NEBRASKA COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

DRAFT

Executive Summary

Five-Year State Plan

Goals and Objectives

October 2027 – September 2031

Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities State Plan, 2027-2031

Each State Developmental Disabilities (DD) Council is required to submit a 5-Year State Plan to the Administration for Community Living's (ACL) Administration on Disabilities (AoD) outlining the intended use of federal funding allocated for its basic operational grant. State Plans are focused on improving the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and their families through full inclusion and participation in all aspects of community life. The federal government expects DD Councils to identify goals that can be achieved in five years using available resources. Federal law mandates that the State Plan address some or all of the Areas of Emphasis established by Congress in the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act).

The Areas of Emphasis are as follows:

Child Care - Community Supports - Early Intervention - Education - Employment - Health Related
Housing - Quality Assurance - Recreation - Transportation

Self-Advocacy: The DD Act requires State Councils to include a self-advocacy goal every year of the State Plan. There are three required goals or objectives that must be included:

- Establish or strengthen a program for the direct funding of a self-advocacy organization in your State or Territory LED by people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.
- Support opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities who are considered leaders to provide leadership training to individuals with developmental disabilities who may become leaders.
- Support and expand participation of individuals with developmental disabilities in cross-disability and culturally diverse leadership coalitions.

This past summer the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities (Council) collaborated with UNMC's Munroe-Meyer Institute to conduct a statewide needs assessment survey. During this time, public input was collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups from more than 370 people with disabilities, families, professionals, and advocates. NCDD received 338 surveys. The goal of the survey distribution was to have a broad geographic distribution, language and ethnic diversity, and multiple developmental disabilities' representation.

Additionally, four focus groups were held, with a total of 16 participants. Two groups were comprised of self-advocates, totaling 8 participants. One group consisted of Spanish-speaking parents/family members in a metropolitan area, with 4 participants. The other group included parents/family members, self-advocates, and professionals from both rural and urban settings, totaling 4 participants. Twenty-four interviews were conducted with a variety of participants, including parents, professionals, and other community members. The participants resided in urban and rural areas of the state. The Needs Assessment report was published in October 2025 and is available on the Council's website.

Data collected for the 2025 Needs Assessment identified both overall priority areas and specific needs identified by family members, care providers, and self-advocates as highly important for the Council to address. Specific needs identified as important include issues related to direct service providers, waiting lists and the availability of services, the need to bolster family supports, unmet behavioral health needs, and intentional outreach to support unserved and underserved populations, as well as individuals who do not have family support. While priority areas were ranked to provide a broad view, the Council considered the importance-level ratings for specific needs within each area to identify themes, such as the availability of and accessing services in multiple service areas, in order to identify specific goals and objectives.

In order to best utilize Council funding resources, Council members and Council Planning Committee members reviewed the feedback to determine the goals and objectives that address the priorities and themes identified statewide. The State Plan is developed in accordance with requirements of the DD Act. This plan will be in effect for the 2027-2031 federal fiscal years beginning October 1, 2026, and ending September 30, 2031. The plan will be submitted to ACL/AoD, our federal oversight agency, by August 15, 2026.

Public Comment

During NCDD's first public comment period (December 8, 2025–January 23, 2026), two major DHHS Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver issues—the proposed changes to the Aged & Disabled (A&D) waiver renewal application and budget reductions affecting certain HCBS DD waiver recipients' funding tiers related to the new interRAI assessment—likely diverted the attention of families and providers from submitting comments.

To ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, providers, professionals, and other advocates have additional time to share input on NCDD's proposed State Plan Goals and Objectives, NCDD is extending the opportunity for public comment.

We have reviewed the feedback received during the initial comment period and made slight revisions to Goal One, specifically Objective B and Objective E. In addition, we have updated some of the definitions to provide greater clarity.

The draft of the State Plan Goals and Objectives is now open for public comment. If you have comments or suggestions, please submit them to: Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities, PO Box 95026, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026, or email dhhs.ddcouncil@nebraska.gov by **April 3, 2026.**

Following the public comment period, the State Plan and any proposed changes will be reviewed by Council members for final approval. Once approved, Council staff will submit the final goals and objectives to the federal government for approval.

Accessibility info: If you would like the State Plan Goals and Objectives draft in another format, please email dhhs.ddcouncil@nebraska.gov or call 402-471-2330 or 800-833-7352 (TDD).

