

BRIDGE FORWARD:

Crossing Barriers to Improved IDD and Behavioral Health Systems in Washington

In the summer of 2025, the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council (WADDC) hosted *Bridge Forward*, a free virtual four-day event with state and national leaders, people with disabilities, families, service providers, researchers, policymakers, and community partners to plan the future of intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) and behavioral health (BH) supports in Washington.

Stakeholders shared their vision for a strong and coordinated state support system, current challenges, and recommendations on how to move the IDD and BH systems forward.

92%

of participants agreed that event presentations were useful to informing advocacy work that needs to be done in Washington

40

speakers and facilitators from across Washington and the United States

95%

of participants agreed that event presentations were important to helping the state make progress for people with IDD and BH needs in Washington.

94%

of participants felt that they knew more about the challenges faced by people with IDD and BH needs in Washington after attending the event



Participants rated the overall quality, topic importance, and usefulness for advocacy of the event above 3.4 out of 4 (on average)

423
Conference Attendees



The Destination: A Vision for the Washington IDD and BH Systems

- **Accessible:** Systems make it easy to get services when & where they are needed
- **Quality:** Services are set up, funded, & delivered for people to live how they want
- **Equitable:** Everyone, especially those who have trouble getting quality services because of their identity or where they live, gets needed personalized support
- **Responsive:** Services are offered based on people's changing needs
- **Sustainable:** Services are reliable & available long-term

Roadblocks to the Destination

- **Service Availability & Accessibility:** Not enough services, or some people cannot access services fairly
- **System Navigation:** Services are hard to find & it's hard to get help accessing
- **Cross-System Navigation:** IDD & BH systems do not work well together & people struggle to get both types of support
- **Quality Services:** Services do not meet people's needs, or are not offered in ways that lead to people's wellbeing
- **Quality Professionals:** Not enough skilled, available, or consistent professionals to provide needed supports
- **Stigma & Unawareness:** Prejudice about people with IDD & BH needs, & people not knowing about services or fearing judgment for using services



Bridges Forward

- **Improve Service Access** by simplifying intake, expanding telehealth, making funding & eligibility more flexible, & increasing outreach & education
- **Advance System Navigation** by adding navigator roles, resource directories, & hotlines, & investing in cross-systems technology & training
- **Enhance Service Quality** by using inclusive and flexible practices, promoting equity, improving communication, gathering feedback and data, & supporting legislative change
- **Strengthen Service Professionals** by investing in recruitment and retention support, frontline training & certification, & training professionals across healthcare, education, & emergency services
- **Reduce Stigma & Raise Awareness** by educating the public about the prevalence & need for both IDD & BH supports, helping people with IDD and their families understand their needs, & improving advocacy across stakeholders