

## FOCUS AREAS

Nebraska's vision is for all individuals with disabilities to live, learn, work, and enjoy life in the most integrated setting of their choosing. This Plan sets forth five focus areas: Community Based Services, Education, Employment, Housing, and Transportation. Within each focus area, workgroups and based on work group priorities, goals, activities, and measures have been identified with relevant partners.

### Community Supports

**Vision:** Nebraskans with disabilities will have access to individualized, community-based services and supports that reflect their unique needs, goals, and preferences. Services will be delivered in the most inclusive, least restrictive settings possible, empowering individuals to live, work, and thrive in the communities of their choice..

**Why Community Supports Matters to Stakeholders:** Access to community-based services plays a vital role in helping individuals with disabilities lead independent and fulfilling lives. These supports—which may include housing assistance, transportation, employment services, and more—are especially important in rural areas, where resources can be limited. When available and responsive to individual needs, community supports foster inclusion, enhance well-being, and promote safety and personal choice. They also help individuals participate more fully in community life and reduce the need for institutional care.

#### Goal 1: Strengthen Collaboration to Support Access to Services across the Lifespan

*By June 2031, Nebraska will strengthen cross-agency collaboration to ensure seamless transitions for individuals with disabilities across key life stages—including pediatric to adult healthcare (medical home transition), public education to adult services (such as HCBS waiver supports), and coordination for individuals dually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare. Efforts will focus on improving service continuity, reducing gaps, and promoting person-centered planning by engaging the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), and other key partners.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska DHHS (Divisions of Medicaid and Long-Term Care, Developmental Disabilities, Behavioral Health) and Nebraska Department of Education (NDE)

#### Activities:

***Map and Strengthen Transition Pathways***- Develop clear transition protocols and timelines for:

- Youth moving from pediatric to adult medical care
- Students with disabilities transitioning from school to waiver services
- Individuals becoming dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid

**Expand Provider and Family Training-** Create and disseminate cross-system toolkits for educators, care coordinators, medical providers, and families to navigate transitions.

**Data Measures:**

Percentage of individuals transitioning from pediatric to adult medical homes with continuity of care verified within 12 months

Percentage of eligible youth successfully enrolled in adult HCBS waiver services within 6 months of aging out of school-based supports

Percentage of dually eligible individuals who receive coordinated care plans

**Goal 2: Enhance Data Collection and Utilization to Address Unmet Needs**

*By June 2031, Nebraska will implement a comprehensive data collection system to identify the average wait time for home and community-based services to begin after authorization and the percentage of authorized hours provided. This will include the identification of appropriate data by 2026, and publishing an annual report on service utilization trends starting in 2027 indexed to existing participant experience assessments to assess overall system services quality.*

**Key Partners:** DHHS-Division of Developmental Disabilities

**Activities:**

**Ensure Compliance with CMS Access Rule** - Identify and define critical service utilization metrics by June 2026, including standardized data definitions across agencies for waitlist reporting by 2027 and Quality Measure Set reporting by 2028.

**Ensure Transparency** - Launch an annual public dashboard and report on utilization trends, service disparities, and quality indicators.

**Collaborate to Improve Systems** - Partner with Nebraska Olmstead Committee and Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee to review trends and identify priorities for policy or operational changes annually beginning in 2029.

**Data Measures:**

- Average wait time from service authorization to initiation.
- Percentage of authorized service hours that are delivered.
- Percent of individuals reporting satisfaction with services on NCI surveys.
- Compliance with CMS Access Rule timeliness and adequacy standards.

**Goal 3: Develop Communication Services and Resources to Enhance Access and Self Advocacy**

*By June 2031, Nebraska will expand access to communication services and technologies to increase access to community supports and services for individuals with disabilities particularly those who are deaf or hard of hearing to support community inclusion and self-advocacy.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH)

**Activities:**

**Expand Resources** – Increase the number of registered ASL interpreters available through NCDHH.

**Support New Technologies** – Develop online training and resources to support usage of new and emerging technologies to support the communication needs of individuals across the state.

**Collaborate to Improve Systems**- Partner between NCDHH and community partners and organizations to develop pathways to certification and support recruitment of new ASL translators to enhance system capacity.

**Data Measures:**

- Number of certified ASL interpreters available through NCDHH.
- Number of resources and trainings available through NCDHH on access and utilization of communication technologies and supports.
- Identification of a plan to develop pathways for certification and support recruitment of new ASL translators.

