



State Disabilities Plan

Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Progress Analysis

November 26, 2025

**Secretary, Carol A. Beatty
Deputy Secretary, Anne Blackfield**

Submitted pursuant to Maryland Human Services
Article, §7-113(f)

Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	2
<i>Fiscal Year 2025 Activities and Updates</i>	3
A. Community Living, Housing, and Family Supports	3
B. Public Safety, Emergency Response, and Emergency Preparedness	12
C. Health, Behavioral Health, and Recreation	14
D. Transportation	17
E. Employment	18
F. Children and Transition-Age Youth	20
G. Technology and Telecommunications	22
H. Government Accessibility	26
<i>Appendix 1: Fiscal Year 2025 – 2027 State Disabilities Plan</i>	27

Introduction

The Maryland Department of Disabilities was established in 2004 as the main agency that represents people with all types of disabilities in State government. The Maryland Department of Disabilities advises the Governor on disability issues and works with federal, regional, and local governments to improve support, services, and programs for individuals with disabilities.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities manages several programs, including:

- A program for constituent services.
- The Maryland Assistive Technology Program and the Assistive Technology Loan Program.
- The Attendant Care Plus Program.
- The Telecommunications Access of Maryland and programs for accessible telecommunications devices and information.
- Access Maryland.

In 2023, the Maryland Department of Disabilities also took over the role of overseeing the State Coordinator for Autism Strategy. In 2025, new laws were passed by the General Assembly, officially establishing the Maryland Assistive Technology Program and the Office of Disability Employment Advancement and Policy within state law.

The Secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities leads the Interagency Disabilities Board, which includes representatives from various state agencies. The Interagency Disabilities Board's responsibilities, including its purpose and members, are detailed in sections of the Maryland Human Services Article (§§ 7-127 through 7-131). A key role of the Interagency Disabilities Board is to create the State Disabilities Plan. The Secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities is responsible for reviewing and approving this plan and then submitting an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly. This report analyzes the state's progress in carrying out the State Disabilities Plan and its goals, as required by Maryland Human Services Article § 7-113. This report serves as that annual progress analysis.

The Interagency Disabilities Board approved a new State Disabilities Plan for Fiscal Years 2025 through 2027. The State Disabilities Plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1 and is available online on the Maryland Department of Disabilities website. ([Link to State Disabilities Plan.](#))

Fiscal Year 2025 Activities and Updates

A. Community Living, Housing, and Family Supports

1. Attendant Care Program

The Maryland Department of Disabilities' Attendant Care Program helps people with severe chronic and permanent physical disabilities pay for attendant (personal) care services. These services are self-directed and participants can choose their own service providers. Services can be in the home, school, workplace, or out in the community. The program is open to Maryland residents over age 18 who are working, looking for work, in post-secondary education programs, are living in nursing homes, or are at risk of having to move into a nursing home.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Updates

Starting on July 1, 2025, the Attendant Care Program expanded the supports and services that can be paid for by the program. As part of this change, the program is changing its name to the Attendant Care Plus Program. The Attendant Care Plus Program will pay for “ongoing additional supports.” Ongoing additional supports can be services or equipment that help a person remain independent in their home or community. Examples of ongoing additional supports include: transportation, durable medical equipment, assistive technology, and costs related to having a service animal. Another change that started July 1, 2025 is that all participants will use an online OneStop Portal to manage their enrollment in the program and request payment for their attendant care and ongoing additional supports.

During Fiscal Year 2025, staff in the Maryland Department of Disabilities worked to prepare for the change to the Attendant Care Plus Program. This work included changing the program's regulations and writing policies and guidance for participants on how to request payment for ongoing additional supports. They also made changes to the OneStop portal.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data

- Total people served by the Attendant Care Program: 110
- People served who were:
 - o At risk for living in nursing home or other institution: 69
 - o Working, looking for a job, or going to post-secondary school: 41
- People on the Attendant Care Program waiting list*: 14
- People on the Attendant Care Program registry***: 282

* The Attendant Care Program wait list is for people who have been screened and have been found eligible for the program, and are now waiting for space to become available in the program.

** The Attendant Care Program registry is for people who are interested in the Attendant Care Program but have not yet been found eligible for the program.

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Maryland Department of Disabilities plans to:

- Hold public webinars, develop easy-to-use guidance, and create videos to explain the program changes and show participants how to use the OneStop Portal.
- Make more changes to the OneStop Portal to fix any problems with the website and make it easier for the participants and program staff to use.
- Increase the number of people in the program, especially people who need attendant care while they are working, looking for work, or going to school.

2. Money Follows the Person Peer Outreach and Supports

The Money Follows the Person Program helps people with disabilities and older adults who are living in nursing homes move to a home of their choice in the community. Maryland's Money Follows the Person Program is run by the Maryland Department of Health, with help from the Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Maryland Department of Aging.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities works with six local groups to provide Peer Outreach and Support services for people living in nursing homes who want to move back into their communities. Through these Peer Outreach and Support services, staff who have gone through similar transitions themselves help others by:

- Sharing their personal experiences with the transition process.
- Explaining what community-based services and long-term support options are available.
- Making referrals to appropriate resources.
- Helping people connect with available assistance.
- Supporting individuals in successfully moving back into their communities and re-establishing their lives.

Peer Outreach and Support services are available everywhere in the state, except for the nine counties on the Eastern Shore.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Updates

In Fiscal Year 2025, some Peer Outreach and Support staff faced difficulties getting into some nursing homes to provide the services. They also said that helping nursing home residents move out and live in the community was challenging due to two main problems: a lack of affordable housing and long waits for approval for services that help pay for peoples' care at home.

During Fiscal Year 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities successfully found a contractor to offer Peer Outreach and Support services in Baltimore City. Before this, two different organizations were temporarily covering the area. The Maryland Department of Disabilities tried the same process for the Eastern Shore but was not able to find a suitable provider.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities continues to support the six contractors by providing necessary training and technical assistance, and acting as a link to the Maryland Department of Health. Staff from the Maryland Department of Disabilities and their contractors regularly attend Money Follows the Person stakeholder meetings to explore better ways to help people move into the community

Calendar Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data

- People who moved from nursing homes into the community through the Money Follows the Person Program: 62 (Calendar Year 2024)
- Peer Outreach Support Services (Fiscal Year 2025):
 - o People in nursing homes who met with Peer Outreach and Support staff: over 1,000
 - o People who received referrals to Options Counseling: 371
 - o People who received referrals for ongoing peer support: 184

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Maryland Department of Disabilities will:

- Continue to find ways to provide Peer Outreach and Support services to the people living in nursing facilities on the Eastern Shore.
- Work with the Maryland Department of Health to improve the transition process for nursing facility residents.

3. Maryland Department of Disabilities Housing Program

The Maryland Department of Disabilities partners with other State and local agencies to operate five housing programs for people with disabilities. The Maryland Department of Disabilities manages the waitlist for the housing programs. In Fiscal Year 2025, around 4,000 people were on the waitlist for affordable, accessible housing.

The housing programs are:

- *The Affordable Apartments program* previously known as the Weinberg Apartments are affordable, accessible and integrated apartments for people with disabilities with incomes at or below 30% of area median income (such as those receiving SSI or SSDI).
- *Section 811*. The Section 811 Program is run by the Maryland Department of Disabilities, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Maryland Department of Health. This program helps people with disabilities pay rent in certain apartment buildings. The program is for people with disabilities who are age 18-62, receive Medicaid for long-term services, and have an income at or below 30% area median income.
- *Bridge Subsidies for Money Follows the Person participants*. The Bridge Subsidy program is part of the Money Follows the Person Program. The Money Follows the Person program pays for program participants' rent for up to the first three years after their move into the community. After three years, the person may get help from their local Public Housing Authority, such as getting a Housing Choice Voucher or living in public housing. This program is currently paused while MDH considers expansion.
- *Developmental Disabilities Administration Rent Subsidy*. This program is a collaboration among the Developmental Disabilities Administration, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Maryland Department of Disabilities. Starting in Fiscal Year 2024, the Maryland Department of Disabilities started providing technical assistance and managing the waitlist for the program. People must be receiving at least one service from the Developmental Disabilities Administration in order to qualify for this program, which provides assistance with paying for rent in the community.
- *Community Choice Homes*. This program provides affordable rental homes in Montgomery County for people with disabilities who have extremely low income.

Fiscal Year 2025 Housing Program Data

	Total Units	Occupied Units or Subsidies Granted	Units in lease-up
Weinberg Apartments	44	40	4
Section 811 Units	319	297	22
Money Follows the Person Bridge Subsidy	N/A	34	N/A
Developmental Disabilities Administration Rent Subsidy	N/A	21	10 searching
Community Choice Homes	36	33	3

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Maryland Department of Disabilities will:

- Continue to work with its partners to find additional funding (such as federal or private grants) to create more affordable housing units or fund more rent subsidies.
- Ensure that the people participating in the housing programs get the case management services that they need.
- Analyze data on affordable, accessible housing needs, including data about the calls that Maryland Department of Disabilities receives for housing assistance.

4. Family Caregiver Commission

The Maryland Department of Disabilities serves on the Maryland Commission on Caregiving which is housed under the Maryland Department of Human Services. The Maryland Caregiver Commission 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 Fiscal Year 2024, the Maryland Caregiver Commission issued a statewide survey to identify family caregiver needs. During Fiscal Year 2025, the University of Maryland analyzed the data. The Maryland Department of Disabilities anticipates sharing the results of this analysis in the next Annual Progress Analysis.

