

Leading Beyond the
Disability System

NATIONAL
LEADERSHIP
CONSORTIUM



ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

About the Bulletin

The NLCDD Bulletin is a free, web-based publication dedicated to providing relevant, trustworthy, and thought-provoking information to leaders, practitioners, and people with disabilities and their families involved in the field of developmental disabilities support services. The Bulletin will serve as a bridge between scientific journals and day-to-day leadership, exploring timely research and policy issues in the leadership and disabilities fields with the aim of promoting organizational change and assisting leaders to support people with disabilities to experience inclusive, valuable, and meaningful lives.

About the NLCDD

Leadership, Values and Vision: Transforming Lives and Organizations

The National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities (NLCDD) was founded in 2006 to develop current and future generations of disability sector leaders to have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to transform services and systems to be responsive to the needs, wants, and rights of people with disabilities. Our mission is to provide quality training, technical assistance, and support aimed at the development of values-based leadership in disability sector leaders. The NLCDD is focused on promoting the rights of people with disabilities to direct their services and lives and to fully belong in their chosen communities. One way the NLCDD works to meet this mission is through a nationally recognized, intensive leadership development program, the Leadership Institute. These in-person or virtual trainings focus on knowledge, skills, and supports leaders need to transform systems and organizations in the disability service sector.

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Introduction: Leading Beyond the Disability System

As we begin a new year, we need to look for new solutions to old and persisting issues in the disability service system. This issue of the *NLCDD Bulletin* explores what it means to lead beyond the disability service system in this time of increasing complexity, pressure, and potential opportunity. Across the articles, authors invite readers to look beyond traditional service boundaries and consider how safety, belonging, workforce stability, and whole-life outcomes are shaped not only by programs, but by relationships, policies, and leadership choices. Together, these pieces emphasize that meaningful inclusion and organizational sustainability are built through intentional collaboration, community connection, and values-driven leadership.

In this issue, several articles highlight what leadership beyond disability service systems looks like in practice. Alisha Fletcher highlights Delaware's efforts to improve communication between autistic people and first responders, and Leigh Ann McKingsley details The Arc's initiatives to improve interactions between the criminal justice system and people with IDD, demonstrating how cross-system partnerships can build safety and trust. Amanda Rich, Erik Carter, and others expand this lens, emphasizing that organizations are most effective when they are *of* their communities, working across sectors, including faith communities and civic spaces, to foster real relationships, shared responsibility, and belonging. These articles reinforce a central message: community engagement is not an add-on, but a core leadership skill.

Workforce well-being and stability form another critical throughline. Authors including Cory Gilden, Joseph Macbeth, Jess Perez, and Rachel Milano-Davis examine the growing strain on Direct Support Professionals as rising costs, shifting public benefits, and limited resources make an already demanding role harder to sustain. Their contributions move beyond surface-level solutions, calling for leadership that addresses structural realities while centering dignity, care, and connection.

The issue also provides practical resources, frameworks, and personal stories that remind us that leading beyond the system means aligning services, relationships, and communities around whole lives and shared humanity. Sheli Reynolds, Katharine Ragon, and Colette Cox describe how the Charting the LifeCourse framework can be used to shift the focus of services toward the "whole person" and outcomes rooted in real connections beyond the service system. Artist and entrepreneur Mara Clawson and her mother, Michelle Clawson, sit down for a conversation with *NLCDD Bulletin* Editor Cory Gilden to discuss how community and discuss how community connections have shaped Mara's art career.

We close this issue with practical tools and resources to help organizations think strategically about community engagement and collaboration, and to support leaders in building systems that are more connected, humane, and responsive to the full lives of the people they serve.

Happy reading,

Kristen Loomis Greenidge

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Building Safer Interactions: How Delaware is Improving Communication Between Autistic People and First Responders

By Alisha Fletcher

- Delaware has three programs to help first responders and autistic people communicate better.
- The first program is a training about autism for first responders. It is led by a retired Delaware State Police officer. Over 1,000 first responders have been trained.
- The second program is a Practice Traffic Stop event. Autistic drivers and passengers get to drive their cars and practice what to do if a police officer pulls them over. Forty-five people have taken part in these events.
- The third program began in 2025 and is called the Blue Envelope Program. The Blue Envelope Program is done in other states too. It provides drivers with disabilities with a place to keep important papers, like their car registration or insurance card. The envelope lets police know the driver has a disability and that they may communicate or act differently than a person without a disability.