SEE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR DRAFT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Draft Goals and Objectives

The Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities is dedicated to improving the **independence, productivity, and integration** of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). **Independence** means having choices available, being able to choose, and exercising control over one's own life. **Productivity** means making a contribution to one's own household, neighborhood, and community. It means working in the community and earning a living. **Integration** means being present in the community, participating in the life of the community, and being valued as a person, friend, family member, and neighbor. These individuals have the same rights as anyone – the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the right to be treated with respect and dignity, and the right to control one's own life and destiny. With this focus on improving the independence, productivity, and integration of people with I/DD, the Council has drafted the following Goals and Objectives.

Additional Definitions

Systemic Change: Systemic change activities (as defined in the DD Act Final rule, 2015) are defined as a sustainable, transferable, and replicable change in some aspect of service or support availability, design or delivery that promotes positive or meaningful outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. These changes aim to build a more coordinated, person- and family-centered system that enhances self-determination, independence, productivity, and community inclusion. The DD Act requires that State Councils on Developmental Disabilities engage in systemic activities.

Key Elements of Systemic Change:
Root Cause Focus*:* Tackles underlying issues in systems, not just surface-level problems.
Policy and Process Reform*:* Involves updating laws, rules, funding structures, and service delivery methods.
Positive, Meaningful Outcomes*:* Aims to improve quality of life and community participation.
Sustainability and Replicability: Changes must be durable and adaptable for use in other settings.
Improved Access: Ensures individuals can access essential community services like transportation and child care.

Self-Determination refers to the right of individuals with developmental disabilities to make their own choices, control their lives, and direct their own supports and services. It empowers individuals to decide where to live, work, and socialize, ensuring they have authority to control resources and responsibility for the outcomes of their decisions to live as the "boss" of their own life.

Self-advocacy is the ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert one's own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involves speaking up for oneself or for a cause. Key components include leadership development, knowing your rights and responsibilities, and the ability to participate in coalitions. A **self-advocate** refers to a person with a developmental disability who actively speaks up to ensure their rights are respected in daily life and in public policy. They are able to assert themselves confidently, understand their own challenges and strengths, and navigate situations to achieve their goals.

Self-advocacy includes education and skill-building related to:

- Rights and responsibilities, including civic participation (e.g., voter registration and voting).
- Preferred methods of communication, including spoken language, sign language, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).
- Decision-making and goal setting.
- Understanding available accommodations and supports.
- Knowing how and where to report concerns, grievances, or rights violations.

- Participation in public policy and systems change.
- Culturally responsive and inclusive approaches that respect individual identity and community.

The **DD Act** emphasizes that individuals with developmental disabilities have the right to act as self-advocates and have a meaningful role in decision-making that affects their lives and public policy. The self-advocacy movement also includes coming together to advocate for policy changes that affect the entire community of people with developmental disabilities.

Self-advocacy is a critical, foundational component ***within*** the broader framework of **self-determination.** One must be able to advocate (speak up) to achieve true self-determination (control).

Competitive Integrated Employment The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) defines competitive integrated employment (CIE) as full-time or part-time work, including self-employment, in which individuals with disabilities are compensated at or above minimum wage and at a rate comparable to employees without disabilities performing the same or similar duties. Individuals must receive equivalent benefits and have access to opportunities for advancement similar to those available to employees without disabilities in comparable positions. Additionally, the employment must take place in an integrated setting where the individual with a disability interacts with individuals without disabilities to the same extent as employees without disabilities in similar roles.

Guardian refers to an individual appointed by a judge to be legally responsible for the care of another person who cannot care for themselves. This person can be a minor child under the age of 19 or an incapacitated adult, and the guardian has the legal authority to make decisions concerning the person subject to guardianship's personal and financial interests, and the law requires that a guardian's authority is limited to decisions that the person under protection is unable to make.

Unfortunately, although the law requires that a guardian's authority is limited to decisions that the person under protection is not able to make, many guardians are appointed with full authority and the person under protection is not given the rights allowed under the law.

Guardianship determinations must be clearly understood and applied appropriately. A guardian is only warranted when an adult individual cannot make or communicate informed decisions in one or more essential areas of life, **even with appropriate supports**. This is distinct from an individual making decisions that others may disagree with. As self-advocacy capacity increase, the number of guardianships should decrease.

