Loan Program, *discussed further in this section*; and
- Monitoring data and activities from other programs and services related to financial stability, *discussed further in this section*.

a. MDOD FY 2024 policy activities

Application for federal funding from the Social Security Administration (SSA). In FY 2024, MDOD and its evaluation partners Mathematica and Colgate University applied for a grant from the federal Social Security Administration's Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program (ICAP). If awarded, the ICAP funding would be used to conduct a randomized controlled trial to test whether providing outreach and application assistance to families of children with disabilities who receive Medicaid increases Supplemental Security Income (SSI) awards and improves outcomes for these families. Grant awards will be announced in Fall 2024.

ENOUGH Act activities.[37] During the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation proposed by Governor Moore. The legislation codified the Governor's Office for Children (GOC) and required GOC to establish an Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Governments, and Households (ENOUGH) Grant Program to advance strategies targeting child poverty. The legislation established an ENOUGH Grant Fund and required GOC to establish a database of resources by July 1, 2025. MDOD has representation on several work groups associated with the ENOUGH Act work and anticipates providing additional updates on these efforts in future annual progress analysis reports.

b. Assistive Technology Loan Program

MDOD's Assistive Technology Loan Program (ATLP). The ATLP is a financing program within the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP), which is a unit within MDOD. The ATLP's purpose is to provide alternative financing for the purchase of assistive technologies, including adapted and non-adapted vehicles, and home modifications for accessibility. The ATLP provides low interest, affordable loans to qualifying borrowers with disabilities who have encountered obstacles qualifying for financing in the traditional market.

---

[37] 2024 Maryland Law, Chapter 407, amending Maryland Education Article, section 5-223 and adding Maryland Human Services Article, sections 8-103 and 8-104. Bill text available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2024RS/chapters_noln/Ch_408_sb0482E.pdf. Last accessed: December 30, 2024.

Without the ATLP, borrowers might have to rely on high-interest credit cards, loans from second-tier lenders, home equity loans, or, in some cases, forgo essential equipment altogether.

Data from ATLP. As part of its own required report to the General Assembly, ATLP tracks its data for an annual reporting period of December 1, 2023, through November 30, 2024. During this reporting period, ATLP performed the following activities:
- Processed 109 loan applications totaling $3,263,098.00 in funding requests;
- Approved 78 loan requests totaling $2,274,324.00;
- Closed 42 guaranteed loans for a total of $1,425,474.00;
- Facilitated the closing of 2 non-guaranteed loans for a total of $52,677; and
- Managed and tracked 249 loans actively in repayment during the time period.
- All ATLP applicants in 2024 indicated a satisfaction measure of highly satisfied/satisfied with their experience

During this reporting period, 50 applications totaling $1,326,914.00 were withdrawn by applicants after submitting them to the program. Loan withdrawals happen for a variety of reasons including individual financial circumstances, accessing equipment or grant funding through a different source, or determining the item is no longer a priority.

iDrive Initiative. Historically, the ATLP has often served as the only financing option for high-cost adapted vehicles, as the cost of vehicle adaptations can exceed the vehicle's overall value, leading traditional lenders to decline these loans. Currently, the ATLP operates the iDrive Maryland Initiative. Initially launched in 2022, the iDrive Maryland initiative expanded lending parameters (increased loan amounts and expanded re-payment terms) to Marylanders with disabilities, especially those living in rural areas of Maryland, seeking funding for adapted & non adapted vehicles. This program continued into 2024 and will be an ongoing financial option for Marylanders with disabilities purchasing adapted & non adapted vehicles.

Data from the iDrive Initiative. During the program's December 1, 2023 through November 30, 2024 reporting period, the ATLP:
- Received 76 vehicle and vehicle modification loan requests totaling $2,892,338; and
- Closed 22 vehicle and vehicle modification loans, categorized as iDrive loans, totaling $1,010,650.

CASH Campaign partnership. In 2024, the ATLP continued its partnership with CASH Campaign of Maryland, referring eligible consumers for free credit counseling, financial education, and credit management support. This partnership has also led to an annually recurring Financial Resiliency webinar series aimed at Marylanders with disabilities, focused on increasing financial awareness by covering topics such as financial planning through the lifespan, housing

affordability for people with disabilities, maintaining benefits while working, and more. This month-long series has been offered for the past four years in October.