Autistic people frequently interact with law enforcement and [social and communication differences can intensify](#) the likelihood of adverse outcomes. To help promote safe, positive interactions between people and first responders, the [Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism \(DNEA\)](#), housed at the [University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies](#), has partnered with state and local law enforcement agencies. Together, they've launched three initiatives across Delaware to simultaneously address the needs of law enforcement and Delaware citizens. A [First Responder Training](#) equips first responders, including police officers, firefighters, and other emergency workers, with practical strategies to better understand autistic communication and behavior. [Practice Traffic Stop Events](#) create a safe, supportive environment where autistic drivers and passengers can practice a traffic stop with a law enforcement officer. Finally, the DNEA supported Delaware's [Blue Envelope Program](#), a tool that signals to officers that a driver may have communication or sensory differences, helping promote clear and respectful interactions.

These programs not only prepare law enforcement to respond more effectively, with a better understanding of autism and other disabilities, but also provide autistic people with opportunities to build confidence and become more familiar with police encounters. By working together, Delaware sets an example of how to create safer and more inclusive communities.

First Responder Training

In 2023, the DNEA partnered with a retired state police officer — who also has a background in social work and is a parent of an autistic child — to create an autism-focused first responder training program. This award-winning, four-hour, in-person training is tailored to meet the unique needs of first responders across various agencies. To date, more than 1,000 first responders have completed the program, which is now mandatory for all probation and parole officers.



Practice Traffic Stop Events

Positive interactions between autistic people and law enforcement are often limited, which can lead to misunderstandings during encounters. To address this, DNEA's first responder trainer regularly debriefs with officers statewide. One such debrief revealed a critical need: an officer described a traffic stop where an autistic driver, confused about the reason for being pulled over, initially resisted stopping. The situation briefly escalated into a pursuit. In response, DNEA launched the [Practice Traffic Stop](#) program. This proactive initiative gives both officers and autistic drivers a safe space to rehearse real-world scenarios and build mutual understanding.

Delaware's Practice Traffic Stop program creates a safe space for autistic drivers and passengers to practice traffic stops and interact with law enforcement. This program helps both groups; officers learn about autistic communication and behavior, while participants gain confidence and become more familiar with the process.

Since its launch in 2024, 45 people have participated in four events. One parent shared, *"The experience was beyond beneficial for my adult son... It allowed the officer to understand his needs in real time and adjust."* This feedback highlights the program's role in promoting mutual understanding.

Blue Envelope Program

Building on these efforts, Delaware joined the national [Blue Envelope Program](#) in 2025. The Blue Envelope Program promotes safe, clear, and respectful communication and sharing of information between drivers and law enforcement during a traffic stop.

A driver's blue envelope communicates to law enforcement that they may have a communication difference, sensory needs, mobility limitations, or other differences related to their disability. For drivers, this envelope serves as a place to organize important documents, such as car registration, insurance, and health-related documents.

To complement the driving and Blue Envelope Programs, the DNEA developed a suite of [evidence-based resources](#). These include strategies and resources such as video models, visual task analyses, and information about whether to disclose a disability. All resources can be found online at www.cds.udel.edu/dnea/mockdriving. Promoting programs like these, that build community connections and understanding, help advance not only personal competence, but also community inclusion.

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The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability: Advocating at the Intersection of Criminal Justice Reform and the Advancement of Disability Rights

By Leigh Anne McKingsley

- **The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability's mission** is to advocate at the intersection of criminal justice reform and the advancement of disability rights.
- **Pathways to Justice** is a comprehensive, community-based program designed to improve access to justice for people with disabilities through a strategic two-step process: creating a Disability Response Team and holding a full-day in person training on justice related issues.
- **Just Policing** is a four-hour self-directed e-course that helps officers understand the culture of the disability community, increase their awareness of invisible disabilities, and highlight legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Arc is leading beyond the disability system by intentionally connecting with people and organizations outside of the disability system to create more inclusive communities for people with disabilities. [The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability](#) is a prime example of how creating connections with justice-related organizations, professionals and those with lived experience can yield huge dividends. Meaningful partnerships can create pathways to understanding between systems, and eventually more solid pathways to justice for those most at risk of harm: individuals with disabilities.

