

Protecting Civil Rights and Promoting Social Justice

Every person has the right to self-determination, equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency regardless of how significantly the person is impacted by a disability. People with disabilities include people of all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and other identities across social and economic backgrounds. People with disabilities face disproportionate systemic barriers in healthcare, education, employment, financial security, and community living compared to people without disabilities.

AUCD will work to ensure robust implementation of civil rights statutes, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act. AUCD will engage in efforts to address inequities at the national, state, tribal, territorial, and local levels. AUCD will advocate to secure additional investments in national data collection, monitoring and dissemination on the systemic disparities and inequities related to race and disability across the lifespan.

Ensuring a Quality Life in the Community

People with disabilities have a right to live in communities. Public programs must eliminate biases toward institutional settings. A cornerstone for people with disabilities to live safe, healthy, and self-determined lives is having access to and receiving quality and individualized services. Medicaid is critical in providing necessary long-term services and supports that allow people to live in their communities and be employed in competitive integrated employment.

AUCD will advocate for improvements to and increased funding for home and community-based services (HCBS) and work to transition people with disabilities from congregate care settings to HCBS. AUCD will work to improve coverage for services provided in HCBS and other long-term services and supports; and remove Medicaid's institutional bias (that makes institutional care a mandatory service and HCBS an optional service). AUCD will work to improve services and supports for families and caregivers. AUCD will work to professionalize the direct support professional workforce.

Ensuring Quality, Accessible and Affordable Healthcare

Every person has the right to receive quality, accessible and affordable healthcare. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) is integral to ensuring quality and affordable healthcare. People with disabilities face significant barriers and disparities in access to and receiving quality healthcare. People with disabilities and their families have been disproportionately impacted by the dual public health and economic crises created by the pandemic. People with disabilities, their families and the various health, education, employment, and social service systems that support them continue to need guidance and financial support to respond to and recover from the public health emergencies.

AUCD will continue to work to ensure the equitable distribution of scarce resources. AUCD will respond to issues with test and vaccine allocation to ensure priority and equitable access for people with disabilities, their families, and their caregivers. AUCD will work to improve federal and state agency collection on COVID-19 positivity counts, vaccination counts and fatalities for residents and staff in both congregate and community settings.

AUCD will work to improve quality, accessibility, and affordability of all types of healthcare, including medical, dental/oral health, hearing, vision, behavioral/mental health, and durable medical equipment for people with disabilities. AUCD will work to address inequities in the access to and delivery of healthcare. AUCD will advocate for improvements and funding for the ACA and Medicaid. AUCD will work to ensure the Autism CARES Act is reauthorized and fully funded. AUCD will work to ensure the effective and appropriate healthcare transition from pediatric to adult healthcare services.

Ensuring Quality Access to Mental Healthcare

Every person has the right to receive quality, accessible and affordable mental and behavioral healthcare services and supports across the lifespan. People with disabilities face significant barriers in access to appropriate mental healthcare. Services for mental healthcare must be on parity (access and payment) with physical healthcare. While lack of access is a long-standing concern, the need for mental and behavioral health services has escalated during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is critical that all persons who experience disabilities receive mental health services beginning in early childhood and throughout the life course. Children with disabilities must be provided Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (comprehensive and preventive healthcare services for children under age 21 who are enrolled in Medicaid). Early intervention services, multi-tiered systems of support that include Response to Intervention and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and school and community access to disability-informed, evidence-based mental and behavioral healthcare providers are essential components of comprehensive services for infants, children, adolescents, and adults with disabilities.

AUCD will work to improve access to quality, accessible and affordable mental and behavioral healthcare for people with disabilities. AUCD will advocate for the reduction/elimination of inequities in the access to and delivery of mental healthcare across the lifespan; mental and behavioral healthcare that is on parity with physical healthcare; and improvements and funding for mental and behavioral healthcare.

Guaranteeing Opportunities to Competitive Integrated Employment

Every person should have the opportunity for competitive integrated employment (CIE). The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act provides critical services to people with disabilities to retain and maintain CIE. Yet, the employment participation rate for people with disabilities shows a significant gap for adults with disabilities compared to adults without disabilities and thousands of people with disabilities continue to work in segregated workshops for subminimum wages.

AUCD will work to accelerate transition to CIE and end the practice of paying subminimum wages to people with disabilities through a multi-year phase-out. AUCD will work to ensure that policies and practices set expectations for, build capacity and connectivity across the service delivery systems. AUCD will work to create opportunities for and address barriers to CIE, microenterprise, and self-employment.

Ensuring a Quality Inclusive Education

Every student has the right receive a quality inclusive education from early intervention to high school that prepares them for a career or postsecondary education. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) provide critical civil rights protections and services to students with disabilities, their families and their communities.

AUCD will work to ensure that ESSA, IDEA and HEOA are fully enforced and funded. AUCD will work to ensure that postsecondary students with disabilities receive necessary accommodations through the HEOA and to support transition services and inclusive postsecondary education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities including Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs).

Ensuring Sufficient Funding for AUCD Centers and Programs

All AUCD Network Centers and Programs are funded through the federal budget and appropriations process. In addition, adequate funding for other programs for people with disabilities is critical for them to be healthy, receive a quality education and be employed in the community.

AUCD's priority programs for increased funding include: the University Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities; the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities; and the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers. AUCD also works to improve funding for: the Projects of National Significance; the Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities, the National Coordinating Center, and Inclusive Think College Higher Education Network; the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research; Assistive Technology Act programs; Family to Family Health Information Centers; and other disability programs.