Application for federal funding from the Administration for Community Living (ACL). In FY 2024, MDTAP applied for a competitive grant from the federal Association for Community Living (ACL) to expand low interest financial loans and borrowing access for hearing aids and hearing assistive technologies. With these grant funds, MDTAP and ATLP would provide consultations, device demonstrations, equipment loans, and financing to Marylander's experiencing hearing loss.

c. Maryland ABLE Program

Maryland ABLE Program. The Stephen Beck, Jr., Achieving a Better Life Experience Act of 2014 established a new § 529A of the Internal Revenue Code that permitted states) to establish and maintain a tax-advantaged savings program ("ABLE Programs") that allow qualified individuals with disabilities to save money to be used for qualified disability expenses. In accordance with federal requirements and limitations, money in ABLE accounts: (1) is exempt from State and local taxation; and (2) may not be considered for the purpose of determining eligibility to receive, or the amount of, any assistance or benefits from local or State means-tested programs, such as Medicaid or SSI. Maryland began developing its ABLE Program in 2016, and as of 2023, this program is administered by the State Treasurer.

Data from the ABLE Program. As reported to MDOD, in FY 2024, the Maryland ABLE Program had 6,555 accounts with assets totaling $92,800,000. The program has continued to experience significant growth, particularly between FY 2023 and 2024, when the program added 1,000 new accounts and increased its total assets by over $25,000,000. The program is on track to have more than $100,000,000 assets in FY 2025.

Table F1: Maryland ABLE Program Accounts and Assets

	Number of Maryland ABLE accounts	Total assets under Maryland ABLE Program management	Percent of Maryland ABLE accounts held by Maryland residents*
2020	2,328	$17,000,000	97%
2021	3,490	$35,000,000	97%
2022	4,773	$48,800,000	97%
2023	5,553	$67,500,000	97%
2024	6,555	$92,800,000	96%

*The Maryland ABLE Program may be used by out-of-state residents who meet all other eligibility criteria and program requirements.

Distribution of ABLE materials in schools.[38] During the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation requiring the State Treasurer to provide written informational materials about the Maryland Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Program to the State Board of Education and local boards of education for distribution to parents during individualized education program (IEP), individualized family service plan (IFSP), or 504 plan meetings as specified. The Maryland ABLE informational materials must be provided at the initial evaluation meeting and at least one time each year during an IEP, IFSP, or 504 plan meeting. As with other IEP, IFSP, or 504 plan informational materials, if a parent's native language is not English, the information must be provided in the parent's native language. The legislation took effect July 1, 2024.

d. DORS Disability Determination Services

DORS Disability Determination Services (DDS).[39] In addition to overseeing vocational rehabilitation services for the state (which are discussed in section "II.D. Employment" of this report), DORS is responsible for determining the eligibility of Marylanders who apply for SSDI or SSI. In FY 2024, DORS had an operating budget of $43,535,713 for DDS; all of these funds (100%) are federal funds from the Social Security Administration.[40]

Disability determinations performed in federal FY 2024.[41] The number of disability determinations adjudicated by DDS declined somewhat during the 2024 federal fiscal year. The number of cases adjudicated reached a high of over 40,000 cases in December and March through April, but were around 34,000 by the end of the fiscal year.

Table F2: Disability Determinations in federal FY 2024

Month	Cases Adjudicated
October 2023	39,031

---

[38] 2024 Maryland Law, Chapters 172 and 173, amending Maryland Education Article, section 8-405. Bill text available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/sb0592?ys=2024RS&search=True. Last accessed: December 30, 2024.

[39] Unless otherwise noted, information in this section comes from: Choudhury, M. Maryland State Department of Education. "Overview of MSDE's Division of Rehabilitation Services." May 23, 2023. Available at: https://marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2023/0523/DeepDive-DivisionRehabilitationServices-DORS.pdf

[40] Maryland Department of Budget and Management, Grady, H. "Fiscal Digest for the State of Maryland for the Fiscal Year 2024 Including Revenues and Appropriations with Explanatory and Supplemental Statements." August 1, 2023. Available at: https://dbm.maryland.gov/budget/FY2024FiscalDigest/FY24-Fiscal-Digest.pdf

[41] Data in this section and Table FXX below were taken from monthly data sheets posted to: Division of Rehabilitation Services, "DORS Caseloads." Available at: https://dors.maryland.gov/consumers/about/stats/Pages/default.aspx. Last accessed: December 15, 2024.

November 2023	39,485
December 2023	40,094
January 2024	39,812
February 2024	39,652
March 2024	40,015
April 2024	40,037
May 2024	40,155
June 2024	39,812
July 2024	N/A
Aug. 2024	35,455
Sept. 2024	34,218

e. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the activities discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Implementation of federal SSA grant award.** In FY 2024, MDOD was awarded a $4.5 million grant from SSA's ICAP (see above for description of the grant application). Starting October 1, 2024, MDOD began work on implementing grant activities for this 5-year project. MDOD anticipates providing further updates on these grant activities in future annual progress analysis reports.
- **Implementation of ACL federal grant funds.** In September 2024, MDTAP received $700,000 in competitive grant funding from ACL (see above for description of the grant application). MDTAP began work implementing activities funded by this grant award in FY 2024. MDTAP anticipates providing further updates on these activities in future annual progress analysis reports.