5. Advisory Boards and Interagency Workgroups

As part of its Community Living, Housing, and Family Supports work, the Maryland Department of Disabilities serves on:

- Autism Waiver Advisory Board
- Developmental Disabilities Quality Advisory Council
- Developmental Disabilities Council
- Oversight Committee on Quality of Care in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities
- Maryland State Independent Living Council Board
- Maryland Partnership for Affordable Housing
- Maryland Commission on Caregiving
- Maryland Veterans' Trust Fund Board

6. Partner Updates

Maryland ABLE Program (State Treasurer). The Maryland ABLE Program allows people with disabilities to save money to be used for disability expenses. The money in ABLE accounts does not count against the person if they are applying for benefits programs with income limits, such as Medicaid or SSI. Money in ABLE accounts is not taxable.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Updates

In Fiscal Year 2025, Maryland ABLE added several new features for account holders based on customer feedback. The program was able to shorten hold times on deposits, launch phone applications for access to both the Maryland ABLE account and the prepaid card accounts, and provide additional saving options to assist account holders with saving money.

As a result of the passage of the federal bill H.R. 1 in July 2025, features for ABLE account holders that were due to sunset at the end of 2025 were made permanent. These features include the ability to:

- Roll over funds from a college savings account to an ABLE account without penalties,
- Make contributions above the standard contribution limit for account holders who are working subject to federal guidelines,
- Take advantage of the Savers Credit.

In addition, H.R.1 changed the calculation for determining the annual standard contribution limit which will potentially increase the amount people can put in their account in future years.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data

- Total number of funded accounts as of June 30, 2025: 7,782
- Total Assets Under Management (AUM) as of June 30, 2025: \$122.7 million

Maryland Department of Health Home and Community Based Service programs. The Maryland Department of Health operates multiple programs that provide long term services and supports in the community for people with disabilities and people with chronic or complex health conditions. These programs are overseen by the Medicaid agency, the Behavioral Health Administration, and the Developmental Disabilities Administration within the Maryland Department of Health.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Updates

- *Electronic PASRR System.* Starting on September 3, 2024, the Maryland Department of Health switched to a new electronic system for collecting and responding to preadmission screening and resident review (PASRR) submissions. This PASRR screening helps prevent people with serious mental illness or developmental disabilities from being unnecessarily admitted to nursing homes. Maryland's Utilization Control Agent, Telligen, now handles PASRR Level I requests on behalf of the Maryland Department of Health through their Qualitrac Provider Portal. Qualitrac is an online application that allows healthcare providers to submit requests and required documents. By using this portal, the PASRR Level I form is now an interactive electronic questionnaire instead of a paper form or PDF. This electronic system improves the accuracy of screenings, reduces errors, and makes the process more transparent.
- *Developmental Disabilities Administration challenges.* During Fiscal Year 2025, people who receive services from the Developmental Disabilities Administration were worried about changes to their service policies (especially for self-directed services) and possible budget cuts in Fiscal Years 2025 and 2026. Although some of these concerns were addressed in Fiscal Year 2025, the Developmental Disabilities Administration is still looking for ways to work and communicate more effectively with stakeholders. The agency also started combining its three different service waivers into one called the Community Pathways waiver. More updates on this will be shared in the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Progress Analysis report.
- *Brain Injury Waiver.* The Brain Injury Waiver program is due for its renewal application in Fiscal Year 2026, which marks its fifth year. Over the past few years, there have been several important changes to the program. In Fiscal Year 2024, the Centers for Medicare

and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved an update that made more people eligible, specifically those living in nursing facilities. In July 2025, CMS approved another change that increased the amount of money people could have in savings from \$2,000 to \$2,500. Then, in August 2025, an amendment was approved that added two new types of residential services. All these changes were made to help more people with brain injuries in nursing facilities access the program and to prevent those already in the program from having to move back into nursing facilities. Additionally, the Behavioral Health Administration is actively working to find new service providers. The Maryland Brain Injury Waiver is scheduled to be renewed in July 2026. The program will have 165 available slots in Fiscal Year 2026.

- *Home- and community-based services wait lists.* In December 2024, the Maryland Department of Health sent the General Assembly a report that describes its efforts to reduce the wait lists for its home- and community-based waiver programs for people with disabilities. This report was required by the “End the Wait Act” passed in 2022. This report contains detailed information and data about the wait lists. ([Link to the Report on the End the Wait Act.](#))
- *Federal changes from H.R.1.* On July 4, 2025, the U.S. Congress passed a bill (H.R. 1) that will significantly change federally funded health programs. These changes will include new restrictions on who qualifies for Medicaid among some immigrant groups, new requirements for work, more frequent checks to see if people still qualify for Medicaid, and a new option for home and community-based care for individuals who don't need to be in a nursing facility. These changes will be put into effect over the next few years, and their impact will be analyzed and reported in future annual progress reports.

Fiscal Year 2025 Data on Medicaid Home- and Community Based programs for people with physical disabilities

The enrollment data provided in this section can also be found on the Maryland Medicaid DataPort website operated by the University of Maryland, Baltimore County’s Hilltop Institute. ([Link to Maryland Medicaid DataPort.](#)) The waitlist data can be found in the Maryland Department of Health’s 2024 Report on the End the Waitlist Act. ([Link to the Report on the End the Wait Act.](#))

- People served by Community First Choice: 23,569
- People enrolled in the Community Options Waiver: 4,519
- People served by the Community Personal Assistance Services Program: 940
- People enrolled in the Rare and Expensive Case Management (REM) Program: 4,902

- People enrolled in the Medical Day Care Services Waiver: 5,360
- People enrolled in the Home Care for Disabled Children Under a Model Waiver: 219
- People on waitlists for Medicaid-operated home- and community-based waiver programs:
 - o Community Options Waiver (on July 1, 2025): 22,349
 - o Home Care for Disabled Children on a Model Waiver (in August 2024): 183
 - o The Medical Day Care Services Waiver does not have a waitlist

Fiscal Year 2025 Data on the Brain Injury Waiver (Behavioral Health Administration)

- People served by the Brain Injury Waiver: 123
 - o The Brain Injury Waiver does not have a waitlist

Fiscal Year 2025 Data on the Developmental Disabilities Waivers (Developmental Disabilities Administration)

- People served by the Community Pathways Waiver: 15,122
- People served by the Community Supports Waiver: 3,678
- People served by the Family Supports Waiver: 340
 - o People on the waitlist for the Developmental Disabilities Administration waivers in August 2024: 4,130

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). The Maryland State Department of Education administers the Waiver for Children with Autism (usually called the “Autism Waiver”) on behalf of the Maryland Department of Health.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Updates

The Maryland State Department of Education now checks individuals’ applications within a month of them being added to the Autism Waiver Registry. This is to make sure that those who are moved from the Registry to the Autism Waiver Waitlist meet the basic requirements. The Maryland State Department of Education is working with the Maryland Department of Health to put the Autism Waitlist Registry, Waitlist, and "Wave" process into an electronic system called LTSSMaryland by November 2025. The "Wave" process is when the Maryland State Department of Education invites people to apply for the Autism Waiver, but this process is currently paused because of budget problems. The Autism Waiver has both a waitlist and a registry for people who are interested in enrolling in the waiver but have not yet been found eligible.

Fiscal Year 2025 Data for the Autism Waiver

- People served by the Autism Waiver: 1,936
- People on the Autism Waiver Waitlist and Registry: 5,111

B. Public Safety, Emergency Response, and Emergency Preparedness

1. Ethan Saylor Alliance

The Maryland Department of Disabilities supports the Ethan Saylor Alliance, which was created by law in 2015. This Alliance trains law enforcement and other public service groups on the specific needs of people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. The main idea behind the Alliance is that individuals with disabilities themselves play a key role in educating the community about their needs. MDOD staffs this alliance, which includes self-advocates, family members, disability professionals, educators, and law enforcement. In Fiscal Year 2025, the Alliance gave money to seven organizations in nine counties and Baltimore City through its Community Impact Grants. Other activities included working with a contractor to update the training materials for law enforcement, paying self-advocates for their help with current law enforcement training, and buying sensory kits and communication tools to give to law enforcement.

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Ethan Saylor Alliance will:

- Finalize and share the updated curriculum for law enforcement training.
- Create videos of self-advocates to include in the law enforcement training.
- Hold a statewide public safety event.
- Conduct more outreach and engagement activities to increase participation in the law enforcement training.
- Issue more Community Impact Grants.

2. Emergency Response Activities

Next Generation 911 (NG911) Technologies. Maryland is updating its 911 emergency services to "Next Generation 911" (NG911). This new technology lets people send things like videos or photos to emergency services, making it easier for those who have trouble communicating to get help. In Fiscal Year 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Maryland 9-1-1 Board created a campaign called "Help Responders Help You." This program will teach people with disabilities and their families how to create an emergency health profile on a smartphone or

online. This information can then be shared with first responders when they call for help. The training will be available anytime through social media images, a flipbook, and a training video.

Eric's ID Law. Eric's ID Law, which became effective on October 1, 2025, was passed during the 2025 legislative session. This law allows individuals with hidden disabilities, such as intellectual or developmental disabilities, to choose to add a butterfly symbol to their driver's license or State identification card. This symbol helps law enforcement and others recognize that the person has a hidden disability. The main goal of this law is to improve interactions between law enforcement and people with hidden disabilities who might have difficulty communicating or understanding instructions. The Maryland Department of Disabilities supported the Maryland Department of Transportation in preparing for this law by attending meetings and reviewing drafts of the instructions for how to request the butterfly symbol on identification cards. The Maryland Department of Disabilities also created a one-page flyer for law enforcement partners with tips on how to interact with someone who has a butterfly logo on their driver's license or state identification card.