The National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability

The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability (NCCJD) was created in 2013 with support from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). NCCJD's mission is to advocate at the intersection of criminal justice reform and the advancement of disability rights. The Center works on a broad array of issues impacting both victims/witnesses and suspects/defendants/incarcerated individuals. Projects are funded primarily through federal grants, but also through foundation support. Target audiences include disability advocates, criminal justice professionals, people with IDD and The Arc's chapter network of almost 600 chapters nationwide.

Pathways to Justice

Initial funding for The Center included the creation of The Center's *Pathways to Justice* Program - a comprehensive, community-based program designed to improve access to justice for people with disabilities through a strategic two-step process. First, NCCJD provides support in creating a local, multi-disciplinary team, called a Disability Response Team (DRT), that brings together key stakeholders from both the disability and criminal justice communities. The team works together to identify barriers to justice and serves as the go-to resource on criminal justice and disability in their community. Second, NCCJD staff work closely with the DRT to provide a full-day, in-person training for law enforcement, victim services providers, and legal professionals covering key topics such as how to identify, interact with, and accommodate people with IDD and other disabilities. See our [digital brochure](#) on the Pathways to Justice program for more information.



By participating in a DRT, criminal justice professionals and disability advocates can...



Just Policing

Over the past two years, NCCJD has focused efforts to create an e-course, *Just Policing*, for police on IDD issues in order to make disability-informed training more accessible. [The goal of *Just Policing*](#) is to build trust between the disability and law enforcement communities. The 4-hour self-directed e-course uses an intersectional approach that considers all identities of a person when discussing criminal justice matters. It helps officers understand the culture of the disability community, increase their awareness of invisible disabilities, and highlight legal obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. By addressing ableism and biases, and supporting community policing strategies, the training aims to make the criminal justice system more accessible and trustful to people with IDD.

Just Policing is comprehensive in its approach and provides information on the various types of diagnoses related to IDD including autism, Down syndrome and Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The training was created in collaboration with people with IDD, disability advocates, and police departments in Oregon, Indiana, and Northern Virginia. [Videos from the training provide a peek into key learnings and can be used to educate stakeholders about the issue.](#) The Center plans to launch *Just Policing* later this year.

Connecting The Criminal Justice System and People with IDD

Just like anyone else, individuals with IDD come into contact with the criminal justice system as suspects, defendants, incarcerated persons, victims, and/or witnesses. However, people with disabilities are much more likely to experience victimization, be arrested, be charged with a crime, and serve longer prison sentences once convicted, than those without disabilities. Individuals with IDD with other marginalized identities (e.g., people of color, members of indigenous communities, and those who identify as LGBTQIA+), are even more likely to get caught up in the system.

Once entangled, they face unique challenges, bias, and inaccessible services, which only perpetuate the cycle of criminal justice involvement. There is often no screening for IDD throughout the criminal justice system, but even when disability is identified there is little to no accountability to ensure individuals receive much-needed accommodations; this goes for victims and suspects alike. At every turn, those with IDD face serious disadvantages, while at the same time, more likely to be a victim of crime, as well as more likely to be incarcerated in jail or prison. The lack of training for justice professionals along with the lack of accountability in the system to ensure the rights of those with disabilities are protected creates the perfect storm where those with IDD remain invisible, unheard and forgotten.

The Impact of Connection and Training

The Center, now in its twelfth year, continues its mission to build a bridge of communication and understanding between the disability and justice worlds. Through our nationwide information and referral service, we provide direct support to individuals with disabilities and their families, often when no other help is available. Countless training and technical assistance requests have been supported by staff with lived experience and expertise totaling over seven decades. The Center responds to national media requests (see [PBS Disability Reframed segment](#)) and actively pursues funding to continue the mission on behalf of individuals with IDD and families desperately seeking support.