II.G. HEALTH AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

MDOD supports services and programs that improve the health and behavioral health of people with disabilities through:

- Participation in health and behavioral health policy activities, *discussed further in this section*;
- Oversight of activities and collaborations designed to improve the physical activity and well-being of people with disabilities, *discussed further in this section;* and
- Monitoring of State policies regarding health and behavioral health, *discussed further in this section.*

a. MDOD FY 2024 policy activities

Advisory councils. MDOD staff participated in multiple boards, commissions, and councils related to health and behavioral health including: the Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC); the Commission on Behavioral Health Treatment and Access to Care (BHC); the Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention; the Maryland Health Equity Commission; the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board; the Maryland Trauma Informed Care Commission; the Oversight Committee on Quality of Care in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities; the Maryland Overdose Response Advisory Council; the Task Force on the Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances; and the Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control's Health and Wellness Council.

988 Policy Academy.[42] MDOD has been working with other agencies to expand access to services such as 988 that can respond to emotional health crises that do not require involvement from law enforcement. In 2024, MDOD, BHA, and DDA began participating in The Link Center Policy Academy, funded by the federal Administration of Community Living (ACL). The purpose of the policy academy is to help make mental health treatment and supports more available to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (including autism), brain injury, and cognitive disabilities. Over the course of 2024 activities related to this work included learning best practices and implementation strategies from other states, conducting listening sessions with Maryland stakeholders including individuals with lived experience, family members, and providers, and developing a strategic plan. This work will continue through 2025

---

[42] U.S. Administration for Community Living, "Supporting Crisis Services to Ensure Optimal Coordination for Children and Adults with Co-Occurring Cognitive Disabilities and Behavioral Health Conditions Policy Academy - Request for Application for State Participation," December 20, 2023. Available at: https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/ATRC/The%20Link%20Center%20Policy%20Academy%20State%20Application_Released%20Dec%202023.pdf. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

where the focus will be on ensuring providers are equipped with information and resources to serve this population. Efforts will focus on expanding training opportunities for crisis responders, strengthening data collection, and streamlining information and resource sharing. The state will continue to leverage the relationships built through the policy academy to ensure Maryland is designing programs and policies that are equitable, accessible, and person-centered.

Grant Review and Evaluation MDOD assisted the Maryland Veterans and Military Families Administration by participating as a grant reviewer for the administration's Service Animal Grant program. MDOD also assisted the Department of Health's Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control office by reviewing and providing feedback on their Disability Inclusion in Health Promotion Programs – LHD Funding Opportunity before the request for applications was published for community participation. MDOD also participated as a grant reviewer for this funding opportunity.

b. Access to recreational activities

Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund.[43] In the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation establishing the Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund to provide sailing, boating, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, and surfing opportunities for "individuals with disabilities" and "service-disabled veterans." Although the fund has not yet received State appropriations, once funded MDOD will administer the fund and may use the fund to provide a grant of up to $40,000 in a fiscal year to a grantee to provide specified boating opportunities for individuals with disabilities or service-disabled veterans.

Accessible playgrounds. MDOD continues to build upon efforts to expand physical health and wellness opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities, including our work on inclusive playgrounds. Over the course of 2024, in partnership with the Developmental Disabilities Council, MDOD continued to meet with integral partners to discuss the importance of inclusive playgrounds, including presentations to the Ways and Means Committee during the 2024 legislative session, the Department of Natural Resources, and Maryland State Department of Education. MDOD met with several community parks and recreation directors to review schematic and plans for upcoming playground projects and provided insight on ways to make their designs more inclusive. MDOD presented at several conferences and meetings including the Maryland Commission on Disabilities, the Mid-Atlantic ADA conference, and Interagency Commission on School Construction Facility Planner meeting. MDOD continued to research and build content for an interactive inclusive playground website, which is projected to launch before the end of 2025.

---

[43] 2024 Maryland Law, Chapters 193 and 194, adding Maryland Human Services Article, Subtitle 11. Bill text available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/SB0597?ys=2024RS&search=True. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

Beach access for people with disabilities. In partnership with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), MDOD met with concerned citizens around beach access issues for people with disabilities. MDOD met with DNR, community advocates, and the town council to discuss the issue at length and determine some interim solutions. MDOD has compiled funding resources to help address beach access concerns.

c. Health and behavioral health services in Maryland

Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT).[44] In the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation introduced by Governor Moore, requiring that an Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) Program be established in each county by July 1, 2026. "AOT" means a specific regimen of outpatient treatment for a "serious and persistent mental illness" to which an individual is ordered by the court to adhere. The legislation established standards and procedures for "assisted outpatient treatment" (AOT) programs, petitions, treatment plans, rights of respondents, hearings, criteria for orders, court orders, and order modifications. The legislation assigned MDH the responsibility of oversight of these programs and requires BHA to submit a report on AOT programs by December 1 of each year. The legislation does not take effect until July 1, 2025, and terminates June 30, 2030. MDOD will include discussion of AOT programs in future annual progress analysis reports.