3. Emergency Preparedness Activities

Emergency planning exercises. In Fiscal Year 2025, staff from the Maryland Department of Disabilities took part in several drills and exercises. These drills tested plans for problems like transportation issues, severe weather, and public health emergencies. The Maryland Department of Disabilities informs disability communities about chances to join these drills and exercises as volunteer "survivors," and helps connect these volunteers with the organizations hosting the events.

Disability, Independence, Access and Language (DIAL) State Coordinating Function. The Maryland Department of Disabilities leads the Disability, Independence, Access and Language (DIAL) State Coordinating Function. During an emergency or disaster, the Maryland Department of Disabilities provides experts, assistive technology, iPads for disaster response, help for survivors, and other services. In the past year, this unit has been activated for severe weather, floods, and transportation incidents. In addition to working at the DIAL State Coordinating Function desk in the State's emergency operations center, Maryland Department of Disabilities staff may also be assigned to the Joint Information Center during a disaster.

4. Advisory Boards and Interagency Workgroups

As part of its Public Safety, Emergency Response, and Emergency Preparedness work, the Maryland Department of Disabilities serves on:

- Active Assailant Interdisciplinary Workgroup; Emergency People Search and Recovery and the Community Outreach subcommittees
- 9-1-1 Board
- The Link Center’s 988 Policy Academy
- 3-1-1 Legislative Workgroup
- 9-1-1 Specialist Recruitment and Retention Legislative Workgroup
- Baltimore Urban Area Security Initiative Whole Community Committee
- State Disaster Recovery Fund Advisory Committee
- Maryland Emergency Response System
- School Safety Sub-Cabinet

5. Partner Updates

Purple Alerts. Purple Alerts are official alerts sent out by the Maryland State Police and local law enforcement when someone with a cognitive disability, like an intellectual or developmental disability, is reported missing. These alerts, which became law on October 1, 2024, help tell police and the public that a person with a disability is missing and might need help. From October 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, 25 Purple Alerts were issued. The Maryland Department of Disabilities is working with the Maryland State Police to help make sure police departments are aware of Purple Alerts.

Federal funding changes. At the end of Fiscal Year 2025, changes in federal funding from the Federal Emergency Management Administration started to impact the funding received by the Maryland Department of Emergency Management. More information about how these changes will affect emergency management and emergency preparedness programs for people with disabilities will be shared in future annual reports.

C. Health, Behavioral Health, and Recreation

1. Health and Behavioral Health Activities

988 Policy Academy. In 2024, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, along with the Behavioral Health Administration and the Developmental Disabilities Administration, joined The Link Center Policy Academy. The goal of the 988 Policy Academy was to improve crisis support services, such as the 988 call line, for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (including autism), brain injuries, and cognitive disabilities.

During 2024, 988 Policy Academy activities included learning best practices from other states, holding discussions with Maryland residents with disabilities and their families, and service

providers, and creating a strategic plan. In Fiscal Year 2025, the focus shifted to increasing training for crisis responders, improving how data is collected, and making information and resources easier to share. Staff from the Maryland Department of Disabilities helped review and give feedback on training materials for mobile crisis teams, which focused on understanding and supporting individuals with these disabilities. They also participated in a virtual training for these teams, highlighting general disability considerations and how to work with partners for smooth transitions. The State plans to continue using these connections from the policy academy to ensure that Maryland's programs and policies are fair, accessible, and centered around the individual.

Grant Review and Evaluation. Staff from the Maryland Department of Disabilities served as a grant reviewer for: (1) the Maryland Veterans and Military Families Administration's Service Animal Grant program; and (2) the Maryland Department of Health's Disability Inclusion in Health Promotion Programs – Local Health Department Funding Opportunity.

Regulation Review and Monitoring. As part of its legal requirement to review regulations that impact people with disabilities, staff from the Maryland Department of Disabilities:

- Attended stakeholder meetings and reviewed the Behavioral Health Administration's proposed updates to its regulations for community behavioral health providers (COMAR 10.63).
- Reviewed the Behavioral Health Administration's draft proposed regulations for Assisted Outpatient Treatment.
- Reviewed the Maryland Health Care Commission's draft proposed amendments for regulations related to preauthorization of health care services (COMAR 10.25.17).
- Reviewed and provided feedback on the Pharmacy Board's regulations related to accessible prescription labels for blind, low vision, and print disabled individuals (COMAR 10.34.43).

2. Accessible Playgrounds

The Maryland Department of Disabilities is working to create more opportunities for people with disabilities to be physically active and healthy, which includes developing inclusive playgrounds. Throughout 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, in collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Council, met with partners to support and teach people about inclusive playgrounds. This included a session at the Maryland Recreation and Parks Associations annual conference and a presentation to the City of Kensington's Town Council. In October, the Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Developmental Disabilities Council launched Maryland's first website dedicated to inclusive playgrounds. This website provides information on the benefits and features of inclusive playgrounds, and it includes an interactive map showing inclusive playgrounds across the state. The website is still accepting suggestions

for new playgrounds to add to the map, and the Maryland Department of [Disabilities](#) and the Council will continue to review these recommendations for inclusion.

3. Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund

The Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Disabled Veterans Boating Fund was created by law in 2024 to give people with disabilities and veterans with service-related disabilities opportunities to go sailing, boating, kayaking, canoeing, paddleboarding, and surfing. Although the fund hasn't received state money, once it does, the Maryland Department of Disabilities will manage it. The Maryland Department of Disabilities will be able to give grants of up to \$40,000 each year to organizations that offer these boating activities. In 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities focused on gathering information from funding announcements, grant applications, and review panels to start writing the rules for how this funding will be used.

4. Advisory Boards and Interagency Workgroups

As part of its Health, Behavioral Health, and Recreation work, the Maryland Department of Disabilities serves on:

- Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC)
- Commission on Behavioral Health Treatment and Access to Care (BHC)
- Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention
- Maryland Health Equity Commission
- Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board
- Maryland Overdose Response Advisory Council
- Task Force on the Responsible Use of Natural Psychedelic Substances
- Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Control's Health and Wellness Council
- State Advisory Council for Serious Illness
- State Coordinating Council

5. Partner Updates

Fiscal Year 2025 Data from Maryland Department of Health's Medicaid Administration

- Number of people receiving Medicaid services: 1,921,071 (including adults and children)
- Number of people receiving Medicaid services in community-based settings: 23, 569

Fiscal Year 2024 Data from Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration*

- Number of people served by the public behavioral health system:
 - o 276,358 individuals (mental health services)
 - o 114,485 individuals (substance use disorder services)
- *Fiscal Year 2024 is the most current data available)

D. Transportation

1. Adapted Vehicle Pilot Program

The Adapted Vehicle Pilot Program started on October 1, 2025, after being passed into law during the 2025 Maryland Legislative Session. This program requires the Maryland Department of Disabilities to help arrange for private individuals or organizations to donate adapted vehicles to drivers who: (1) use a mobility aid and (2) could not be approved for a vehicle loan through the Maryland Assistive Technology Loan Program due to low income. During Fiscal Year 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities began planning for the Adapted Vehicle Pilot Program and will provide updates in future annual progress analyses.

2. Transportation and Travel Webinars

Webinars. In Fiscal Year 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities started a quarterly online seminar series called "From Here To There." These seminars discuss transportation issues and concerns that are important to people with disabilities.

Travel training. The Maryland Transit Administration, supported by staff from the Maryland Department of Disabilities, began work to start "travel training" programs for people with disabilities living in the areas served by the Maryland Transit Administration. These programs are designed to help people with disabilities learn about and use various forms of public transportation, giving them more options for getting around their communities.

Transportation plans. The Maryland Department of Disabilities assists the Maryland Department of Planning in reviewing detailed development plans from Maryland cities and counties. Staff from the Maryland Department of Disabilities provided feedback and suggestions on how these transportation plans might impact the people with disabilities in the communities.

3. Advisory Boards and Interagency Workgroups

As part of its Transportation work, the Maryland Department of Disabilities serves on:

- Maryland Connected and Automated Vehicle (MDCAV)
- Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (MBPAC)
- Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB)
- State Coordinating Committee for Health and Human Services Transportation (SCCHST).

4. Partner Updates

Fiscal Year 2025 Data from Maryland Department of Transportation's Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Paratransit (MobilityLink) and Call-a-Ride Services

- Number of people certified for Mobility paratransit: 34,038
 - Average daily paratransit rides delivered*: 4,904
 - Percent of rides delivered on-time*: 94.5%
 - Average daily number of Call-a-Ride rides delivered: 5,776
- *Paratransit rides and on-time performance data is only for Mobility rides and does not include Call-a-Ride rides

Fiscal Year 2025 Data from Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Paratransit Services

- Number of Maryland residents certified for paratransit: 20,407
- On-time service (system-wide): 90%

E. Employment

1. State as a Model Employer

State as a Model Employer (SAME) Initiative. The SAME Initiative is a nationwide effort to ensure that state governments set an example for private businesses by improving how they hire, recruit, and promote people with disabilities in their State jobs. In the fall of 2023, a Maryland team, led by the Maryland Department of Disabilities and including representatives from the Lieutenant Governor's office, the Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Budget Management, and the Maryland Department of Labor, was chosen by the National Governor's Association (NGA) to attend a summit focused on inclusive disability employment. In January 2024, Maryland was again selected by the NGA to receive more in-depth support to create a plan for Maryland's SAME initiative. This planning continued through Fiscal Year 2024, leading to a new law, the Model Employer Act, which was signed in April 2025. This law created the Office

of Disability Employment Policy Advancement, effective in 2025, and the State as a Model Employer Initiative, which will start on July 1, 2026.

