

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, socioeconomic backgrounds, and other identities. People with disabilities have intersecting identities and disproportionately face significant systemic barriers to healthcare, education, employment, and financial security that must be addressed.

AUCD will continue to work to ensure robust implementation of civil rights statutes, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act. AUCD will engage in and work to address efforts to address inequities at the national, state, and local levels. AUCD will work to ensure that people with disabilities are fully accounted in generic federal policies and programs. AUCD will work 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. AUCD will work to promote alternatives to guardianship. AUCD will work to secure passage of accessible voting rights legislation.

Ensuring a Quality Life in the Community

People with disabilities have a right to live in the community. Public programs must eliminate biases toward institutional settings. Having access to and receiving quality and individualized services is the cornerstone for people with disabilities to be safe, healthy and live self-determined lives.

AUCD will advocate for increased funding for home and community-based services (HCBS) and work to transition people with disabilities from congregate care settings to safer HCBS, including long-term or permanent authorization of Money Follows the Person. AUCD will work to remove Medicaid's institutional bias and to improve coverage for services provided in HCBS and other long-term services and supports, including Medicaid portability. AUCD will support efforts to professionalize the direct support professional workforce by promoting workforce stabilization efforts, such as increasing pay, increasing state reimbursement rates and/or implementing a national credentialing system.

Guaranteeing Opportunities in 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 work to secure passage of legislation that ends subminimum wages for people with disabilities through a multi-year phase-out. AUCD will work to ensure that policies and practices set expectations for and address barriers to CIE, microenterprise and self-employment. AUCD will work to prepare people with disabilities to meet workforce needs and to create incentives to increase opportunities in and support systems for training programs such as apprenticeships and CIE. AUCD will continue to ensure that workforce, economic, and public health systems support the safe return to work for people with disabilities.

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) supports and promotes a national network of university-based interdisciplinary programs. AUCD's mission is to advance policies and practices that improve the health, education, and social and economic well-being of all people with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and their communities by supporting our members in research, education, health, and service activities that achieve our vision. For more information, please contact Cindy Smith, Director of Public Policy at csmith@aucd.org.

Ensuring Equity in Healthcare

Every person has the right to receive quality and affordable healthcare. People with disabilities face significant barriers and disparities in healthcare access, care, and outcomes. 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 emergency. The rights and protections in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) are integral to a person with disabilities and their families' quality of life. Medicaid is critical to provide necessary long-term services and supports that allow people to live in their communities and be employed.

AUCD will continue to work to ensure the equitable distribution of scarce resources. AUCD will continue to 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 have improved 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 access, affordability and quality of healthcare for people with disabilities and funding for the ACA, Medicaid, Medicare and Children's Health Insurance Program. AUCD will continue to work to lower the cost of prescription drugs for people with disabilities who require them by ensuring that the adoption of cost-lowering measures do not index prescription drug costs based on Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs). AUCD will work to ensure QALYs are not adopted in other parts of the healthcare system. AUCD will work to ensure that effective and appropriate healthcare transition from pediatric to adult healthcare services is available.

Ensuring a Quality Inclusive Education

Every student has the right to be safe in school and to receive a quality inclusive education that prepares them for post-secondary education, employment and to achieve financial independence. 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, and that students with disabilities are safe in school. AUCD will work to ensure that post-secondary students with disabilities receive necessary accommodations through the HEOA and to support post-secondary programs, including Think College and Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (TPSIDs). AUCD will work to pass legislation that ensures students are safe in school and are free from the use of restraint and seclusion, bullying, and harassment. AUCD will continue to work to ensure students with disabilities maintain their full rights under IDEA and are provided necessary compensatory education as a result of the pandemic.

Ensuring Sufficient Funding for AUCD Centers

All of the 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 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers, Projects of National Significance, the Transition Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability and the National Coordinating Center, the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, Assistive Technology Act programs, and Family to Family Health Information Centers.