Public Behavioral Health System Administrative Service Organization (ASO) Vendor Change. In February of 2024, the Department of Health announced Carelon Behavioral Health as the new Administrative Service Organization for the Public Behavioral Health System. Carelon's contract began March 1, 2024, to allow for a 10 month transition period. Carelon will serve as the ASO from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2029, with the potential option to extend until December 31, 2031.

States Advancing All-Payer Equity Approaches and Development Model (AHEAD). On November 1, 2024 the Governor, Maryland Department of Health, and the Health Services Cost Review Commission announced the states participation in the federal States Advancing All-Payer Equity Approaches and Development Model, known as the AHEAD Model. This approach builds upon the Total Cost of Care model and will promote health care transformation both by improving population health and lowering costs across all payers—including Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers. Over the course of the next year Maryland will work with stakeholders to plan for the model which will begin January of 2026.

---

[44] 2024 Maryland Law, Chapters 703 and 704, adding Maryland Criminal Procedure Article 16-204(c) and Maryland Health-General Article, Subtitle 6A. Bill text available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/SB0453?ys=2024rs. Last accessed: December 30, 2024.

d. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the health and behavioral health activities discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Identification of meaningful metrics of health and behavioral health**. MDOD anticipates working with MDH, BHA, and DDA to identify metrics that meaningfully measure the health and behavioral health outcomes for people with disabilities. These metrics will be incorporated into future annual progress analysis reports.
- **Supported decision making in health care.** Starting in 2022, Maryland has required that people with disabilities have access to supported decision making when making decisions about critical aspects of their lives, including decisions about medical treatment. MDOD anticipates monitoring the implementation of this requirement in health care settings.
- **Direct care workforce shortage.** There is a national shortage of both direct care workers in health care and direct support professionals (DSPs) who often provide services offered in HCBS programs. Maryland agencies are exploring ways to increase the larger health care workforce. MDOD anticipates including updates of these efforts in future annual progress analysis reports.

II.H. FAMILY SUPPORTS

Almost all of the policies and programs discussed throughout this report have the potential to impact the families of people with disabilities, particularly if family members are acting as caregivers for the individual. Specific activities that focus on family caregivers are discussed below.

a. FY 2024 policy activities

Maryland Commission on Caregiving. MDOD serves on the Maryland Commission on Caregiving (MCC) which is housed under the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS). The MCC serves as Maryland's official advocate for informal caregivers. It is charged with gathering and addressing caregiver concerns, coordinating respite services across the state, and making recommendations on policies that positively impact caregivers. In FY24, the MCC provided testimony on several bills that impact family caregivers and coordinated successful events throughout the state during National Family Caregiver Month in November.

Family Caregiver Survey. In 2023, DHS and the MCC in collaboration with the University of Maryland, School of Social Work released a survey that asked caregivers of adults over age 18 to share what they believe are the priorities for supports and services. Data analysis of the survey results began in FY 2025 and will be discussed in greater detail in future annual progress analysis reports.

b. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the activities discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Respite services.** The lack of respite services is a commonly cited concern among family caregivers. MDOD anticipates continuing to monitor State efforts to expand access to respite services.
- **Self-directed services.** As noted in section "II.A. Community Living" MDOD anticipates monitoring updates to self-directed services provided through DDA HCBS waivers. As these updates include policies relating to paid family caregivers, MDOD anticipates including special consideration of impact on these caregivers in future annual analysis reports.
- **Direct care workforce shortages.** As noted in section "II.G. Health and Behavioral Health," Maryland agencies have been working on strategies to address the shortage of direct care workers. This shortage has a particular impact on family caregivers, who may have to fill in when professional caregivers are not available. MDOD anticipates

monitoring Maryland's work on this issue with consideration of how this shortage impacts families of people with disabilities.

II.I. PUBLIC SAFETY, EMERGENCY RESPONSE, AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

MDOD supports public safety, emergency response, and emergency management practices for people with disabilities through:

- Participation in related policy activities, *discussed further in this section*;
- Staffing the Ethan Saylor Alliance, *discussed further in this section*; and
- Monitoring related programs and activities occurring around the state, *discussed further in this section*.

a. MDOD FY 2024 policy activities

Emergency planning exercises. In FY 2024, MDOD staff participated in several drills and exercises which tested plans for transportation, evacuation, weather disasters, and public health emergencies.

Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Workgroup. The purpose of the Maryland Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Work Group (AAIWG) is to identify, update, and share best practices and current activities to help Maryland prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from active assailant incidents. The AAIWG's multidisciplinary membership includes subject matter experts from across the State. MDOD serves on two subcommittees; the Emergency People Search and Recovery and the Community Outreach.