## Education

**Vision:** Nebraskans with disabilities will have equitable access to inclusive, high-quality educational opportunities prepare them for meaningful participation in their communities.

**Why Education Matters to Stakeholders:** Education is a fundamental right and the cornerstone of lifelong learning, independence, and inclusion. Inclusive education creates opportunities for students with disabilities to learn alongside their peers, fostering social development and reducing stigma. It helps ensure that all students are valued members of their school communities and are prepared to contribute meaningfully to society. Nebraska is committed to ensuring that every student, regardless of ability, has access to high-quality, inclusive education that supports their full potential.

**Goal 1: Strengthen staffing capacity and equitable access to educational support services statewide, with targeted strategies for rural schools.**

*By June 2031, Nebraska will assess and address staffing needs and service availability in special education and related services to ensure appropriate support for students with disabilities, particularly in rural areas. Efforts will focus on gathering comprehensive staffing data and identification of workforce and retention strategies to close service gaps.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Educational Service Units (ESUs), Local School Districts

**Activities:**

**Conduct a Workforce Needs Assessment** – Collaborate with Educational Service Units and school districts to analyze current staffing ratios and identify high-need areas based on student demographics and service data.

**Identify Service Gaps and Opportunities** - Analyze current availability and utilization of related services by region to analyze service availability, identify needs, and recommend strategies for more efficient allocation and access to services, particularly in rural areas.

**Develop Workforce Recruitment and Retention Strategies** – Establish targeted strategies to recruit educators in special education and inclusive teaching roles, particularly in rural areas.

**Data Measures:**

- Completion of staffing assessment reports by 2028 and annual reporting of staff-to-student ratios by district beginning in 2029
- Completion of service availability and utilization mapping by 2028 and annual reporting by district beginning in 2029.
- Identification of workforce recruitment and retention strategies to support special education and inclusive teaching roles.
- Identification of barriers to service availability and utilization and strategic recommendations by ESU for efficient allocation and availability of services.

## **Goal 2: Strengthen Educator Preparation and Ongoing Training in Inclusive Education**

*By June 2031, Nebraska will improve both pre-service and in-service training to ensure all educators are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to support students with disabilities in inclusive settings. This includes embedding special education content in general education licensure programs, expanding dual certification pathways, and offering ongoing professional development for current educators.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Department of Education, Institutes of Higher Education, Educational Service Units (ESUs)

**Activities:**

**Integrate Special Education into Teacher Licensure Programs** – Partner between Nebraska

Department of Education and institutions of higher education to identify how best to incorporate special education content into general education licensure programs to ensure that all educators are trained in inclusive education practices.

**Promote Dual Certification Pathways** – Promote and incentivize pathways for educators to earn dual certification in general and special education.

**Partner with Higher Education Institutions** – Collaborate with higher education institutions to develop training and curriculum for inclusive education best practices to support new and existing teachers.

**Data Measures:**

- Percentage of in-state teacher preparation programs integrating inclusive educational practices and special education content.
- Number of educators possessing dual certifications.

**Goal 3: Increase Parental Engagement and Knowledge of Resources Beyond Schools**

*By June 2031, Nebraska will enhance parental understanding and involvement in the transition process for students with disabilities by providing comprehensive information on community supports, independent living resources, and services beyond the school system.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Educational Service Units (ESUs), Department of Health and Human Services—Division of Developmental Disabilities

**Activities:**

**Develop and Distribute Family-Friendly Guides** – Create easy-to-understand resource directories and guides for parents, detailing transition services and community supports following graduation.

**Host Regional Parent Engagement Workshops** – Collaborate between NDE, DHHS, ESUs, and disability support organizations to conduct workshops and webinars to increase parental awareness and engagement in transition planning.

**Collaborate with Disability Support Organizations** – Partner with PTI Nebraska, UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute, and other disability support and advocacy organizations to provide targeted support and information to families through printed, digital, and peer-to-peer resource sharing.

**Data Measures:**

- Number of families participating in workshops and webinars.
- Number of families and students accessing online resources to support person-centered

transition planning.

## Employment

**Vision:** Nebraskans with disabilities will have meaningful choice and access to competitive, integrated employment opportunities that align with their strengths, goals, and preferences.

