



Council Connections brings the latest news on disability rights, resources that promote inclusion, and opportunities for advocacy to individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members living in the heart of Vermont Communities.

GOVERNOR SCOTT RECOGNIZES DIRECT SUPPORT APPRECIATION WEEK

[Green Mountain Self-Advocates](#) and Designated Service Agencies have partnered together to honor direct support professionals and **they invite you, and your entire family, to join them for the celebration**. Share stories, make connections, and promote community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities everywhere.

- **Where:** Vermont State House lawn.
- **When:** Thursday, September 14th, 11:00am-1:00pm
- **Contact:** Call 1-802-229-2600 for more information.



AGENCY OF EDUCATION ACCIDENTALLY GAVE FALSE GUIDANCE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Since 2013 special educators and parents received guidance from the wrong set of rules for children's services based on incorrect links and old information.

Following the changes congress made to the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA) in 2012, the Vermont State Board of Education critically read, revised, and filed new rules for special education with the Secretary of State. The only problem? The wrong draft was sent to the Secretary and nobody noticed.

According to the **2015 Child Count Report** by the Vermont Agency of Education, there are about **13,900 students with disabilities who are attending Vermont schools.**

Spokesperson to the Agency of Education, Haley Dover, explained that the error had gone unnoticed for several years until it was discovered during website maintenance. There is no way to measure how many students were affected and to what extent, said Dover.

But the results may prove to be positive. Although President to the [Vermont Family Network](#), Pam McCarthy, is discouraged that the State is now asking schools to follow what they

deem as the "correct set of rules", it is possible that corrections may need to go through the legislature. This may create a long awaited opportunity to advocate for additional changes.

"How is it that the secretary can sort of just say, 'Oh, we made a mistake. The rules you thought were the rules are not really the rules.'" - Pam McCarthy

There were five major errors that had to be addressed with a [Memorandum by the Agency of Education](#). Besides typos and adjustments to formatting, the errors that are getting the most attention are:

1. Out-of-Date Rule Reference in Rule 2361.2
2. Use of Age 6 to 22 Eligibility Criteria for Young Children in 2361.2
3. Developmental Delay Evaluations
4. IEP Requirements in 2361.2
5. Initiation of Evaluation



The legislative process to replace the incorrect version may open the rules up for public comment.

The [Manual of Rules and Practices for Special Education](#) was submitted by the Agency of Education (previously known as the Vermont State Board of Education) in 2013 and is 144 pages long.

For more information, [read or listen to the article by Vermont Public Radio](#).



ANNUAL FUND RAISER TO MAKE HOMES ACCESSIBLE WAS A SUCCESS

About 200 participants had the choice of running 1k or 5k to raise money for Vermonters with disabilities. Supporters did not have to run to donate and participate.

The [Howard Center](#) serves Vermonters in Chittenden County and is the host to [Zoe's Race](#), a fund raiser that successfully raised \$30,000 last Sunday morning to be awarded to qualifying families. The money remodels homes so that stairs, bathrooms, doorways, etc. are more accessible for individuals and families.

Prizes were given to top fund-raisers and teams with coordinating costumes.

Photo credit to Zoe's Race.

The fun run's 1k and 5k choices were such a success that there will be a 10k option next year for dedicated athletes. Seventeen homes have been renovated thus far.

For more information, [read or watch the article by WCAX](#).



VERMONT FOUND TO BE ONE OF THE BEST STATES FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

An annual nationwide study by [United Cerebral Palsy](#) indicates that Vermont has improved its Medicaid program for people with developmental disabilities.

The [2016 Case for Inclusion report](#) ranked Vermont second in the nation, after Arizona, and showed significant gains from 2015, when Vermont scored at #22.

The report measured states in five key areas. Vermont's scores were strong in promoting independence (#1) and in supporting productivity (#2), the two factors weighted most heavily in the

For serving people with

disabilities Vermont ranked
#2 out of 50. Arizona was #1.

study. Vermont fared less well in its quality assurance (#33) and in its outreach to people in need of services (#32). In the final category, "keeping families together," Vermont ranked #16.

For more information, [read the 2016 article by Disability Scoop.](#)

WE WANT TO SHARE YOUR PHOTOS

VTDDC is looking to expand its stock photographs of Vermonters with disabilities and their families, that show inclusion, productivity, and capability.

Look through your photo albums and find your favorites!
We are thankful for anything you're willing to share.



Email us at vtddc@vermont.gov with the photos attached and subject line "I am Vermont".

WHAT'S UP, UNDER THE BIG DOME?

The legislature is not in session, but advocacy happens year round...

The [Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living](#) (DAIL) is taking written comment on the [Draft State System of Care Plan for Developmental Disabilities Services](#) until **September 15, 2017**.



Comments may be emailed to clare.mcfadden@vermont.gov or mailed to:
Developmental Disabilities Services Division
Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living
280 State Drive, HC 2 South, Waterbury, VT 05671-2030

VTDDC will submit written comment and are available to help you write and/or submit your own personal comments. **Pro-tip: It's always helpful to include a personal story about the issue(s) that concern you.**

All advocacy begins by saying, "Nothing about us, without us."

SAVE THE DATE for the next Quarterly Meeting



Council members work together to increase public awareness and to encourage systems change. They are expected to attend four day-long meetings each year and to be active participants on a committee or work group.

When: **Thursday, September 28, 2017**

Where: **[Hannaford Career Center](#)**, Middlebury, Vermont