9-1-1 Board. The first such group in the U.S., the Maryland 9-1-1 Board is a diverse team of 9-1-1 system subject matter experts and stakeholders brought together by the Governor to coordinate the enhancement of county 9-1-1 systems across Maryland. MDOD represents the accessibility and language needs of Maryland residents and visitors on this board.

Disability, Independence, Access and Language (DIAL) State Coordinating Function (SCF). MDOD is the lead agency for the DIAL SCF for disaster preparedness, response and recovery coordinated by Maryland Department of Emergency Management. The DIAL SCF provides subject matter experts, assistive technology, disaster response iPads, survivor case management and other services during disaster activations.

b. Ethan Saylor Alliance

The Ethan Saylor Alliance. The Ethan Saylor Alliance was created by law in April of 2015 and was aimed at providing increased training for members of law enforcement and other public service entities on specific needs of those with developmental and intellectual disabilities. The premise of the Alliance is that self-advocates take the central role in educating and informing the community in regard to the specific needs of those with disabilities. The alliance, which is

staffed by MDOD, includes self-advocates, family members, disability related professionals, educators and members of law enforcement. In FY24, the Alliance funded six organizations through its Community Impact Grants process which involved over 275 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and over 300 law enforcement personnel throughout the state. Other activities included compensating self-advocates who support current law enforcement training efforts and funding focus groups of people with disabilities to evaluate the current model curriculum for law enforcement and make recommendations on changes.

c. Public safety, emergency response, and emergency management activities

Purple Alert Program.[45] In the 2024 legislative session, the General Assembly passed legislation that required the Department of State Police (DSP) to establish a Purple Alert Program. The Purple Alert Program provides a system for rapid dissemination of information to assist in locating a "missing person." For the purposes of the Purple Alert Program, a "missing person" was defined in legislation as someone with "a cognitive impairment, mental disorder, intellectual or developmental disability, or brain injury." DSP must (1) provide training to local law enforcement agencies on the guidelines and procedures to be used to handle a report of a missing person; (2) provide assistance to a local law enforcement agency, as necessary, to assist in the safe recovery of a missing person; (3) recruit public and commercial television and radio broadcasters, local volunteer groups, and other members of the public to assist in developing and implementing a Purple Alert; (4) consult with the State Highway Administration to establish a plan for providing information relevant to a Purple Alert to the public through the dynamic message sign system located across the State; and (5) consult with MSDE to develop a program that allows high school students to assist in the search for a missing person.

d. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the activities discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Next Generation 911 (NG911) Technologies.** Maryland has been transitioning 911 emergency services to "Next Generation 911" (NG911). NG911 technologies allow people to transmit data files such as videos or photos to emergency services. These alternative forms of sharing real-time information make emergency services more

---

[45] Chapter 739 of 2024, adding Maryland Public Safety Article, section 3-608. Bill text available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb0195?ys=2024RS. Last accessed: December 30, 2024.

accessible to people who have trouble communicating. MDOD anticipates providing updates on these efforts in future annual progress analysis reports.

- **Self-identification to law enforcement and emergency responders.** State agencies and legislators continue to explore ways to help people with disabilities quickly and effectively convey their disability-related needs (including communication needs) to law enforcement and other first responders. MDOD anticipates providing updates on these efforts in future annual progress analysis reports.

II.J. ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

MDOD supports access to telecommunications, digital information, and technology for people with disabilities through:

- Administering the Telecommunications Access of Maryland Program, *discussed further in this section*;
- Administering the Maryland Assistive Technology Program, =, *discussed further in this section*; and
- Participating in accessible information and communications technology (ICT) activities, *discussed further in this section*.

a. Telecommunications Access of Maryland

Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM). TAM is an agency within MDOD. In collaboration with the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR), TAM provides telephone access and other services for persons with certain disabilities. TAM administers the Maryland Relay Service and the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications equipment distribution program.

Maryland Relay. Maryland Relay is a free public service that allows people who are otherwise unable to use a standard telephone to both make and receive phone calls. The service is primarily used by people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, DeafBlind, or have difficulty speaking. Maryland Relay includes a number of options including:

- Traditional Relay (TTY), which allows a person who is Deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech disabled to type conversations to a relay agent who then reads them to the other caller.
- Additional and Alternative Relay services, such as Spanish-language TTY, Braille TTY for DeafBlind users who wish to communicate via Braille, and Video Relay Services for callers who wish to communicate via American Sign Language
- Real-Time Text (RTT), which transmits instant text conversations between callers
- Remote Conference Captioning (RCC), which provides captioning during conference calls
- Captioned Telephone, which lets hard of hearing users read the words spoken by callers

Data for TAM Services. In FY 2024, Maryland Relay provided 166,970 Telecommunications Relay Service minutes, 33,901 Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) minutes and 20,475 Remote Call Captioning minutes.

