Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council

2027 Legislative Priorities

People with developmental disabilities should have the opportunity to live safely, participate fully in their communities, and access the services and support they need, regardless of where they live in Washington.

For the 2027 Legislative Session, the Developmental Disabilities Council urges policymakers to protect the systems that make community living possible while addressing growing gaps in access, workforce capacity, and caregiver support.

Protect and Strengthen Medicaid

Medicaid is essential for people to live in the community successfully.

The DDC supports efforts to protect, sustain, and expand Medicaid, including medical services and developmental disabilities waiver programs.

For people with developmental disabilities, Medicaid is much more than health insurance. It is the foundation for services that make everyday life and community living possible, including personal care, therapies, assistive technology, and critical supports administered through the Developmental Disabilities Administration.

Because Medicaid is a partnership between Washington State and the federal government, changes at either level can have significant consequences for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Washington must remain vigilant in protecting access to these essential services and ensuring that individuals and families have timely, understandable information about changes that may affect their support services.

Ensure Access to Services Across Washington

Where a person lives should not determine whether they can receive the services they need to live safely, independently, and as part of their community.

The DDC opposes cuts or policy changes that reduce access to disability services and supports. Many of these systems are already underfunded and stretched beyond capacity.

Qualifying for a service does not mean a person can actually receive it. Across Washington, people may be eligible for support but unable to access it because providers are unavailable, programs do not exist in their communities, or systems are too difficult to navigate.

Washington must strengthen local service networks, improve system navigation, use meaningful and age-appropriate assessments, and address “service deserts” that leave individuals and families without realistic access to support in their community.

Recognize and Support Family Caregivers

Family caregivers are a critical part of the supports that people with disabilities rely on to live in the community.

The DDC supports policies that recognize family caregivers as essential partners in Washington’s long-term care system.

Families often fill the gaps when paid providers are unavailable, difficult to recruit, or difficult to retain. Their knowledge, stability, and commitment are invaluable, but families cannot be expected to carry increasing responsibility without adequate support.

All family caregivers should have access to paid training that is practical, accessible, and relevant to the needs of the person they support. Investing

in family caregivers strengthens the quality and continuity of care while helping individuals remain in their homes and communities.

Build a Stable and Sustainable Disability Workforce

A service system cannot fulfill its promise if there is no workforce available to provide the service.

Washington's shortage of qualified caregivers and disability service providers has become an access issue for people with developmental disabilities.

When providers are unavailable, authorized services can exist on paper while remaining inaccessible in practice. Individuals may go without essential assistance needed to live safely, work, participate in their communities, and maintain independence. Families are often left to fill the gap.

Recruitment and retention challenges include low wages, inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates, certification requirements, training costs, limited access to technology, language barriers, and training that does not always reflect the individual needs of the people receiving support.

Washington must invest in strategies that make disability service careers sustainable, strengthen recruitment and retention, reduce unnecessary barriers to entering the workforce, and ensure providers receive relevant, high-quality training.

Summary

Washington has made a commitment to people with developmental disabilities: they should be able to live with dignity, choice, safety, and meaningful connection to their communities.

Protecting Medicaid, ensuring equitable access to services, supporting family caregivers, and stabilizing the disability workforce are

interconnected. Weakness in one area places greater pressure on all the others.

The DDC urges the Legislature to protect what works, address the gaps that leave people without meaningful access to services, and invest in a sustainable system that works for people with developmental disabilities and their families in every community across Washington.

The Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council voted on these priorities on October 15, 2026.