NCCJD has created over 15 Disability Response Teams (DRTs) and reached over 2,000 stakeholders in over a dozen states through the *Pathways to Justice* program. Through the DRTs, both criminal justice and disability stakeholders have developed trusting and mutually beneficial relationships, felt empowered to raise awareness and effect change in their communities and identified ways to collectively address community-specific barriers to justice. *Pathways* trainings help criminal justice professionals better understand disability and their legal obligations toward the disability community, more effectively identify and communicate with people with IDD, provide appropriate accommodations and supports in their respective roles, and learn about disability resources in their communities.

The Center actively engages international partners through our work with [The Access to Justice Knowledge Hub](#). This international Hub centers the voices of persons with disabilities so they can be heard equally and fairly within justice system procedures. The Hub draws from the spirit and letter of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular Article 13 on Access to Justice.

By learning from people with lived experience and experts throughout the world, NCCJD seeks to imagine and build a stronger, more inclusive understanding of justice within the U.S. that supports individuals and systems alike.

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Being “of” Not Just “in” The Community as an Organizational Goal: An Overview of the Research

By Amanda Rich

- **Community matters:** Disability service organizations are most effective when they help people build real connections and feel valued in their communities.
- **Silos hold organizations back:** Many nonprofits work in isolation because of limited time, funding pressures, lack of trust, or unclear shared goals, but this isolation limits impact and innovation.
- **Collaboration makes organizations stronger:** Working across sectors improves outcomes for people with disabilities, strengthens trust and credibility, supports staff well-being, and helps organizations adapt and stay sustainable over time.
- **Community engagement is a core leadership skill:** Meaningful engagement means building ongoing, accessible, and equitable relationships that share power, close feedback loops, and include people with disabilities in real decision making.

Introduction

Community is at the heart of what disability service organizations *do*. Decades of research in [developmental psychology](#) and [disability support services](#) show that resilience and quality of life are grounded in community. The quality of disability support services is measured not simply by a person’s physical presence, but by the extent to which they are supported to become valued, connected members of their community. Community connectedness benefits not only people who use services, but also the organizations that provide them.

The ability to foster organizational community connectedness through intentional community engagement is a defining feature of effective nonprofit leadership, particularly within disability service organizations. For today’s nonprofit leaders, community engagement and working beyond service silos are no longer optional activities. They are core leadership skills that shape program relevance, organizational legitimacy, equity, [organizational health](#), and long-term sustainability.

Historically, however, many nonprofit and service organizations, including disability service organizations, have not consistently or effectively engaged with the broader communities in which they operate or collaborated across sectors. Instead, many have worked at least in part within isolated silos.

This article explores:

- 1 Why organizational silos exist,
- 2 Why they are worth breaking down,
- 3 Strategies for doing so, and
- 4 Why this work matters for leaders, their organizations, and the disability services field as a whole.

Building Blocks of Silos

Despite clear evidence that organizations thrive through diverse and meaningful relationships, many nonprofits operate in relative isolation from the communities they serve. Several factors contribute to this pattern of organizational and [service-sector silo](#):

- **[Perceived competition for limited resources:](#)**
Historically, nonprofit leaders have often viewed other organizations as competitors for scarce funding and resources. Traditional grantmaking has frequently, intentionally or not, rewarded individual organizational success rather than cross-organizational or cross-sector collaboration. This dynamic can reduce leaders' willingness to share ideas, lessons learned, or resources.
- **[Too much to do with too few people:](#)**
Nonprofit and human service staff are frequently tasked with doing more with fewer resources. Planning and sustaining community engagement or cross-sector collaboration requires time, staffing, and coordination — resources that are often in short supply.
- **[Lack of shared goals or vision:](#)**
Some organizational leaders report cultural differences, misunderstandings, or a lack of shared goals and values across organizations and sectors as barriers to collaboration.
- **[Lack of shared infrastructure:](#)**
Relationship-building and collaboration are supported by infrastructure such as systems and spaces that allow people to connect and exchange ideas. Conferences, webinars, continuing education, and service expos often exist, but they are not always designed to foster broad, cross-sector, or community-wide collaboration.
- **[Lack of trust in potential partners:](#)**
Leaders may avoid collaboration due to concerns about misaligned priorities, power imbalances, or past negative experiences with partnerships.
- **[Fear of increased visibility:](#)**
Some leaders are hesitant to increase organizational visibility due to concerns about scrutiny, accountability, or exposing organizational challenges while striving to meet their mission.