2. Employment Activities

Disability hiring programs. The Maryland Department of Disabilities is actively working with employers to help them hire people with disabilities by providing training and resources. The Maryland Department of Disabilities has also supported the creation of a Neurodiversity Internship program with Northrop Grumman, which started in Baltimore and has since expanded to other areas of the state. Additionally, the Maryland Department of Disabilities has helped expand the Autism Society of Maryland’s Autism Hiring Program to new locations in Anne Arundel, Montgomery, and Baltimore counties, building on the original program in Howard County.

Maryland Workforce Exchange. Throughout Fiscal Year 2025, MDOD collaborated with the Department of Labor to improve the Maryland Workforce Exchange platform, making it easier for job seekers with disabilities to connect with interested employers. Updates on this work will be shared in the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Progress Analysis.

3. Advisory Boards and Interagency Workgroups

As part of its Employment work, the Maryland Department of Disabilities serves on:

- Governor’s Workforce Development Board, including the Access and Equity Workgroup
- Division of Rehabilitation Services’ Maryland Pathways to Partnerships Advisory Council
- Maryland Department of Health’s Employed Individuals with Disabilities workgroup
- Direct Workforce Professional Workgroup Think Tank
- Association for Persons in Supported Employment Lunch with Leaders

4. Partner Updates

Fiscal Year 2025 Data from Maryland State Department of Education (Division of Rehabilitation Services)

- Vocational Rehabilitation Services (average per month)
 - o Adults (age 25+) served by DORS: 11,302
 - o Youths (age 14-24) served by DORS: 7,839
- Other services (average per month)
 - o Youths served through Pre-Employment Training Services (Pre-ETS): 6,897

- Adults served through the Independent Living for Older Blind Adult Program: 959
- Waiting list and new referrals (average per month)
 - People on the waiting list for VR services: 2,765
 - New referrals for VR (all ages): 1,950
 - New referrals for Pre-ETS: 806
 - New referrals for ILOB: 214

Fiscal Year 2025 Data from Maryland Department of Labor

- Number of people who self-identified as having a disability looking for work using the Maryland Workforce Exchange website: 10,318
- Number of job seekers with self-identified disabilities using America’s Job Centers services: 326

F. Children and Transition-Age Youth

1. Disability Innovation Fund Grant

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities received \$9.5 million in federal money over five years from the U.S. Department of Education's Disability Innovation Fund (DIF). With this funding, the Maryland Department of Disabilities is leading a joint effort with several organizations, including the Maryland State Department of Education, the Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Developmental Disabilities Administration, local education agencies, the University of Maryland, and Parents Place of Maryland. The goal of this project is to create, test, and evaluate a tool that will help share student data. This tool aims to improve connections, better coordinate services, and measure how well students find jobs after leaving school.

2. Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program Grant

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities, along with its partners Mathematica and Colgate University, received a grant from the federal Social Security Administration's ICAP program. This funding was meant for a study using Medicaid data to identify children who might qualify for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The goal was to see if reaching out to these families and helping them apply for SSI would increase the number of SSI awards and improve their outcomes. The grant was given in October 2024, and work began. However, due to changes in federal priorities, the Social Security Administration ended the grant in April 2025. The Maryland Department of Disabilities appealed this decision but was

unsuccessful and is now looking for other ways in partnership with the Governor's Office on Children to fund the continuation of this work.

3. Education and Post-Secondary Education Transition Activities

Participation in the Blueprint Special Education Work Group. The Maryland Department of Disabilities was part of the Blueprint Special Education Work Group. This group was formed by the Maryland State Department of Education and met regularly starting in Fiscal Year 2024 and continuing into Fiscal Year 2025 to talk about how to improve special education in schools and to better prepare students for college and work as part of the focus of the Blueprint on college and career readiness.

Support of endorsements. The Maryland Department of Disabilities supported the Maryland State Department of Education in its creation of special "Endorsements" for students who receive a Maryland Certificate of Program Completion. These endorsements are in three areas: (1) Post-secondary Education; (2) Career and Work Readiness; and (3) Community and Citizenship. The Maryland State Department of Education has started testing this program and plans to roll it out statewide within three years. The Maryland Department of Disabilities also organized presentations and meetings with the Maryland State Department of Education to inform the disability community about these changes, and they regularly attend meetings with the Maryland State Department of Education and local education transition coordinators.

State Agency Transition Collaborative (SATC). The Maryland Department of Disabilities continues to support the State Agency Transition Collaborative (SATC). The SATC created a Transition Checklist, which is updated and shared every year with the Maryland State Department of Education. This checklist is then given to local transition coordinators and others to help them access important information for planning transition from school to post school.

4. Advisory Board and Interagency Workgroups

As part of the Children and Transition-Age Youth work, the Maryland Department of Disabilities serves on:

- ENOUGH Act Access to Benefits workgroup
- State Agency Transition Collaborative
- State Coordinating Council
- Governor's Children's Cabinet
- Blueprint Commission on Special Education

5. Partner Updates

2024-2025 School Year Data from Maryland State Department of Education's Special Education Program:

- Number of students receiving special education services ages 3-21: 122,441
 - o Percent of students receiving special education services: 13.8%
- Number of students exiting special education services: 11,500
 - o Percent of students returning to general education: 11%
 - o Percent leaving school with a diploma: 46.1%
 - o Percent leaving school with a certificate: 6.8%
 - o Percent leaving school due to turning age 21: 0.5%
 - o Percent recorded as dropping out: 13%
 - o Percent leaving special education for other reasons: 23.4%
- 4-year graduation rate for students with disabilities: 69.98%
- Percent of time students in special education ages 5-21 spent in classrooms learning alongside nondisabled peers:
 - o More than 80% of the time: 73.9%
 - o 40-79% of the time: 9.3%
 - o Less than 40% of the time: 11.1%

G. Technology and Telecommunications

1. Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP)

The Maryland Department of Disabilities oversees the Maryland Assistive Technology Program, which provides a number of assistive technology services. Assistive technology are devices that help people with disabilities learn, work, and live safely at home. The Maryland Assistive Technology Program's services are available to any Marylander with a disability, including those who cannot get services from other agencies such as the Division of Rehabilitation Services or the Developmental Disabilities Administration. The Maryland Assistive Technology Program also provides information and training to families, educators, health care professionals, and others who support people with disabilities.

The Maryland Assistive Technology Program offers the following services

- Short-term loans of assistive technology devices.
- Assistive technology information, demonstrations, consultations, and training.

- 3D printing of low-tech or custom assistive technology items.
- Information resources including the Home Modifications Directory, the Statewide Vehicle Funding Guide, and the Hearing Aid and Hearing Assistive Technology Funding Guide.

The Maryland Assistive Technology Program also runs a program called the Maryland High-Tech Assistive Technology Reuse (MATR) Program. MATR takes donations of used assistive technology and donates them back out to Marylanders with disabilities in need.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Updates

In 2025, the Maryland Assistive Technology Program officially became a state law (SB208). This law made official the activities that were already allowed under the federal 21st Century Assistive Technology Act; the new law also created a way for the program to charge for some of its services. This will allow the program to meet a statewide need by providing evaluations for assistive technology, personalized training on how to use it, and services to check and fix digital accessibility issues.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data

- People who borrowed AT: 203
- People who received AT demonstrations: 215
- People who received trainings about AT: 1,271
- People who received information about AT: 1,035
- Items printed by the 3-D Lab: 192
- Items donated to MATR: 144
- Items MATR donated to people with disabilities: 97

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Maryland Assistive Technology Program will:

- Offer services that it can charge for, in addition to the free activities covered by its federal grant.
- Find new sources of funding, including private grants, so that the program can continue to offer more services.

2. Information and Communications Technology Accessibility Initiative

The Maryland Assistive Technology Program's Information Technology (IT) Accessibility Initiative helps State agencies follow Maryland's standards for non-visual access. The goal is to improve how the Maryland State government buys IT and make sure all Marylanders with disabilities have equal access to State government IT. Staff from the Maryland Assistive Technology Program offer advice, technical help, accessibility training, and evaluate technology platforms.

*Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data**

- Number of State agencies requesting accessibility consultation services: 25
- Number of State ICT Accessibility Trainings: 25
- Number of State procurement consultations: 37
- Number of completions of Accessibility eLearning Modules: 850

*This information details tasks carried out by MDTAP staff. Since 2023, the Department of Information Technology's Office of Accessibility has been responsible for overseeing purchases of accessible technology and fixing accessibility issues, and they might have done more work in these areas.

3. Assistive Technology Loan Program (ATLP)

The Assistive Technology Loan Program is a program within the Maryland Assistive Technology Program that helps people with disabilities get low-interest financial loans so they can buy assistive technology, adapted and non-adapted vehicles, and home modifications for accessibility.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Updates

In September 2024, the Maryland Assistive Technology Program received a \$700,000 grant from the federal Administration on Community Living. This money will be used to make it easier for people to get hearing assistance technology through lending libraries, and to provide more information and funding for hearing aids and other assistive listening devices. As part of this grant, the Assistive Technology Loan Program created and shared a guide called the "Hearing Aid and Hearing Assistive Technologies Funding Guide," which is available to programs and individuals throughout Maryland.

