

Vermonters can **GROW** savings without losing disability benefits.

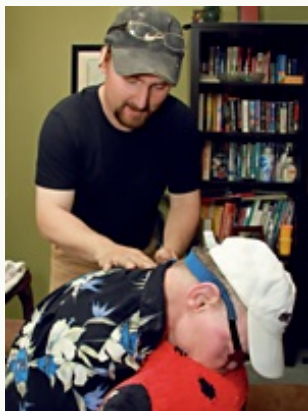
VermontABLE allows eligible residents with disabilities to plan and save for their futures without risking needs-based benefits. Individuals and family-members may save up to \$15,000 yearly and enjoy tax-free earnings.

[Take the Eligibility Quiz](#)

Produced and distributed by the [Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council](#).



**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.



Should a provider's personal beliefs limit the care provided?

## PERSONAL CHOICE WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Disability advocates are concerned about a new [US Department of Health and Human Services rule that grants protections to healthcare providers who make decisions based on their own personal and religious beliefs](#).

In what the Trump Administration has nicknamed the "conscience rule," licensed healthcare professionals, such as employees of hospitals, group homes, and agencies, can now choose to refuse aid to an individual seeking an abortion, sterilization, or assisted suicide. And, the loose writing of the new rule may go even further than that.

Advocates argue that the rule opens the way for personal opinion to override civil rights. Examples of the many ways the "conscience rule" could be interpreted include: Denying someone their medication, blocking access to doctors or procedures, and even telling a person what they can or cannot wear. The rule also protects providers from discrimination or retaliation when acting on their religious or personal beliefs.

**"A person's wellbeing, safety, and choice should not be at jeopardy to receive services. This revised rule by the US Health and Human Services contradicts both the Constitution and the Americans with Disabilities Act."**

- Kirsten Murphy, Executive Director to the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

Under the new rule, insurance providers and employers also have a say about which medical services they're comfortable with delivering and/or paying for, which may lead to a greater denial rate especially in conservative states.

Vermont is among the twenty-three (23) states and cities that filed a joint appeal about undermining patient trust, the misuse of federal spending, and the above concerns.

As of July 1, 2019, a federal judge blocked the original timeline for when this rule comes into effect - but the delay is only until November 2019 and it does not guarantee a dismissal or re-write to the proposed rule. In the meantime Plaintiffs will have to remain vigilante that one persons discomfort does not overrule another persons civil right.

For more information [read the article by Disability Scoop](#), [Washington Post](#), and [an update with NPR](#).



**Communities who are most likely to be affected by the "conscience rule" are women and people who are LGBTQ.**



#### **The Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities**

**promotes inclusion, educates businesses and employers, and advises the Governor.**

**Looking for a job?  
Consider reaching out to  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
for assistance getting, and  
keeping, meaningful  
employment.**

## **EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES SEES ALL-TIME HIGH**

**As acceptance rates for disability-benefits plummet, more people are becoming employed in the general workforce. The national message is clear, "There's a job for everyone."**

While the Trump Administration has made it harder to receive disability benefits, the culture is also shifting – increasingly, staying-in the workforce is the accepted norm. Employers have done more to accommodate all who want to work, and they find that the demand for quality labor, creative thinkers, and a strong work ethic counters any worries they may have about employing someone with a disability.

For a generation, the number of people on the federal government's disability insurance program grew steadily. Now for the first time in decades, that number is shrinking. Several factors are driving the statistical change: Members of the baby-boomer generation are dropping their disability benefits to enter retirement. At the same time, the US is experiencing historically low unemployment, pressuring employers to think more creatively about how to fill vacancies.

### **Tips for Better Living ...**

**You don't get what you don't ask for.** It's never easy to willingly give-up the guaranteed income that comes with Social Security, but many who have taken that risk have improved their own sense of self and quality of life. Special rules make it possible for people with disabilities receiving Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to work and still receive monthly payments and Medicare or Medicaid. Social Security calls these rules "[work incentives](#)."

Always ask what kind of accommodations could be made so that you can be successful at your new job. Part of accepting a new job is negotiating terms like pay and benefit; and talking about necessary accommodations can be an important

part of the package. Ask for the ramp you need, get the door re-wired to swing open, or request an ergonomic chair up front. Talk about your work hours. You are your best advocate.

There is also the option of [opening a VermontABLE account](#). VermontABLE lets hard workers save their wages without risking their government benefits.

For more information [read or listen to the article by NPR](#).



**Make a family plan for every emergency.**

[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

## DOES YOUR CHILD'S IEP HAVE A PLAN FOR SCHOOL-WIDE EMERGENCIES?

**Professionals encourage parents and teachers to consider physical barriers, sensory issues, and what can be done to keep all students with disabilities safe.**

What will happen to your child if there's a fire at the school? A power outage? What if there's an active shooter? Asking these questions at the next IEP meeting -- and creating a written plan -- is an often-overlooked part of securing necessary accommodations and supports.

An independent plan for emergencies doesn't just help one student. It makes things easier for peers who may not have disabilities.

There are many questions to ask, starting with, "Will my child...

- Wear ear defenders?"
- Have a fidget or comfort item?"
- Have their device or equipment?"
- Stay with their peers?"
- Stay with their support person or a substitute?"
- Have someone communicate with them essential information related to the emergency?"
- Have someone grab their medicine?"
- Have a back-up plan?"
- Have appropriate outdoor wear?"
- Practice with everyone else?"
- Have more opportunities to practice?"
- Have accessible transportation?"
- Have their emergency contacts called as a priority?"

Discussing an appropriate plan for each emergency is best. Emergencies to consider:

- Fire
- Flood
- Power Outage
- No Heat or Air Conditioning on peak-weather days
- Active Shooter
- All other reasons to evacuate and/or close the school

Be sure to get the emergency plans in writing as part of your child's IEP, and make sure that all key adults in your son or daughter's life have a copy and are familiar with the plan.

## DOME?

**VTDDC is at the State House closely monitoring policy that could impact Vermonters with developmental disabilities...**

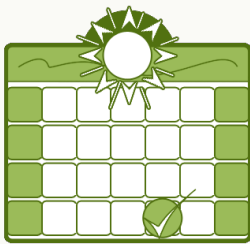


The Legislature left town without fixing Vermont's broken Special Education Panel. Federal law requires every state to have a Special Education Advisory Panel. The law requires that a majority of the Panel be individuals with disabilities or parents of individuals with disabilities. Vermont is not complying – at last count, of the 14 members, only 2 or 3 were individuals with disabilities or parents of individuals with disabilities.

Both the House and Senate passed a bill requiring Vermont's Special Education Advisory Panel to comply with the federal requirements for such panels by September 2019. Unfortunately, the bill did not become a law this session. The Council is working with partner organizations to explore other ways to address this issue before next session.

Contact Sue, VTDDC's Senior Planner and Policy Analyst, by email for more details on what the Council is doing this legislative session:

[Susan.Aranoff@Vermont.gov](mailto:Susan.Aranoff@Vermont.gov)



## SAVE THE DATE for the next Quarterly Meeting

**When:** Thursday, September 26, 2019

**Where:** [Hannaford Technical Center](#), Middlebury, VT

**Council members work together** to increase awareness about the needs of Vermonters with disabilities and 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.

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