**Why Employment Matters to Stakeholders:** Employment plays a critical role in fostering independence, financial stability, and a sense of purpose for people with disabilities. Meaningful, competitive employment enhances community inclusion and is closely linked to improved health outcomes. For individuals with mental health or substance use challenges, stable employment can also support recovery and reduce recidivism. Expanding access to inclusive employment opportunities not only benefits individuals but also strengthens Nebraska's economy by connecting employers to a diverse and talented workforce ready to help address labor shortages.

**Goal 1: Increase access to proficient and evidence-based supported employment, customized employment, and supported self-employment for Nebraskans with disabilities.**

*By June 2028, Nebraska will increase access to proficient and evidence-based supported employment, customized employment, and supported self-employment by developing and implementing a single set of training expectations and core competencies for supported employment providers across Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH). This unified framework will promote consistent, high-quality service delivery statewide.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)- Divisions of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Nebraska Department of Education – Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

### Activities:

- **Convene a cross-agency workgroup** – By June 2025 coordinate with VR, DDD, DBH, providers, and self-advocates to review current training models and identify common competencies.
- **Identify Shared Training Standards** – By December 2026 develop a draft set of shared training standards aligned with national best practices and stakeholder input.
- **Pilot Training Model** – By June 2027 begin pilot the unified training model with select provider agencies and collect feedback.
- **Training Implementation** – By June 2029 finalize and implement the unified training framework statewide, including technical assistance and guidance documents.

### Data Measures:

- Percentage of employment providers trained under the new unified framework.

**Goal 2: Ensure timely access to effective individualized services and supports needed to secure and maintain competitive integrated employment for individuals receiving HCBS services.**

*By June 2031, Nebraska will ensure timely access to individualized, effective services and supports that enable individuals with disabilities to secure and maintain competitive integrated employment. The state will track and improve the service timeline from referral to job placement, increase the percentage of individuals on Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers who receive support from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and monitor long-term employment outcomes, including sustained employment one year after VR case closure.*

**Key Partners:** Key Partners: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)- Divisions of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Nebraska Department of Education – Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

**Activities:**

- **Establish Baseline Data** – By December 2025 establish baseline data and definitions for key metrics, including average time from referral to placement and one-year job retention.
- **Develop Standardized Reporting** – By June 2026 develop a standardized cross-agency reporting process to track employment pathways for individuals receiving services through VR, DDD, and Medicaid.
- **Create Dashboard to Increase Transparency** – By December 2027 create and publish an annual employment outcomes dashboard, disaggregated by region and demographic characteristics.
- **Identification of Gaps and Opportunities** – By June 2028 implement targeted technical assistance strategies for regions with lower performance, based on dashboard findings.

**Data Measures:**

- Average time (in days) from referral for employment services to job placement.
- Percentage of individuals on HCBS waivers who are referred to and receive services from VR.
- Percentage of individuals who are employed one year after VR case closure.

**Goal 3: Goal 3: Increase the Number of Young Adults with Disabilities Pursuing Employment After Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)**

*By June 2031, Nebraska will increase the number of individuals with disabilities who enter competitive, integrated employment directly following completion of Pre-Employment Transition Services. This goal focuses on strengthening the pipeline from school-based transition services to employment, ensuring that students, families, educators, and employers have the tools and support needed to facilitate a successful shift into the workforce.*

**Key Partners:** Department of Education—Vocational Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Partnership, Department of Health and Human Services-Division of Developmental Disabilities, and Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

**Activities:**

- **Resources for Readiness** – Develop and distribute tailored employment readiness resources for students, families, and teachers, highlighting the benefits of employment and available supports.
- **Supporting Employers** – Launch a statewide employer engagement campaign to promote inclusive hiring, highlight success stories, and provide practical tools for recruiting and retaining employees with disabilities.
- **Training for Schools and ESUs** – Implement regional training and technical assistance for school-based teams to improve post-Pre-ETS employment outcomes.
- **School to Work Pipeline** – Establish formalized school-to-work pathways in partnership with businesses, focusing on internships, apprenticeships, and early work experiences.

**Data Measures:**

- Number of individuals with disabilities aged 21–22 utilizing vocational rehabilitation through Nebraska VR or Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Average number of day service hours used per individual on HCBS waivers aged 21–22 (as an inverse measure of employment participation).

## Housing

**Vision:** Nebraskans with disabilities will have access to safe, affordable, accessible housing in the communities in which they choose to live.