Table J1: Maryland Relay Data

	Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) minutes	Remote Call Captioning (RCC) minutes	Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) minutes
FY 2020	169,536.65	12,375	243,261.44
FY 2021	129,549.93	80,975	281,011.98
FY 2022	82,297.56	81,765	229,333.12
FY 2023	72,443.20	31,745	167,522.76
FY 2024	33,901.75	20,475.00	166,970.39

Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT). As part of its Maryland Relay service, TAM also operates MAT, which provides free equipment to qualified individuals who have trouble using a standard telephone. In addition to the individuals described above who use Maryland Relay, MAT services are also available to people who have hearing, vision, speech, mobility, developmental, or cognitive difficulties.

MAT Data. In FY 2024, MAT received 543 applications for accessible equipment and provided 1,315 devices.

Table J2: Maryland Accessible Telecommunications Data

	Number of people applying for accessible equipment	Number of accessible telecommunications devices distributed
FY 2020	368	430
FY 2021	241	387
FY 2022	236	409
FY 2023	500	969
FY 2024	543	1,315

Funding for TAM. The Universal Services Trust Fund (USTF) pays for TAM (including the Maryland Relay Service and the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications program, which operates the DeafBlind Communication Facilitator Service), the Senior Call-Check program

(operated by the Department of Aging), and the NFB-Newsline Reading Program (operated by the Maryland State Library Agency).

The Comptroller collects fees for this purpose through a surcharge on all accounts rendered for a communications service, determined annually by MDOD and the Public Service Commission (PSC). The surcharge is set annually at an amount that is no higher than necessary to generate sufficient revenues to fund the costs of the programs for the following fiscal year, given the current fund balance.

As of FY 2024, the current fee was set at 5 cents per month. This rate of 5 cents per month was established in 2016, when it was reduced from 11 cents per account. Recent legislative additions to USTF-funded programs, including the addition of the Senior Call Check Program and the DeafBlind Communication Facilitator Service, have increased program costs. In December 2024, to ensure adequate funding, the PSC approved a surcharge increase to 9 cents, effective at the start of FY26. While current rates cover existing program costs, TAM continues to monitor funding sufficiency.

b. Maryland Assistive Technology Program

Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP). Assistive technology (AT) is critical to helping children and adults with disabilities obtain education, maintain employment, and live safely at home. MDOD's assistive technology program, MDTAP, provides a number of AT services including:
- **AT lending libraries.** MDTAP maintains several AT lending libraries, which allow individuals with disabilities to borrow AT on a short-term basis, whether to borrow prior to purchase or as a temporary replacement for broken or missing AT.
- **AT demonstrations and device consultations.** MDTAP provides both in-person and virtual opportunities for people with disabilities to discuss technology needs, review settings where the technology is needed, and try out different devices.
- **3D printed AT Fabrication.** MDTAP provides free 3D printed low tech AT devices and provides limited customized prints of AT when applicable.
- **Information and referral services.** MDTAP provides information about AT and provides referral to AT-related and disability-related services. MDTAP also maintains public resources about funding for AT, such as the Home Modifications Directory and the Vehicle Funding Guide.
- **Training about AT.** MDTAP provides general training and webinars that raise individuals' awareness of AT.

MDTAP's services are available statewide and can be accessed by any Marylander with a disability, including those who cannot currently receive (or are ineligible to receive) services from other agencies such as DORS or DDA. MDTAP also provides information and training to families, educators, health care professionals, and others who support people with disabilities.

Data for MDTAP AT activities. Due to funding limitations (described below) MDTAP has had to reduce some of its activities in FY 2024 as compared to FY 2023.

Table J3: MDTAP AT Activity Data

	Number of individuals borrowing devices	Number of individuals participating in device demonstrations	Number of individuals receiving information & referral	Number of individuals receiving trainings about AT
2020	83	67	714	353
2021	132	109	570	851
2022	162	217	1,038	866
2023	210	221	1,060	1,357
2024	166	149	1,030	882

AT reuse and donation. MDTAP maintains the Maryland High-Tech Assistive Technology Reuse (MATR) Center, the state's high-tech AT reuse center. MDTAP takes in donations of assistive technology devices, and then cleans, refurbishes, repairs and donates them back out to Marylanders with disabilities in need. MDTAP also has a 3-D Printing Lab that allows MDTAP to print customized, low-tech aids free of charge for individuals with disabilities.

Data on MDTAP AT reuse and donation. In FY 2024, MDTAP re-focused efforts internally on expanding the impact of MATR. MATR was able to receive donations into and out of its distribution facility at levels not previously experienced, with one donation of (new and gently used) low vision devices estimated at $100,000 in value. MDTAP anticipates continued increases in the high tech AT redistribution data in future fiscal years as it continues to develop public and private partnerships to facilitate equipment donations into and out of the program. Additionally, MDTAP invested more staff time and expertise into growing the AT Fabrication (3D printing program), which resulted in a significant increase in the number of items printed and individuals served.

