



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.



VERMONTERS GATHER AT STATE HOUSE TO THANK DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Self-advocates, family members, and allies, came together to celebrate direct support staff and everything they've accomplished together.

Governor Phil Scott [proclaimed September 10-16, 2018 to be Direct Support Professional Recognition week](#). In response [Green Mountain Self-Advocates \(GMSA\)](#) and Vermont's designated agencies met on Thursday on the State House lawn. They served cider and light snacks while attendees ate lunch and admired the brightly colored flags that self-advocates had created. This is the third annual gathering to thank providers.

Over 50 Vermonters with disabilities, supports, and professionals attended Direct Support Professional Day.

GMSA President, Randy Lizotte, was the first to speak.

"We are here to thank all of the amazing support workers who work each day to give us the life we want to live. They are at their best. They do it because they believe in us." - Randy Lizotte

Lizotte listed examples of why support staff are so valuable in the community, and what it means for people with disabilities to have those social supports.

VTDDC member, Clare McFadden, was also announced as the new Division Director to Vermont's [Developmental Disabilities Service Division](#), a branch under the [Department of Aging and Independent Living](#). She will be starting her new role in just a few days.

The Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council gives a warm and heartfelt thanks to all those who work directly and indirectly with people with disabilities. Your selflessness and dedication sets the bar high for all of us. Thank you!



Flags of appreciation hang in front of autumn flowers at the State House. The flags were made by self-advocates.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE FROM MEDICARE AND MEDICAID ENHANCES THE SPIRIT OF ABLE



The [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) are pulling all the stops to make sure officials and the public know that ABLÉ works alongside your benefits.

A [seven page letter that thoroughly addresses common misconceptions about the ABLÉ Act](#) and how it affects state Medicaid programs was sent to every state Medicaid Director in the nation. The letter highlights and describes conditions for:

- Post-eligibility
- Contributions and distributions to ABLÉ accounts
- How funds are treated and/or transferred

VTDDC's Executive Director, Kirsten Murphy, describes ABLÉ as "the most transformative policy change since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990."

The [National ABLÉ Resource Center](#), and partners, intend to read the full letter and share a comprehensive summary. The Center will also host a webinar to explain their findings.

For more information, [read the article from the National ABLÉ Resource Center](#).



Did you know? Vermont is already ahead of the game! [VermontABLE](#) is a savings program sponsored by the Vermont State Treasurer's Office. It allows Vermonters with disabilities to save and invest without losing certain public benefits. You can open an account with flexible investment options and tax-free earnings. **VermontABLE has 84 enrollees with an average account balance of \$3,240.**



A SPIN-OFF OF AIRBNB MODEL HOSTS ONLY DISABILITY ACCESSIBLE ROOMS AND HOMES

What's a traveler with a disability to do when they book a hotel room or residential space and find it isn't accessible? Start booking elsewhere.

The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act ensures that all public locations are handicap accessible, but the rules do not apply to private, residential housing, and many countries do not have standards like the US. Even in the States, the term "handicap accessible" is sometimes used loosely.

In June, a [Rutgers study found](#) that people with disabilities were often rejected by AirBnB hosts, even when the hosts said their lodgings were wheelchair accessible.

[Accomable.com](#) (short for Accessible Accommodation) is a reliable online traveling agent that lists short-term renting solutions. It's an AirBnB-style web service that exclusively lists lodging for those who may have mobility or sensory impairments.

For more information, [read the 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".



NATIONAL NEWSPAPER IS COLLECTING REAL LIFE STORIES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Washington Post is asking unemployed American citizens who receive or have received disability benefits (like SSI and Medicaid) to answer three questions:

1. How do/did you spend your days?
2. How has/had giving up work affected your life?
3. How does/did it make you feel?



In response to this **VTDDC challenges Vermonters with disabilities to respond!** Write truthfully about what does or does not work for you, how you feel your day could be improved or enhanced, and what your local and statewide services do to make sure your days are satisfying and fulfilling.

For more information, [read the article and fill out the form on the Washington Post.](#)

WHAT'S UP, UNDER THE BIG DOME?

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

Did you know that the [Vermont Housing and Conservation Board](#) is **taking public comment from around the state to learn about community needs** that could be addressed through the Housing for All program, [a new \\$35 million bond issue designated for very low income Vermonters](#)? These new units could support more options for independent living for people with disabilities.

The [last public input session](#) will be Thursday, September 26th from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Northeastern Vermont Development Association, 35 Eastern Avenue, St. Johnsbury, Vermont.



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

The mission of VTDDC is to help build connections and supports that bring people with developmental disabilities, and their families, in the heart of Vermont Communities.