



Developmental Disabilities  
Council of Oklahoma

There are an estimated 61,000 persons with developmental disabilities in Oklahoma; people with the same dreams as any of us, but with different challenges.

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*The Developmental Disabilities Council of Oklahoma (the Council) was founded to promote quality services and programs that enable persons with disabilities to fully realize their maximum potential through increased independence, productivity, and community inclusion. As the federal Developmental Disabilities Act affirms, disability is a natural part of the human experience that does not diminish a person's right or opportunity to participate in life.*

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THE COUNCIL LEADS THE CHARGE FOR THOSE RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES, IMPLEMENTING OUR MISSION IN MANY WAYS. WE ARE:

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● **CHAMPIONS**

*Raising public awareness about the capabilities, contributions, and concerns of Oklahomans with disabilities and their families.*

*Always, the Council remains proactive in pursuing media coverage that portrays positive images of people with disabilities living in Oklahoma; and the Council-founded [Justin A. McCurry Resource Library](#) hosts thousands of books, videos, audio recordings, brochures, and subject matter files for use by advocates and providers for persons with disabilities, as well as the general public.*

● **CATALYSTS**

*Working with our colleagues authorized by the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, the Council convened and facilitates a first-in-the-nation bi-partisan, bi-cameral Legislative Caucus on the "Waiting List." The Waiting List, or, more formally, the Medicaid Home- and Community-based Waiver Request List, is held by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and includes more than 6700 individuals seeking support services to live in their own communities. Last year, the Waiting List caucus secured \$2 million in new appropriations to reduce the wait for these individuals who require specialized supports to live and work in their own communities, rather than be confined to nursing homes. In the current year, the caucus has announced it will request more than \$3 million.*

## ● ADVOCATES

Strengthening self-advocacy and family advocacy; pursuing state and national policies that uphold and advance the rights of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

*Partners in Policymaking*, leadership training funded by the Council, helps create productive partnerships between consumers of service for people with disabilities and those who make public policy. Participants develop skills necessary to effectively work with legislators, state agencies, and others whose decisions and actions impact the lives of people with disabilities.

*Oklahoma People First* and the *Oklahoma Self-Advocacy Network*, organizations run by and for Oklahomans with developmental disabilities, also receive funding from the Council.

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## ● EDUCATORS

Providing information and training to legislators, policymakers, agencies, providers, individuals with disabilities and their families.

Among the Council's education efforts are customized presentations and trainings in *Person-Centered Thinking* and the *Supporting Families Community of Practice (CoP)*. *Person-Centered Thinking* is based on an understanding of what is important TO a person, and what is important FOR a person. *Community of Practice* tools foster positive life trajectories for individuals with disabilities by encouraging natural supports and discouraging a life that is dictated by formal services.

At the Council's annual *Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)*, a camp for rising high school juniors and seniors with disabilities, participants learn about taking an active role in their education and post-graduation planning, higher education opportunities, career exploration, assistive technology, disability rights laws, and teamwork while building self-esteem and independent living skills. A highlight of the *YLF* week is working with members of the Oklahoma Legislature on public policy issues, concluding with a debate on the House floor.

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## ● PARTNERS

Building relationships with policymakers, agencies, and organizations that can together create good lives for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

*Dreamnight* at the Oklahoma City Zoo is co-sponsored annually by the Council, providing genuine recreational access and promoting the well-being of families. Initial funding from the Council created a manual, distributed to all AZA-accredited members, facilitating the participation of more zoos in *Dreamnight* across the country.

The Council collaborates with *Sooner SUCCESS*, which coordinates comprehensive efforts of health education, social service, mental health, and other service systems statewide for Oklahoma children with disabilities and special healthcare needs, and is partnering on their new initiative focused on supporting parents who have intellectual and/or physical disabilities.

*Please visit our website for complete project details: [www.okddc.ok.gov](http://www.okddc.ok.gov). For more information about Council projects, contact Ann Trudgeon, Executive Director.*