**Why Housing Matters to Stakeholders:** Housing is vital for everyone, including those with disabilities. Housing provides the stability needed for all other aspects of life and represents a fundamental choice that people deserve to make for themselves. Without it, people with disabilities face an increased risk of institutionalization or homelessness, which undermines their dignity, independence, and quality of life. Including housing in Nebraska's Olmstead Plan will ensure that individuals with disabilities are supported in living independently and given an opportunity to thrive in their communities.

### Goal 1: Cross-Listed Resources to Enhance Access to Affordable and Accessible Housing for Individuals with Disabilities

*By 2031, ensure 100% of rental housing development projects funded by the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority and the Department of Economic Development are listed on a single, accessible website such as nebraska.findhelp.com.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Investment Finance Authority and the Department of Economic

## Development

### Activities:

- **Enhance Website Visibility and Accessibility** – Update both the NIFA and DED websites to improve the visibility and accessibility of findhelp platform, ensuring seamless navigation for users including the use of standardized housing tags, such as *#limited mobility, #visual impairment, #seniors*, to provide transparency and increase ease of use for individuals with disabilities.
- **Provide Staff Training on Findhelp** – Offer comprehensive training for NIFA and DED staff on effectively using the findhelp platform to locate and share housing resources.
- **Enable Staff to Add Units to Findhelp** – Train NIFA and DED staff on the process of adding rental housing units to the findhelp platform, ensuring up-to-date listings.
- **Deliver Training for Service Providers** – Conduct training sessions for service providers through existing statewide systems such as the three Continuums of Care, Olmstead workgroups, and the Department of Health and Human Services, to help them utilize Nebraska.findhelp.com effectively.

### Data Measures:

- Percentage of NIFA and DED rental housing development projects funded by the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority and the Department of Economic Development listed on a single, accessible website.
- NIFA and DED rental housing development projects identified using tags to identify applicability to relevant individuals based on disability or needs.
- Average monthly usage of a single, accessible website listing rental housing development projects funded by the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority and the Department of Economic Development.

## Goal 2: Increase Housing Access for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI)

*By 2031, establish a statewide coordinated referral and tracking system with DHHS Division of Behavioral Health that connects individuals exiting institutional or high-acuity behavioral health settings to community-based, accessible housing options.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Investment Finance Authority and the Department of Economic Development, and Nebraska DHHS—Division of Behavioral Health

### Activities:

- **Identify Process Gaps** – By June 2026, partner between DED, NIFA, and DBH to identify process gaps which impede individuals with SMI from accessing necessary housing within their communities.
- **Conduct Pilot Training** – By June 2027, develop an improved process, including statewide coordinated referral and tracking system, and pilot training to DBH service coordinators to

- support individuals with SMI in accessing housing within their communities immediately upon discharge from existing institutional or high-acuity behavioral health settings.
- **Publish Resources** - By June 2029, develop resources and publications to create awareness about housing accessibility for individuals with SMI and awareness among institutional and high-acuity behavioral health settings.
- **Evaluate for Expansion** – By 2029, evaluate enhanced process for application to other populations with disabilities

**Data Measures:**

- Identification of process gaps and development of an improved process to provide housing access to individuals with SMI
- Number of DBH service coordinators trained on new process to support and connect individuals with SMI to community-based housing options.
- Number of individuals with SMI successfully utilizing a coordinated referral and tracking system to access community-based housing options.;

**Goal 3: Enhance Resource Sharing and Communication to Expand Access**

*To ensure services align with actual community needs, Nebraska must improve data collection related to unutilized or underutilized care hours. This goal involves developing mechanisms to track service gaps, such as adding targeted questions to existing surveys or creating new data collection tools. By analyzing trends in service utilization, the state can better understand where resources are needed, inform policy changes, and create more person-centered service plans.*

**Key Partners:** Department of Economic Development and Department of Education—Assistive Technology Partnership, and Department of Health and Human Services—Division of Developmental Disabilities

**Activities:**

- Beginning in 2026, the Department of Economic Development will participate in Disability Pride Month (July) to highlight the contributions of individuals with disabilities and bring attention to the need for safe, affordable, and accessible housing statewide.
- By June 2026, the Department of Economic Development will collaborate with community advocates to develop resources and publications to support individuals and organizations in their understanding of how programs can assist in securing affordable and accessible housing.
- By June 2026, the Assistive Technology Partnership and the Division of Developmental Disabilities will collaborate with community advocates to develop resources and publications to support individuals and organizations in their understanding of how assistive technology and home modifications can be used to support individuals with disabilities in their homes and communities.