Table J4: MDTAP AT Reuse Data

	Number of devices donated to MATR	Number of devices donated to individuals by	Number of items printed in the 3-D Printing Lab

		MATR	
2020	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
2021	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
2022	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
2023	**55**	34	6
2024	381	168	294

Federal funding for MDTAP. MDTAP was formed in 1989 to implement federal grant funds authorized under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act (P.L. 100-407); the grant was most recently reauthorized in 2022 under the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act (Pub. L. 117-263, § 5401 *et. seq.*, referred to in this document as the "AT Act"). MDTAP has been, and currently remains, 100% funded by federal funds. Historically, the annual award for Maryland has increased by approximately $15,000 per year. The federal grant increases have not kept pace with MDTAP's increasing costs, including personnel costs, some of which have increased 20% in recent years due to state employee pay increases. Since 2020, budget constraints have required MDTAP to reduce statewide services contracts and limit purchases for the AT lending libraries, leading to fewer AT services delivered to people with disabilities. MDOD is exploring ways to make MDTAP more financially secure, and MDOD anticipates providing updates on these efforts in future annual progress analysis reports.

Home modification resources. A significant need in Maryland is funding of home modifications for people with disabilities. During FY 2024, MDTAP put together a comprehensive training, "Funding Home Modifications," which served as a companion session to the Home Modifications Directory made available on MDTAP's website. The Directory and the presentation included information on local and state programs, tax incentives, processes for requesting home assessments, aging-in-place, and smart home technology to support independence and safety. This session was also recorded and shared on the MDTAP YouTube channel, with an additional 42 views since posting.

AT for transitioning youth. In 2024, MDTAP continued to offer its comprehensive training, "From High School to Beyond: AT in the Transition Process." This session was hosted live, and covered topics including evaluating for changes in AT needs, keeping AT, and/or funding new AT regardless of post-school services. The session participants included teachers, parents, and service providers. After the live session, a recording was posted on the MDTAP YouTube channel with an additional 32 views. This session continues to be highly requested and customized, including variations presented to Parents Place of Maryland and Maryland School for the Blind.

Equivalent and Non-Visual Access Accountability for K-12 Schools Act of 2022.[46] In the 2022 legislative session, the General Assembly passed that required each local school system to provide a student with disabilities access to digital tools that (1) provide equivalent access to and are independently usable by the student and (2) enable the student to acquire the same information, participate in the same interactions, and access the same services as a student without disabilities, with substantially equivalent ease of use. The bill took effect July 1, 2023. In FY24, MDTAP, working with MSDE, and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), developed four education modules to aid local schools in meeting these new legal requirements.

c. Information and Communications Technology Accessibility

MDTAP's Information Technology (IT) Accessibility Initiative. MDTAP's IT accessibility Initiative supports State agencies to meet Maryland's Non-Visual Access standards. The purpose of the initiative is to improve policies and practices in State IT procurement and ensure equal access to State government IT for all Marylanders with disabilities. MDTAP staff provide consultations, technical assistance, accessibility training, and evaluations of technology platforms.

Table J5: Maryland ICT Data.

The table below displays the number of ICT activities that the IT Accessibility Initiative has participated in directly as an activity under MDTAP. As of 2023, the DoIT Office of Accessibility has taken the lead on ICT procurement and resolving accessibility incidents and may have completed additional numbers outside of the listed activities.

	Number of State agencies requesting accessibility consultation services	Number of State agencies resolving accessibility incidents	Number of State ICT Accessibility Trainings	Number of State ICT Procurement Accessibility Trainings
2020	20	15	3	2
2021	27	19	16	7
2022	19	17	30	5
2023	21	18	34	2
2024	23	18	32	4

---

[46] Chapter 215 of 2024, amending Maryland Education Article, Section 7-910. Bill text available at: https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/SB0617?ys=2022RS. Last accessed: December 30, 2024.

Maryland Accessibility Officer Initiative. MDTAP and DoIT, in collaboration with the Office of State Procurement within DGS, launched the State's first-ever Accessibility Officer Initiative. Staff from every Executive state agency, designated as Accessibility Officers, were invited to attend a training session led by MDTAP to learn more about accessible design and how they can gradually lead its implementation at their agency. These Accessibility Officers will serve as vital points of connection between different state departments, teams, and external entities, to help state agencies build more accessible websites and digital services.

d. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the activities discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on:

- **Implementation of ACL federal grant funds.** In September 2024, MDTAP received $700,000 in competitive grant funding from ACL (see above for description of the grant application). MDTAP began work implementing activities funded by this grant award in FY 2024. MDTAP anticipates providing further updates on these activities in future annual progress analysis reports.