Reasons to Break Down Silos

Despite these barriers, there are compelling reasons to intentionally dismantle silos and build meaningful relationships across organizations and sectors. Most community-based organizations share a common goal: helping communities work better for everyone. Achieving this goal inherently requires collaboration and visibility.

Across much of U.S. history, people with disabilities were excluded physically, economically, and socially from community life. As a result, community infrastructure and social service systems were often developed without the input or leadership of people with disabilities. Disability service organizations are uniquely positioned to help bridge this gap.

By collaborating with other community organizations, disability service organizations can help ensure that the goals, needs, and priorities of people with disabilities are reflected in broader community initiatives, including housing, victim/survivor services, advocacy, criminal justice, education, healthcare access, and nutrition access. When communities work better for people with disabilities, they tend to work better for everyone, including people who are not, or not yet disabled.



Research consistently shows that effective community engagement and cross-sector collaboration benefit organizations in several key ways:

- **Expanded capacity:**
Collaboration allows organizations to pool expertise, share resources, and work toward shared goals. [Partnerships can expand reach](#) and access to new stakeholders, including potential clients, staff, board members, and funders.
- **Improved outcomes:**
People’s needs exist within complex systems. People with disabilities served across multiple contexts often face overlapping challenges related to housing, healthcare, food access, transportation, and childcare. Collaboration supports [more holistic and efficient responses and improves access](#) to data that can inform future efforts. Working beyond traditional disability service networks can also spark innovation and new approaches to community access, health, and well-being.
- **Long-term sustainability:**
Strong networks and partnerships help organizations weather crises, emergencies, and economic disruptions. Organizations with diverse, robust relationships are better positioned to adapt and respond during times of uncertainty.
- **Healthier workplace cultures:**
Encouraging individual self-care alone is insufficient to support employee well-being. Leaders can foster cultures of mutual support and community care by connecting staff, people who use services, and families to broader community resources, especially during times of stress or crisis.
- **Strengthened legitimacy and trust:**
Nonprofits rely on public trust to fundraise, partner, share data, and advocate effectively. Research links organizational trust to community engagement practices such as transparency, credible reporting, and meaningful communication about impact.
- **Clearer strategy and priorities:**
Community stakeholders are not merely “audiences”—they are sources of insight into changing needs, barriers, and opportunities. Engagement helps leaders clarify what is truly needed and adjust strategies accordingly.
- **Stronger evaluation efforts:**
Community engagement helps organizations understand their role within a broader ecosystem. Program success is often influenced by factors beyond an organization’s direct control. Models such as Results-Based Accountability emphasize understanding these interconnected pathways in order to “turn the curve” on key indicators of success.

Paths Toward Becoming *Of*—Not Just *In*—the Community

Relationship-building, partnership development, and embedding organizations within their communities are often grouped under the umbrella term [community engagement](#). At its core, community engagement refers to intentional, ongoing processes through which organizations build relationships with the people and communities most affected by their work, with the goal of shared learning, decision-making, and action. Unlike one-way communication or outreach, engagement is relational and reciprocal. It prioritizes dialogue, trust-building, and responsiveness rather than information dissemination alone.

Community engagement is often described as existing along a [continuum of power-sharing](#). Early [stages](#) may involve information-sharing and learning about community assets and systems. Tools such as [community asset mapping](#) help identify formal and informal resources that support community members. Further along the continuum are formal partnerships that involve shared goals, clearly defined roles, pooled resources, and mutual accountability. These deeper forms of engagement require clarity, trust, and sustained investment.