**Data Measures:**

- DED participation in and support of Disability Pride Month activities and celebrations.
- Development of resources and publications to support individuals and organizations

regarding DED and ATP programs, services, and supports.

#### **Goal 4: Support Individuals with Disabilities to Stay in their Homes**

*By June 2031, Nebraska ATP will reduce the overall length of time it takes to complete home modification projects from referral to project completion allowing individuals with disabilities who need a home modification to remain independent in the home of their choice service in a timely manner.*

**Key Partners:** Department of Education—Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) and Department of Health and Human Services—Division of Developmental Disabilities

#### **Activities:**

- **Contractor Recruitment** – Perform activities to increase the number of approved contractors signed up with ATP.
- **Database Improvements** – Implement changes to the ATP database to increase efficiency and improve contractor retainment.
- **Services Coordinator Training** – Provide training to Services Coordinators on the ATP process and information needed when referring for home modifications.

#### **Data Measures:**

- Overall time taken from referral for a home modification to project completion.
- Number of approved contractors recruited.
- Number of trainings provided to Services Coordinators.

### **Transportation**

**Vision:** Nebraskans with disabilities will have equitable access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation options that support independence and full participation in community life.

**Why Transportation Matters to Stakeholders:** Accessible infrastructure is essential for ensuring that individuals with disabilities can navigate their communities with independence and dignity. While transportation systems offer critical connections to employment, healthcare, and social activities, gaps in accessibility—especially in rural areas—can limit full participation. True accessibility goes beyond vehicles and includes well-designed sidewalks, curb cuts, transit stops, and pathways that support safe, seamless mobility. Investing in inclusive infrastructure promotes equity, reduces isolation, and helps all Nebraskans thrive in the places they call home.

#### **Goal 1: Improve Physical Accessibility at Public Facilities**

*Ensure that all Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) facilities where public programs or services are offered meet ADA accessibility standards. By 2031, fully implement the NDOT ADA Transition Plan and annually report progress on key physical accessibility enhancements.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT)

**Activities:**

- **Conduct Accessibility Assessments** – Identify and document barriers to access at rest areas, NDOT-owned buildings, and highway system elements.
- **Implement Facility Improvements** – Develop and carry out a phased plan to address physical accessibility barriers at prioritized NDOT locations.
- **Monitor and Report Progress** – Track improvements and provide annual updates aligned with ADA compliance milestones.

**Data Measures:**

- Number of NDOT-let state and local projects annually that include accessibility components (e.g., sidewalks, curb ramps, accessible parking).
- Number and percentage of Local Public Agency (LPA) subrecipients with an ADA Coordinator, ADA Policy, and Title VI Nondiscrimination Plan.

## Goal 2: Advance Digital Accessibility of NDOT Web Content

*Enhance the accessibility of NDOT's digital platforms to ensure compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. By 2031, all NDOT public-facing digital content will be optimized for users with disabilities.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Department of Transportation

**Activities:**

- **Evaluate and Plan Website Enhancements** – Conduct a comprehensive digital accessibility audit to identify barriers across NDOT web properties by June 2028.
- **Phase in Accessibility Improvements** – Implement prioritized upgrades to improve accessibility of content and navigation across platforms.
- **Engage Users in Testing** – Collaborate with disability advocacy groups to validate improvements through usability testing and feedback.

**Data Measures:**

- Annual accessibility compliance rating of NDOT websites and digital tools.
- Number of accessible documents, forms, and maps published online each year.

### **Goal 3: Ensure Accessible and Inclusive Public Participation**

*Improve access to NDOT's public engagement processes to support inclusive participation of individuals with disabilities in transportation planning and decision-making.*

**Key Partners:** Nebraska Department of Transportation

**Activities:**

- **Develop Accessible Engagement Policies** – Maintain clear guidelines to ensure meetings are planned with accessibility in mind, including location, format, and materials.
- **Ensure Communication and Physical Access** – Provide ASL interpretation, live captioning, screen-reader-compatible materials, and ADA-compliant venues.
- **Include Disability Stakeholders** – Proactively engage people with disabilities in outreach and decision-making tied to the ADA Transition Plan.

**Data Measures:**

- Number of public meetings hosted with documented accessibility features.
- Number and type of accessibility-related public comments received on NDOT's ADA efforts.