II.K. STATE GOVERNMENT ACCESSIBILITY

MDOD supports people with disabilities' access to State government programs, activities, and services through:

- Operation of the Access Maryland Program, *discussed further in this section;* and
- Helping ensure State websites are accessible, *discussed under section II.J. Technology*.

a. Access Maryland

MDOD's Access Maryland Program. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all programs, activities, and services of state and local governments be accessible to people with disabilities. To ensure that government buildings and services are consistent with the ADA's physical accessibility standards, Access Maryland provides funding and project assistance to make accessibility upgrades to Maryland's state-owned facilities, university buildings, and parks. MDOD receives requests from State agencies, prioritizes the requests and makes recommendations for funding, and provides oversight throughout the design and construction phases.

Data from Access Maryland. In FY 2024, Access Maryland awarded $1.9 million for projects. Twenty-four projects were awarded funding by Access Maryland, and 3 State-owned properties gaining increased accessibility by the end of the fiscal year.

Table K1: Access Maryland Project Data

	Number of projects awarded funds by Access Maryland	Number of projects completed during the year	Number of State properties with increased access as a result of projects completed during the year*
FY 2020	16	8	5
FY 2021	28	5	1
FY 2022	27	10	2
FY 2023	25	9	5
FY 2024	24	4	3

*Some Access Maryland projects are multi-year and/or involve multiple State properties, so the number of properties with improved accessibility does not necessarily match the number of projects completed in a reporting year.

b. Considerations for the next State Disabilities Plan

As part of the next State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will continue to report on the activities discussed above in this section. Additionally, we anticipate increased attention on the following areas:

- **Plain language requirements.**[47] In July 2024, Governor Moore signed an executive order requiring that the state provide written materials from the state government in plain language. MDOD is participating in efforts to implement this Executive Order, including advocating for plain language materials to be made available in other languages as well as English. MDOD anticipates providing updates on these efforts in future annual progress analysis reports.
- **Voter access.** In November 2024, Maryland voters participated in local and national elections. MDOD anticipates working with advocates and other partners to examine the experiences of voters with disabilities and anticipates including discussion of voter access in future annual progress analysis reports.

---

[47] Executive Order 01.01.2024.25. Available at:
https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/61/EO%2001.01.2024.25%20Maryland%20Plain%20Language%20Initiative%20(1).pdf. Last accessed: December 27, 2024.

III.A. INTERAGENCY DISABILITIES BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Maryland Human Services Article, Section 7-128

The Board consists of the following members:

    (1)   the Secretary of Disabilities;

    (2)   the Secretary of Aging, or the Secretary's designee;

    (3)   the Secretary of Commerce, or the Secretary's designee;

    (4)   the Secretary of Budget and Management, or the Secretary's designee;

    (5)   the Secretary of Health, or the Secretary's designee;

    (6)   the Secretary of Housing and Community Development, or the Secretary's designee;

    (7)   the Secretary of Human Services, or the Secretary's designee;

    (8)   the Secretary of Labor, or the Secretary's designee;

    (9)   the Secretary of Planning, or the Secretary's designee;

    (10)   the State Superintendent of Schools, or the Superintendent's designee;

    (11)   the Secretary of Transportation, or the Secretary's designee;

    (12)   the Deputy Director of the Division of Children and Youth of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services, or the Deputy Director's designee;

    (13)   the Director of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, or the Director's designee;

    (14)   the Secretary of Juvenile Services, or the Secretary's designee;

    (15)   the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services, or the Secretary's designee;

    (16)   the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services, or the Executive Director's designee; and

    (17)   representatives from any other unit of State government that the Governor designates.

III.B. STATE DISABILITIES PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Maryland Human Services Article, Section 7-132

(a)   The State Disabilities Plan shall provide for the coordination of support services that:

(1)   ensure compliance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act and other relevant federal and State provisions intended to protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities;

(2)   are necessary for individuals with disabilities to achieve maximum participation in the mainstream of the community in the most integrated setting possible; and

(3)   address, on a statewide basis, the improvement of:

(i)   the capacity of communities to support individuals with disabilities with personal attendant care and other long–term care options that are self–directed;

(ii)   the availability of accessible, integrated, and affordable housing options;

(iii)   reliable transportation options;

(iv)   employment and training options, including self–employment and noncongregant competitive opportunities available in an integrated environment in which there are individuals with and without disabilities;

(v)   somatic and behavioral health options;

(vi)   accessible and universally designed technology;

(vii)   support services for children, youth, and their families to enable them to achieve successful learning;

(viii)   family support services, including respite care; and

(ix)   crime control, public safety, and correctional services that appropriately take into account the needs and rights of individuals with disabilities.

(b)   The State Disabilities Plan shall assess the provision of and resources for support services for individuals with disabilities.