What This Means for Me and My Organization

- **Build skills that support meaningful engagement:**
 - ◆ *[Relational and communication skills](#):*
Leaders must listen actively, communicate clearly, and adapt language to diverse audiences. In disability services, this may include plain language, AAC supports, and multiple communication modalities.
 - ◆ *[Cultural humility and reflexivity](#):*
Effective engagement requires ongoing self-reflection, attention to power dynamics, and a willingness to learn from community members.
 - ◆ *[Facilitation and shared decision-making](#):*
Leaders need skills to support inclusive participation, manage group dynamics, compensate community members for their time, and close feedback loops.
 - ◆ *[Systems thinking and adaptive leadership](#):*
Engagement often reveals complex challenges that require learning, experimentation, and adaptation rather than technical fixes.
- **Embed engagement into [strategic and evaluation plans](#):**
Treat community engagement as a core organizational goal, with clear objectives and resources allocated to support it.
- **[Create feedback loops](#) that “show receipts”:**
Follow up after engagement efforts to share what was heard, what it meant, and what actions were taken — or why action was not possible.
- **[Design for accessibility and equity](#):**
Engagement that only reaches those with time, transportation, childcare, or comfort speaking publicly will miss critical perspectives.
- **[Practice transparency as a relationship](#):**
Transparency is not merely a compliance task. Instead, it is a foundation for trust and legitimacy.
- **Avoid common pitfalls:**
 - ◆ Lack of clarity about roles and decision-making authority
 - ◆ Over-reliance on the same “usual voices”
 - ◆ Failing to close feedback loops
 - ◆ Mistaking visibility for true engagement.
 - ◆ Only turning to outside organizations when more funding is needed

What This Means for the Field

- Invest in shared infrastructure that supports cross-sector collaboration.
- Fund and incentivize cross-sector partnerships.
- Center disability justice and inclusion in all collaboration efforts.
[Ableism remains pervasive](#) in communities and institutions, including disability service systems, themselves. Leaders must actively ensure that people with disabilities, especially those who are multiply marginalized, hold valued, decision-making roles within collaborative efforts.

The Bottom Line

Community engagement is not an “extra,” a soft skill, or a compliance requirement. It is a core leadership practice that shapes how disability service organizations learn, adapt, and fulfill their missions. For organizations committed to inclusive futures, community engagement is not simply about inviting new voices to the table, it is about redistributing power, deepening trust, and co-creating pathways forward.

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Faith, Flourishing, and Disability: Congregations as Partners in Belonging

By Erik W. Carter

- Faith communities are natural partners for helping people with disabilities to know they belong and matter.
- Belonging comes through having friendships and meaningful roles, not just attending programs.
- Leaders can build these partnerships by introducing people, sharing positive stories, and offering simple guidance to congregations.

Faith matters in the lives of many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families, just as it does for others. Spiritual beliefs and religious involvement can shape how people make meaning, find hope, navigate hardship, and connect with others. Yet this dimension of life is often overlooked within disability service systems, even as we strive to promote inclusion and quality of life.

Leading beyond the system requires building connections to the places where people already gather, form relationships, and experience belonging. Faith communities are among the most universal of these spaces. Congregations offer rhythms, relationships, and resources that can foster flourishing for people with disabilities and their families.

Untapped Opportunities

Faith communities are called to welcome and embrace people with disabilities. Across traditions, commitments to hospitality, mutual care, and shared life are woven into congregational identity. This also includes people with IDD and their families, even when their presence and needs have been overlooked. Indeed, congregations *need* the presence and contributions of people with disabilities and their families. Their gifts, perspectives, stories, and strengths can enrich and enliven a faith community.

In recent years, more and more faith communities are recognizing this gap. Growing numbers of congregations are reexamining their assumptions and practices and expressing a genuine desire to become more accessible and welcoming. Yet this openness remains uneven. Some congregations are eager and ready to move forward. Many others are unsure where to begin or unaware of who might be missing. Clergy and lay leaders often lack training or experience related to disability. As a result, uncertainty — rather than resistance — can inadvertently limit engagement.

For people with IDD and their families, this uneven response matters. Congregations are more than places people attend. They are communities where relationships form; identities are affirmed, and lives are shaped over time. Whether a congregation is prepared or hesitant can make the difference between isolation and connection, between being present and truly belonging.

A Place of Belonging

Our research with people with IDD and their families reveals ten dimensions of what belonging looks like within a faith community. Belonging is experienced when people are *present*, intentionally *invited*, genuinely *welcomed*, and deeply *known*. It grows when individuals are *accepted* as they are, *supported* well, and truly *heard*. But belonging is most marked by relationships. It is felt most when people are *befriended*, when their gifts are *needed*, and when they are *loved* deeply by others.