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Assistive Technology Loan Program changed its loan agreement. This change means that a portion of the interest earned on loans that the program guarantees will now

be returned to the program. This new arrangement ensures that the Assistive Technology Loan Program earns interest on the loans it backs, while also making sure that the partner lender continues to earn the same amount of interest on all loans they help facilitate with the program's guarantee.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data

- Number of loan applications received: 110
- Number of loans approved: 75
- Number of loans made: 36
 - o Total \$ amount of new loans made: \$1,099,572.53
- Number of active loans: 193
 - o Total \$ amount of active loan balances: \$3,640,785.30

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Assistive Technology Loan Program will look for additional sources of funding, including private grants.

4. Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM)

Telecommunications Access of Maryland, a part of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, works with the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay to operate Maryland Relay. This is a free public service that helps people who can't use a regular phone to make and receive calls. It does this by using sign language interpreters or technology that turns speech into text. This service is mainly for individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, have lost their hearing later in life, are DeafBlind, or have trouble speaking. Besides regular relay services, Maryland Relay also offers Remote Conference Captioning for conference calls and Captioned Telephone Services, which allows hard of hearing users to read what callers are saying.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data

- Number of Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) minutes: 143,017
- Number of Remote Call Captioning (RCC) minutes: 24,675
- Number of Captioned Telephone Service (CTS) minutes: 20,516

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

Maryland Relay is preparing for a new service called Real-time Text (RTT). This new service is being set up because the Federal Communications Commission has decided that RTT will replace the older TTY communication method.

5. Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT)

The Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) Program is offered as part of Maryland Relay services. MAT provides free equipment to qualified individuals who have trouble using a standard telephone.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data

- MAT applications received: 445
- Accessible telecommunications devices given out: 675

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

MAT is looking for new ways to offer more services. The program aims to help more Maryland residents with disabilities get access to telecommunication services and identify areas where these services are still needed.

H. Government Accessibility

1. Access Maryland Program

The Maryland Department of Disabilities' Access Maryland program helps state-owned buildings, university buildings, and parks in Maryland become more accessible for people with disabilities, following ADA standards. State agencies can ask Access Maryland for money and help with these projects. Access Maryland staff works with the Departments of Budget and Management and General Services to get funding and assistance with the projects from start to finish, including design and construction.

Fiscal Year 2025 Program Data

- Money awarded by Access Maryland in FY 2025: \$1,912,000.00
- Projects awarded funding in FY 2025: 5
- Projects completed in FY 2025: 2

Fiscal Year 2026 Program Goals

In Fiscal Year 2026, the Maryland Department of Disabilities will:

- Continue to look for ways to help agencies and universities spend their project money efficiently.
- Work with the Department of Budget and Management to change the way applications are processed and the way in which funds are awarded to agencies and higher education institutions.

2. Language Access Plans and the Language Advisory Board (HB 1473)

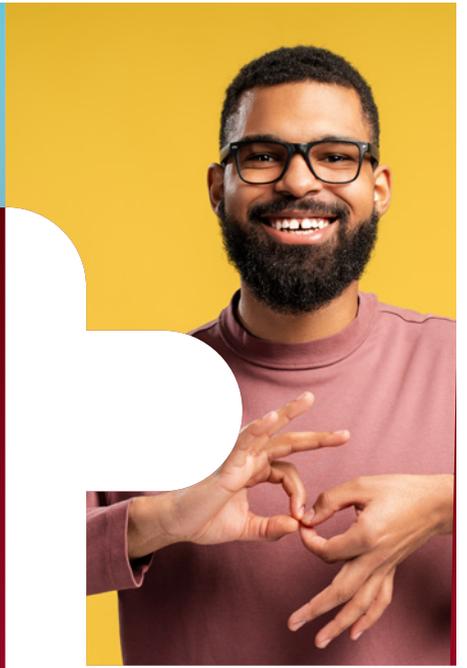
In 2025, the General Assembly passed HB 1473. This law requires all state agencies to create new Language Access Plans. Language Access Plans are plans for how State agencies will make information about government services easy to understand for people with Limited English Proficiency and people with disabilities. The Maryland Department of Disabilities and the Office of Immigrant Affairs will lead a group called the Language Advisory Group. This group will research and create a guide for state agencies to follow when they develop their Language Access Plans. The first meeting of this group is planned for December 2025. Updates on HB 1473 will be shared in future annual progress reports.

3. Plain Language Initiative

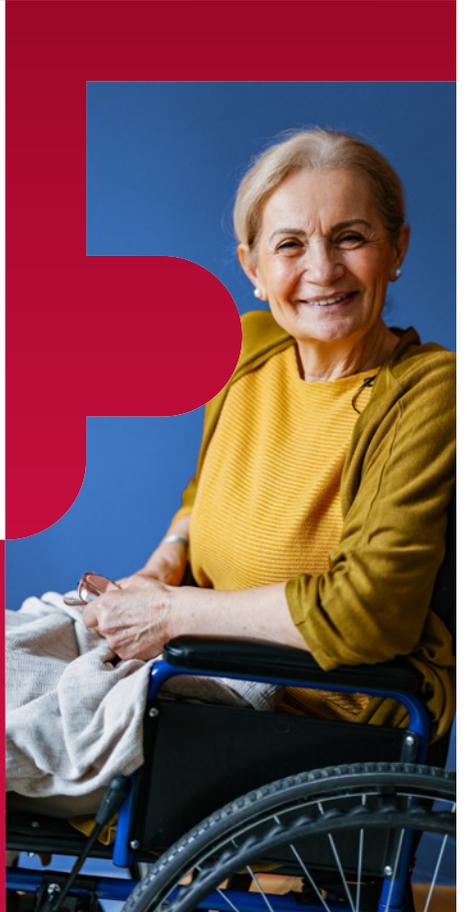
During Fiscal Year 2025, the Maryland Department of Disabilities participated on the committee that created the Maryland Plain Language Plan. The first phase of the plan includes identifying and training staff who will serve as plain language coordinators in each State agency. The Maryland Department of Disabilities' Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) also supported the plain language work through its IT Accessibility Initiative. The IT Accessibility Initiative staff created training about plain language. The basic training is available on Workday Learning for State employees.

Appendix 1: Fiscal Year 2025 – 2027 State Disabilities Plan

Attachment starts on the next page.



Maryland State Disabilities Plan



2025 - 2027

It is with great pride and resolve that I present to you Maryland's State Disability Plan.

With its creation led by the Maryland Department of Disabilities, the only cabinet-level cross-disability department in the nation, this plan will help ensure everything we do promotes accessibility and advances the quality of life for people with disabilities. Our mission is clear: to promote equity, elevate opportunities, and foster an environment where every voice matters. Guided by this vision, we aim to create a Maryland where inclusion is not just a principle but a way of life.



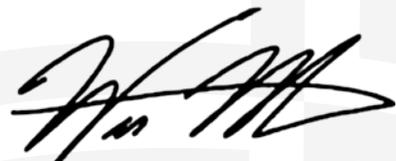
GOVERNOR WES MOORE

The State Disability Plan is built upon four key pillars:

- ▶ **Continuous Service Improvement:** Enhancing the quality and efficiency of services provided to individuals with disabilities.
- ▶ **Building Capacity:** Empowering and equipping our workforce, agencies, and communities to better support the needs of Marylanders with disabilities.
- ▶ **Promoting Equity:** Ensuring that fairness and inclusion remain front and center in all policies and practices.
- ▶ **Leveraging Resources:** Utilizing innovation and collaboration to maximize the impact of our collective work.

At the heart of this plan lies the belief that all Marylanders with disabilities possess the knowledge, talent, and potential to make a difference—not just in their own lives but in the lives of others. It is a reflection of our shared values, our resolve, and our steadfast commitment to ensuring that every Marylander has the tools and opportunities to thrive.

I want to thank every state agency, advocate, and resident who contributed to this effort. Thank you for joining us as we work to build a state where every Marylander has the opportunity to succeed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wes Moore'.

GOVERNOR WES MOORE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Maryland Department of Disabilities	1
Mission statement.....	1
Vision statement.....	1
State Disabilities Plan	2
Agency Work Plans.....	2
Annual Progress Analysis.....	2
State Disabilities Plan Partners.....	2
Parts of the State Disabilities Plan	5
Strategic Pillars	6
Strategic Pillar 1.....	7
Strategic Pillar 2.....	7
Strategic Pillar 3.....	8
Strategic Pillar 4.....	8
Priorities, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators and Outputs	9
Priority 1: Community Integration.....	10
Priority 2: Housing.....	11
Priority 3: Transportation.....	12
Priority 4: Employment.....	13
Priority 5: Health and Behavioral Health.....	14
Priority 6: Technology.....	15
Priority 7: Education.....	16
Priority 8: Family supports.....	17
Priority 9: Safety and Criminal Justice.....	18
Priority 10: Emergency Planning and Climate Change.....	19
Priority 11: Civic Access and Engagement.....	20
Acronyms	21



About the Maryland Department of Disabilities

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is charged with coordinating and improving the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities in the state of Maryland. By working collaboratively with all State government agencies, MDOD provides advocacy and guidance to ensure that the State government delivers services in the most integrated settings possible, develops consistent policies affecting those with disabilities, and considers the diverse needs of all when making decisions which impact Marylanders. In this way, MDOD supports the Moore-Miller Administration's goal of "leaving no Marylander behind."

MISSION

Changing Maryland for the better by promoting equality of opportunity, access, and choice for Marylanders with disabilities.

VISION

The Department of Disabilities is committed to the promise of a Maryland in which all people with disabilities have the knowledge and influence to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others.