Charting the LifeCourse Framework: Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) framework is a person- and family-centered approach that helps individuals of all ages and abilities develop a vision for a good life and identify the necessary supports to achieve it. It focuses on a holistic view of life, considering all life stages, domains like daily life and community living, and integrating various supports like personal strengths, family, community, and formal services. The goal is to empower individuals to live more self-determined and inclusive lives by planning, problem-solving, and having meaningful conversations about their goals. Nebraska's DHHS uses Charting the LifeCourse tools to help individuals who use HCBS (Home and Community-Based Supports) think about their services and plan their life. Nebraska's DHHS posts Charting the LifeCourse tools, tip sheets, and videos about them on the DHHS HCBS Participant Planning webpage**.**

The 2027-2031 State Plan has two goals, each with a set of objectives. The Council will use the approved 5-Year State Plan to develop a detailed work plan for each year the State Plan will be in effect.

Goal 1. By September 30, 2031, Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families and guardians will experience measurable increases in opportunities for self-determination, independence, productivity, safety, and inclusion in community life, as a result of systemic changes at the state, regional, and/or local level.

Objective A. Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will advocate for and monitor the progress of Nebraska's 2026-2031 Olmstead Plan goal to expand access to safe, affordable, and accessible housing in the communities where Nebraskans with disabilities choose to live.

Objective B. By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will advocate for systemic changes that strengthen and expand access to Home and Community Based Services, such as person-centered community connection assistance and intermittent service alternatives, that increase the independence of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their communities.

Objective C. Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will, in collaboration with related state agencies and organizations, advocate for systemic changes that increase the number of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities who engage in competitive integrated employment and for the collection and sharing of data to measure the desired increase.

Objective D. By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will advocate for systemic improvements in Medicaid navigation—defined as the ability of individuals with IDD and their families and guardians to understand, access, and effectively use Medicaid services. This includes increasing access to qualified providers, behavioral health services, and specialist care. These efforts aim to measurably enhance the health, wellbeing, and safety of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Objective E. Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will support high-quality, person-centered training opportunities for professionals who provide support to individuals with IDD. These trainings will focus on enhancing skills that promote the self-determination, independence, productivity, safety, and inclusion of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in community life and educational settings.

Objective F. Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will, in collaboration with related stakeholders and organizations, monitor and respond to the needs of Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families and guardians that result from manmade, natural, or environmental events.

Objective G. Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will serve as a trusted policy advisor to the Nebraska Legislature, the Governor, and other policymakers; track key legislative activity; collaborate with state and local stakeholders; and equip allies, self-advocates, families and guardians with tools to engage in advocacy. These efforts will ensure that policies across all areas of community life reflect the rights, needs, and voices of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, promoting full inclusion and meaningful participation in decision-making.

Goal 2. By September 30, 2031, Nebraskans with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, caregivers, and guardians will have increased access to information, tools, and supports that empower them to make personally meaningful and appropriate choices about their services, education, employment, decision-making needs, healthcare, living situation, and relationships—leading to more self-determined lives.

Objective A. Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will increase the influence of self-advocates and leaders with disabilities by strengthening, supporting, and funding at least one self-advocacy organization led by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will support opportunities for transition-age youth (14–21) with intellectual and developmental disabilities to form self-advocacy groups that build leadership and self-determination skills, promoting their inclusion in age-appropriate community clubs and activities.
- By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will increase opportunities for self-advocate leaders to train others with disabilities to increase their personal, civic, and/or collaborative leadership roles.
- By September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will expand self-advocate participation in cross-disability and culturally diverse coalitions.

Objective B. Through September 30, 2031, the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities will support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and guardians, and Council staff to increase leadership and participation in policymaking through active participation in statewide advisory committees, cross-disability workgroups, public advocacy, and cross-system dialogue.

Objective C. By September 30, 2031, transition-aged youth (ages 14–21) with intellectual and developmental disabilities, along with their families and guardians, will have increased access to person-centered planning—grounded in the Charting the LifeCourse framework—through education and training that support informed choice and successful transitions to inclusive, meaningful employment and adult services. This will be achieved through collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Network, state agencies, and community partners.

Objective D: By September 30, 2031, as the result of Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities efforts, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, guardians, professionals, related organizations, policymakers, and the public will have greater access to information about disability issues, services, and supports, and will assist individuals, their families, and guardians, to obtain needed supports and advocate effectively for themselves and for systems change.