State Disabilities Plan

The Department of Disabilities is responsible for leading the Interagency Disabilities Board in creating the State Disabilities Plan. The State Disabilities Plan provides a multi-year framework for delivering, coordinating, monitoring, and improving services, supports, and policies affecting Marylanders with disabilities.



Agency Work Plans

To support the State Disabilities Plan, MDOD will help State agencies develop annual work plans. These work plans will list specific activities that the State agencies will work to accomplish during each State fiscal year (which starts July 1 and ends June 30).

Annual Progress Analysis

Each December, MDOD will report on the progress the State has made in carrying out the State Disabilities Plan during the previous State fiscal year.



State Disabilities Plan Partners

The State Disabilities Plan provides a framework which allows all levels of government and all sectors of the community to coordinate efforts to improve the lives of Marylanders with disabilities, their families and caregivers. The plan is developed in collaboration with State agencies, community members, and other stakeholders.



STATE DISABILITIES PLAN PARTNERS →

INTERAGENCY DISABILITIES BOARD

The State Disabilities Plan is developed by the Interagency Disabilities Board, which is chaired by the Department of Disabilities and consists of the following State agencies: Department of Aging, Department of Budget and Management, Department of Commerce, Department of Health, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Human Services, Department of Juvenile Services, Department of Labor, Department of Planning, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Department of Transportation, Governor's Office for Children, Governor's Office for Crime Control and Policy, Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the State Department of Education. MDOD also works to engage with other State agencies that are not officially part of the Interagency Disabilities Board.

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES AND LOCAL COMMISSIONS

The Maryland Commission on Disabilities (MCOD) serves as the advisory body for MDOD and plays an instrumental role in the development of the State Disabilities Plan. The MCOD includes 19 members appointed by the Governor and representatives from the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates. A representative from the Maryland Alliance of Local Disability Commissions and Committees is among MCOD's members to ensure statewide local perspectives are part of this process.

STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

State and local government agencies have a significant impact on the daily lives of Maryland's communities, including people with disabilities. All government entities, including those that do not specifically serve people with disabilities, can support and assist with implementing the State Disabilities Plan by using it and its supporting documents as reference.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Community-based organizations play a critical role in carrying out the work of the State Disabilities Plan. These organizations support Marylanders with disabilities and their families in a variety of ways, including: providing services; promoting community participation and independent living; and advocating for service and policy improvements, civil rights, systemic change, and social inclusion of people with disabilities. This plan and its supporting documents were developed in consultation with many community-based organizations and, in turn, will prove to be a useful resource to promote joint initiatives between the government and the community.

PRIVATE SECTOR AND PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

The skills, talents and resources of people with disabilities represent untapped potential for the private sector. There is a strong business case for employing people with disabilities, as well as ensuring that businesses' buildings and products are physically accessible to customers with disabilities. Additionally, private organizations have the opportunity to make huge impacts on the lives of people with disabilities through philanthropic partnerships with State and local governments. We hope this document can be a valuable resource to members of the private sector to further engage the support of the disability community and foster increased public-private partnerships.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS, ADVOCATES, AND STAKEHOLDERS

None of this work would be possible without the thoughtful input from members of and advocates for the disability community. MDOD has conducted listening sessions throughout the State to hear directly from the community about their priorities that are reflected in this plan. Additionally, MDOD and our partner agencies continually collect and consider feedback from the disability community through our constituent services, customer surveys, stakeholder advisory groups, and other pathways for sharing concerns, experiences, and recommendations.



Parts of the State Disabilities Plan

The **priorities** are the different areas that the State must focus on to help improve the lives of Marylanders with disabilities. State law lists the priorities that must be included in the State Disabilities Plan. We have also added several additional priorities based on current challenges facing the disability community.

The **strategic pillars** are cross-cutting strategies that all State agencies can use to achieve the objectives in this plan. These strategic pillars will guide the activities the State agencies put in their work plans each year.

The **objectives** are the high-level goals we have set for each of the priorities. The objectives included in this State Disabilities Plan are not exhaustive. The objectives included in this State Disabilities Plan are examples of the types of activities the State will do under the different priority areas. More objectives may be identified by MDOD and its partners as needed.

The **key performance indicators and outputs** are the data or activities that show progress for each priority area. We will collect and share this information each year as part of our Annual Progress Analysis. As with the objectives, the key performance indicators included in this State Disabilities Plan are examples of the types of data or activities we think are important to show progress. More key performance indicators may be added to the Annual Progress Analysis as needed.



STATE DISABILITIES PLAN

Strategic Pillars



STRATEGIC PILLAR 1: **Continuous Service Improvement**

Agencies that provide services for people with disabilities must ensure that these services are user-friendly, coordinated, effective, delivered on time, and are culturally competent. Activities aligned with this strategy should support:

- ▶ **User-friendly processes.** Application processes are clear, streamlined, and do not require unnecessary paperwork. Applications and information about the services are in plain language and in peoples' preferred language. Services are developed in a culturally competent manner.
- ▶ **Coordination.** When an individual with a disability receives multiple services (whether from one agency or from multiple agencies) application processes and service delivery are coordinated to ensure there are no conflicts, duplication, or oversights.
- ▶ **Timeliness.** Applications are processed timely and people begin receiving services as soon as possible. If there are delays, the recipients are kept informed of the reason for the delay and updated on expected start times.
- ▶ **Public awareness.** Information and outreach efforts ensure that people with disabilities are aware of services for which they are eligible.
- ▶ **Stakeholder input.** Service participants and other stakeholders have opportunities to provide meaningful input into policies and processes.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 2: **Building Capacity**

Agencies that provide services for people with disabilities must work to ensure that these services are effective, innovative, and available statewide. Agencies also recognize that programs cannot meet current needs or expand if they do not have sufficient staffing to oversee or deliver services. Activities aligned with this strategy should support:

- ▶ **Effectiveness.** Services are individualized whenever possible and align with what the person with a disability needs and developed in consideration of long-term goals or outcomes.
- ▶ **Innovation.** Agencies approach challenges with creativity and flexibility to the extent possible. Agencies continually seek new ways to improve program quality and address the needs of the disability community.
- ▶ **Statewideness.** Services are available to people in all communities across the state, including in rural areas.
- ▶ **Workforce development.** Agencies seek ways to recruit, retain, and support staff and caregivers. Services are delivered by qualified staff who are appropriately trained.





STRATEGIC PILLAR 3:

Promoting Equity for People with Disabilities

All units of State government must ensure they are complying with and enforcing the federal and State laws that protect the civil rights of people with disabilities. Programs and initiatives should be designed to make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to all parts of society and do not face discrimination, a loss of personal choice and decisionmaking, or disproportionate socioeconomic impacts. Activities aligned with this strategy should protect or improve:

- ▶ **Accessibility.** Government buildings, public services, public digital spaces, and public spaces must be free from physical, technological, and communications barriers that prevent their use by people with disabilities.
- ▶ **Non-discrimination.** Agencies must work to address societal barriers. This also includes protection from harassment based on disability status.
- ▶ **Integration.** Services are delivered in the least restrictive or most integrated setting possible. People with disabilities are able to participate in government services and community activities alongside non-disabled peers.
- ▶ **Autonomy.** Agencies ensure that policies or practices are supporting individual choice, independence, and decisionmaking.
- ▶ **Reducing socioeconomic disparities.** Agencies pursue initiatives that reduce the socioeconomic disparities experienced by people with disabilities as compared to their nondisabled peers, including additional out-of-pocket expenses and lower rates of employment and financial savings.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 4:

Leveraging Resources

To help ensure that programs and initiatives retain sufficient resources, or are able to expand, agencies should find ways to

- ▶ **Resource allocation.** State resources are allocated where they are most needed.
- ▶ **Federal funding.** Agencies supplement State resources by pursuing federal grants or expanding existing programs that receive federal financial support.
- ▶ **Private-public partnerships.** Agencies partner with private sector entities to pool resources and ensure that activities are not being duplicated.
- ▶ **Interagency collaboration.** Agencies pool resources and expertise when developing new initiatives or pursuing outside funding.



STATE DISABILITIES PLAN

Priorities, Objectives, and Key Performance Indicators and Outputs



PRIORITY 1:

Community Integration

Addressing the capacity of communities to support individuals with disabilities in the community through long-term services and supports (home- and community based waivers and State plan services) and other State-led programs (financial supports, financial savings programs, and programs that provide personal care assistance and at-home services).

OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Improving access to services delivered through LTSS and community programs**, including: expanding enrollment in programs, reducing wait lists and service waiting times, improving communications with program participants.
- ▶ **Supporting self-directed options in LTSS**, including: clarifying processes and expanding self-direction options where they aren't currently available.
- ▶ **Supporting diversions and transitions from non-community placements**, including initiatives that help individuals in long-term institutional, hospital, or out-of-state placements.
- ▶ **Ensuring people with disabilities are integrated in the community at all ages**, including monitoring the rates of education opportunities delivered in the least restrictive environment and adult services provided in integrated community settings.
- ▶ **Encouraging workforce development**, including efforts to increase the number of qualified, well-trained workers to provide community-based services.
- ▶ **Planning communities to be accessible to everyone**, including supporting work that promotes inclusive housing, transportation, economic opportunity, and access to public spaces in community infrastructure development.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS

- Data on enrollment, service delivery, and wait lists (if applicable) from home- and community-based and personal care programs operated by BHA, DDA, MSDE, MDOD, and DHS
- Data on ABLE Program accounts
- Data and updates on self-direction in programs operated by MDH and DDA
- Data on people with disabilities living in institutions and transitioning to the community supported through Preadmission Screening and Resident Review and Money Follows the Person programs
- Data from MSDE and MDH on settings in which children and adults with disabilities receive education and support services.
- Data from State and Federal sources on the number of Maryland workers in jobs that support people with disabilities with activities of daily living
- Updates from MDOA and MDP on inclusive community planning effort



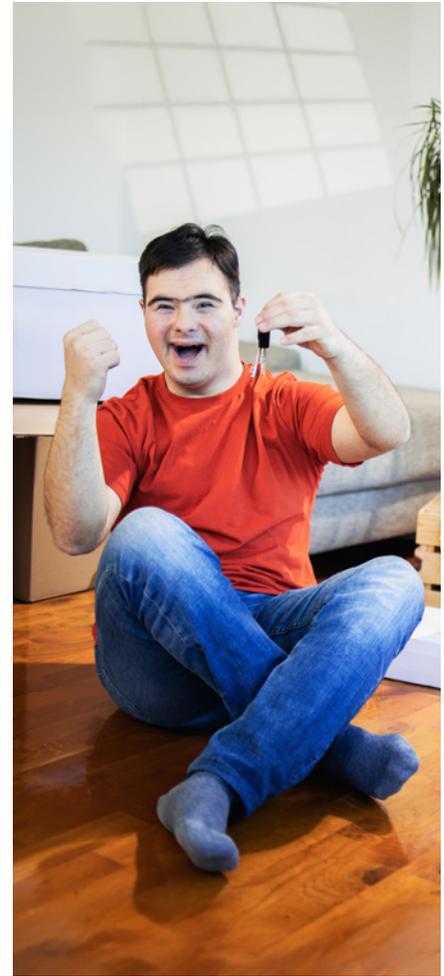


PRIORITY 2: **Housing**

Addressing the availability of accessible, integrated, and affordable housing options and housing modifications.

OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Increasing access to affordable, integrated housing for people with disabilities**, including through support of projects that build new units or set aside units for people with disabilities using universal design alongside non-disabled neighbors.
- ▶ **Increasing financial assistance for renters and home buyers with disabilities**, including support of programs that provide rental assistance, tax incentives, and financial planning that help people with disabilities afford housing.
- ▶ **Supporting access to home modifications**, including the support of programs that perform environmental assessments, provide funding for home modifications, or conduct outreach about available resources.
- ▶ **Providing resources individuals need to find or remain in the housing of their choice**, including effective case management and housing referral services.



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS



- Data and updates on affordable housing programs for people with disabilities operated by DHCD and MDOD
- Data and updates from the Money Follows the Person program operated by MDH and MDOD
- Data and updates on programs that assist people with disabilities to modify their homes operated or overseen by MDOD, DHCD, and the local Area Agencies on Aging
- Data and updates from MDOD on improvements to housing-related resource referrals and case manager trainings



PRIORITY 3: **Transportation**

Addressing reliable transportation options and supporting individuals' ability to travel throughout their communities.



OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Providing effective paratransit and public transportation**, including travel training courses, and ensuring that services are reliable, on-time and available statewide, and identifying and removing barriers to people with disabilities' access to public transportation.
- ▶ **Ensuring access to sidewalks and other pathways that are safe and free from barriers**, including supporting efforts to ensure that public pathways can be accessed by people who use mobility and other assistive devices.
- ▶ **Supporting access to resources needed by drivers with disabilities**, including funding options and vehicle adaptations.
- ▶ **Monitoring new transportation-related resources and technologies for potential impact on people with disabilities**, including educating people with disabilities about new resources and technologies that can assist with travel and promoting equal access to new transportation technologies.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS

- Data from MDOT and WMATA on ridership and on-time performance in paratransit and public transportation systems
- Data from MDOD on financial assistance for vehicle adaptations
- Updates on MDOT, stakeholder, and local government initiatives to improve sidewalks and pedestrian safety
- General updates on Maryland's adoption of new travel and transportation resources and technologies



PRIORITY 4: **Employment**

Addressing competitive employment and training options that are available in an integrated environment in which there are individuals with and without disabilities.

OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Expanding access to employment services**, including reducing wait lists for vocational rehabilitation services and ensuring that other state and local career services are accessible to and being utilized successfully by job seekers with disabilities.
- ▶ **Ensuring access to career-readiness training**, including ensuring that students with disabilities have equitable access to career-readiness resources in high school including the broad array of CTE, apprenticeships and other programs.
- ▶ **Identifying and removing barriers to private and public sector employment**, including promoting access to assistive technology in the workplace, helping employers recruit qualified job candidates with disabilities, and providing benefits counseling for job seekers with disabilities.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS

- Data on pre-employment and employment services offered through DORS, BHA and DDA
- Data on job seekers with disabilities in the Maryland Workforce Exchange, America's Job Centers, and other programs operated by MDOL
- Data on the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Program from MDH
- Data on the number of State of Maryland employees with disabilities





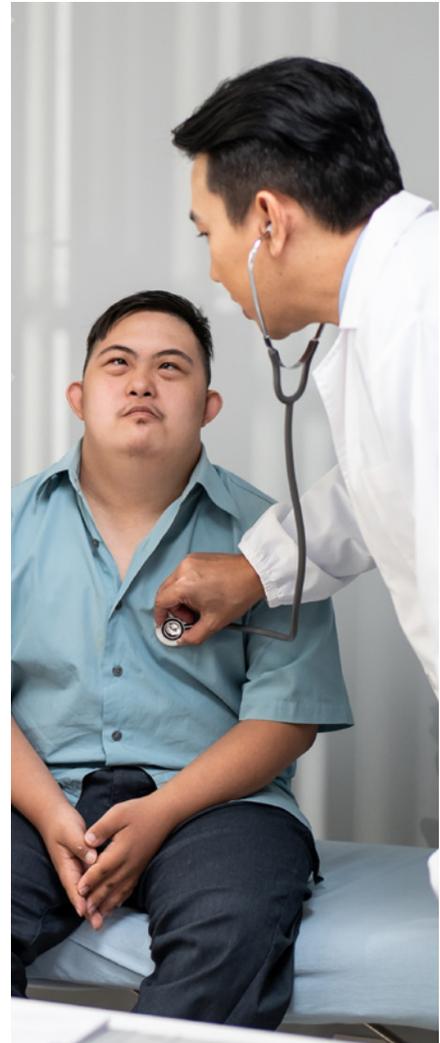
PRIORITY 5:

Health and Behavioral Health

Addressing services and activities that support physical and behavioral health.

OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Identifying and removing barriers to accessing health and behavioral health providers**, including examining administrative and payment processes, linguistic and cultural competencies, and provider availability.
- ▶ **Encouraging workforce development**, including efforts to increase the number of qualified, well-trained workers to provide healthcare services.
- ▶ **Expanding access to mental health crisis services**, including ensuring that the service providers are trained in the diverse needs of people with disabilities.
- ▶ **Promoting access to physical exercise and recreation**, including educating communities about inclusion and accessibility practices and supporting activities that expand opportunities for inclusive recreation.
- ▶ **Supporting autonomy in medical decision-making**, including promoting wider adoption of supported decisionmaking and advance care planning.



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS

- Data on enrollment and service delivery for medical assistance programs operated by MDH and BHA
- Data from State and Federal sources on workers in health care jobs
- Updates on MDOD, DNR, and DDC collaborations supporting inclusion and access of public recreation spaces
- Updates on MDOD's initiatives supporting inclusion and access of watersport activities
- Updates on stakeholder initiatives educating the public about supported decision making in healthcare settings



PRIORITY 6: **Technology**

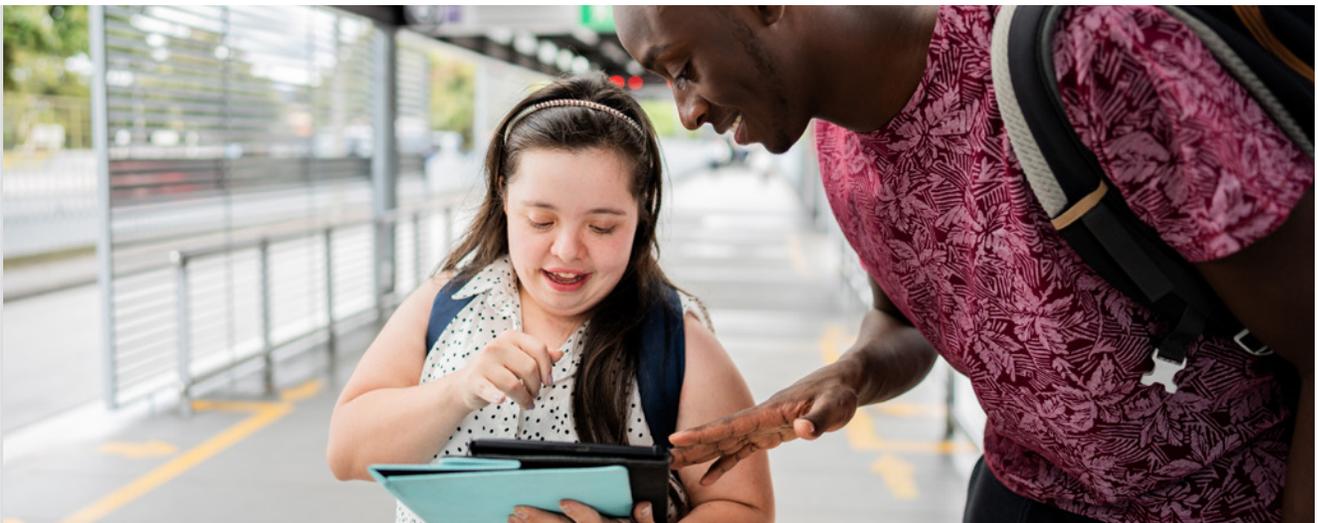
Addressing accessible and universal technology.

OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Promoting understanding and use of assistive technology**, including by educating people with disabilities, service professionals, educators, and employers about assistive technology.
- ▶ **Assisting people with disabilities to acquire assistive technology**, including through the use of financial loan programs, other forms of alternative financing, equipment reuse activities, and home- and community-based services.
- ▶ **Providing people with difficulty using a standard telephone with access to telecommunications**, through accessible telecommunications equipment and support services.
- ▶ **Ensuring that digital information is accessible and compliant with accessibility laws**, including government websites and information technology purchases.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS

- Program data from MDOD's Maryland Assistive Technology Program
- Program data from MDOD's Assistive Technology Loan Program
- Program data from MDOD's Telecommunications Access of Maryland Program
- Program data from MDOA's Durable Medical Equipment Re-Use Program
- Data from MDOD and DOIT on accessible information technology (ICT) projects





PRIORITY 7: **Education**

Addressing support services for children, youth, and life-long learners that enable them to achieve successful learning.



OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Supporting the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, to ensure ALL students exit college and/or are career ready** including implementing recommendations specific to supporting special education services and educators and ensuring general education staff are able to effectively support students with disabilities.
- ▶ **Ensuring students with disabilities have access to accessible educational technologies**, including ensuring that schools are educated about, and are using, accessible technology in classrooms and in remote learning environments.
- ▶ **Improving the rates of students with disabilities successfully completing high school**, including continuing to close the completion gap between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers.
- ▶ **Streamlining transitions between high school and postsecondary services**, including: continuing to identify administrative barriers to successful transitions; supporting effective data-sharing among agencies that service transitioning youth; and helping individuals and their families prepare for and navigate transitions.
- ▶ **Promoting successful completion of postsecondary education programs**, including encouraging students' access to disability support services.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS

- Data and updates from MSDE on special education services in K-12 schools
- Data and update from MSDE on compliance with Maryland's Ensuring Access for Students with Disabilities legislation
- Data from MSDE on high school completion rates for students with disabilities
- Data and updates from MSDE on the use of endorsements
- Data on students with a Section 504 Plan
- Updates on collaborative transition initiatives led by MDOD, MSDE, DORS, and DDA
- Data from DHS's Ready By 21 Programs for youth who age out of services
- Data and updates on students with disabilities in higher education as reported by MHEC

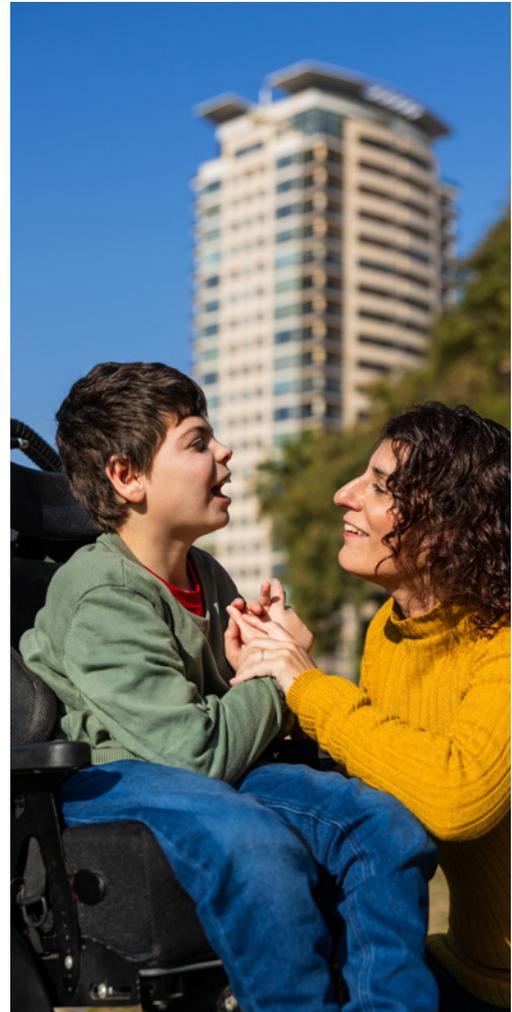


PRIORITY 8: **Family supports**

Addressing family supports, including respite care.

OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Connecting families to early identification services and supports**, including building the provider capacity and availability to make early identification.
- ▶ **Promoting sufficient respite resources**, including identifying ways to expand respite programs and accessible childcare programs.
- ▶ **Supporting access to affordable financial planning supports and benefits**, including: ensuring that individuals and families with disabilities have equal access to public benefit programs including military families; expanding resources that help families engage in financial planning; and supporting programs intended to reduce childhood poverty.
- ▶ **Providing meaningful assistance to local organizations supporting families in need**, including supporting local care teams and local organizations that provide services for families with children with disabilities.



KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS



- Data and updates from MD Commission on Caregiving by DHS
- Data and updates on respite programs provided by DHS and other stakeholders
- Updates on ENOUGH Act and local care team activities overseen by GOC



PRIORITY 9:

Safety and Criminal Justice

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



OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Ensuring that people with disabilities have safe and appropriate interactions with law enforcement, correctional facility staff, juvenile justice staff and emergency responders**, by expanding disability-related trainings for law enforcement, correctional facility staff, juvenile justice staff and emergency responders and expanding options for people with disabilities to share their communication needs with emergency responders.
- ▶ **Ensuring that people with disabilities can communicate needs when requesting emergency services**, including through programs that allow for voluntary self-disclosure of disability-related needs or sharing of emergency profiles with public safety answering points (PSAPs).
- ▶ **Ensuring safe and appropriate treatment of youths and adults with disabilities who are court-involved**, including: identifying and expanding training needs for correctional staff; and examining education, housing, assistive technology, and treatment needs for individuals with disabilities who are court-involved.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS

- Data on individuals with disabilities who are court or forensic-involved as identified by BHA, DJS, and DPSCS
- Data and updates on law enforcement trainings offered through the Ethan Saylor Alliance supported by MDOD
- Updates on initiatives overseen by BHA, DDA, and MDOD ensuring Maryland's crisis response system is equipped to respond to people with disabilities
- Updates on initiatives overseen by MDOD, MDEM, and MVFA to help people with disabilities communicate disability-related needs to law enforcement or emergency responders



PRIORITY 10:

Emergency planning and climate change

Addressing the needs of people with disabilities in all-hazards disaster-related emergency planning and climate change efforts.

OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Ensuring that people with disabilities can access communications in preparation of, during, and after disasters**, including ensuring that accurate information is provided in alternative formats and using accessible telecommunications.
- ▶ **Ensuring that people with disabilities can access disaster or evacuation shelters**, including ensuring that they have transportation to shelters and that the shelters can provide reasonable accommodations, and assistive technologies.
- ▶ **Supporting access to assistive technology and durable medical equipment needed during and after emergencies**, including ensuring that people with disabilities have access to replacements for devices that are damaged in emergencies.
- ▶ **Promoting reuse of assistive technology**, including ensuring people with disabilities have access to programs that help them donate and receive gently used equipment, rather than having items end up in landfills.
- ▶ **Considering the impact of green technologies on people with disabilities**, including ensuring that they are developed and deployed safely and accessibly.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OUTPUTS

- Updates from MDOD, DHS and MDEM on access to communications about disasters and access to emergency shelters
- Data and updates from MDOD's Maryland Assistive Technology Program on AT reuse programs
- Updates from MDOT and stakeholders on electric vehicle initiatives





PRIORITY 11:

Civic Access and Engagement

Addressing the ability of people with disabilities to access and engage with government services and civic life.

OBJECTIVES SUPPORTING THIS PRIORITY SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- ▶ **Improving the physical accessibility of public buildings**, including funding for accessibility modifications made through the Access Maryland Program
- ▶ **Reducing instances of discrimination against people with disabilities**, including educating the community about civil rights in employment, housing, and public accommodations.
- ▶ **Ensuring government information is in plain language**, including implementation of the Maryland Plain Language Initiative and ensuring that new plain language materials are available in non-English languages.
- ▶ **Providing voters with disabilities equal access to voting**, including ensuring that polling places and voting processes are accessible and can be used independently.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS INCLUDE:

- Data on building projects funded through the Access Maryland Program, led by MDOD and supported by DBM and DGS.
- Data on disability discrimination complaints filed with MCCR
- Updates on multi-agency implementation of the Maryland Plain Language Initiative
- Updates on stakeholder-led voting access efforts.



Acronyms

BHA	Behavioral Health Administration	MDEM	Maryland Department of Emergency Management
DBM	Department of Budget and Management	MDH	Maryland Department of Health
DDA	Developmental Disabilities Administration	MDOA	Maryland Department on Aging
DDC	Developmental Disabilities Council	MDOD	Maryland Department of Disabilities
DGS	Department of General Services	MDOL	Maryland Department of Labor
DHCD	Department of Housing and Community Development	MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation
DHS	Department of Human Services	MDP	Maryland Department of Planning
DJS	Department of Juvenile Services	MHEC	Maryland Higher Education Commission
DNR	Department of Natural Resources	MSDE	Maryland State Department of Education
DOIT	Department of Information Technology	MTA	Maryland Transit Administration
DORS	Division of Rehabilitation Services	MVA	Maryland Vehicle Administration
DPSCS	Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services	PSAP	Public Safety Answering Point
GOC	Governor's Office for Children	WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
MCCR	Maryland Commission on Civil Rights		