In faith communities shaped by these postures and practices, people with disabilities are greeted by name, missed when absent, and invited into meaningful roles. Families find places where they are understood, welcomed, and sustained in their faith. Congregations also begin to see practical ways they can support everyday life, such as transportation, work opportunities, housing connections, and relationships.

Disability service leaders can help this kind of belonging take root by strengthening connections to and capacity within congregations. When faith communities are supported in living out their calling, they become places where people with and without disabilities can worship, serve, grow, and thrive together.

What Disability Service Leaders Can Do

Leaders in the IDD field can help foster these partnerships. The goal is not to turn congregations into service providers, but rather to help them become places of connection, contribution, and care for those with disabilities.

Start with relationships, not programs. Partnerships are built person by person. Leaders can connect people with disabilities, families, direct support professionals, and faith leaders in ways that encourage listening and mutual learning.

Reframe disability. Many congregations default to a “helping” mindset. Leaders can help change perspectives by sharing stories that highlight the gifts, strengths, interests, talents, and contributions of people with disabilities.

Offer support. Most congregations do not need lengthy training to begin. Practical guidance about awareness, accessibility, and flexibility can go a long way. Leaders can help congregations feel confident instead of overwhelmed.

Capture what matters. Rather than focusing only on who attends, leaders can encourage communities to notice whether relationships are forming, meaningful roles are emerging, and people are becoming more connected to one another.

Leading Beyond the System

No service system — no matter how well designed — can meet every human need. Flourishing depends on relationships, meaning, and belonging, all of which are cultivated in community. Faith communities offer a hopeful example of what becomes possible when people commit to sharing life together over time.

For leaders in the disability field, engaging faith communities is not a diversion from our core work. It is a way of expanding the circles of support that contribute to rich lives. When leaders look beyond formal systems and also invest in partnerships rooted in community, they help create places where people with disabilities are not merely supported. They truly belong.

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When a Hard Job Gets Harder: Supporting Frontline Disability Employees Through Growing Costs and Shrinking Resources

By Cory Gilden

- Direct support jobs were already hard, and rising costs have made them even harder.
- High turnover hurts everyone. When staff leave often, people with disabilities experience disrupted services, agencies spend more on constant hiring, leaving less time and money for quality improvement.
- Wellness programs alone are not enough. Supporting workers requires fixing issues like pay, training, schedules, and career growth, not just asking staff to cope better.
- Strong leadership and community connections can help stabilize the workforce. Listening to frontline voices, improving onboarding and supervision, advocating for better funding, and building community partnerships all support workers and improve services.

Direct support professionals (DSPs) and other frontline workers have always carried the weight of the disability service system. Long before the pandemic and the current administration, they navigated demanding schedules, emotionally intense work, and wages that rarely reflected the complexity and importance of what they do. A job that was hard before is now even harder.

Inflation, rising housing and food costs, funding cuts, and constraints have collided with an already fragile workforce system. For service provider agencies and state disability departments, the result is not just a staffing challenge, but a sustainability challenge that affects service quality, continuity of care, and the well-being of everyone involved.

What Does the Research Say?

Direct support work has deep intrinsic value. Most DSPs say they believe they make a meaningful difference in the lives of the people they support, yet the structural supports around the role have historically lagged. The [2025 Relias and ANCOR DSP Survey](#) found that only about 46% of DSPs felt they were well prepared after onboarding training, leaving more than half without the confidence and preparation needed to succeed. About 21% reported they did not receive enough support from their employer overall.

Even before recent economic pressures, these conditions contributed to high turnover rates. The [2019 NCI® Staff Stability Survey](#) reported that DSP turnover reached an average of 42.8% annually, with some states reporting rates as high as 64.8%, far exceeding many other professions.

What has shifted in recent years is not just workload, but the economic reality. The average wage for DSPs in the United States hovers around \$12.80 per hour, with the higher end of the pay range reaching just over \$15 per hour. These are wages that fall short of a livable income for many in today's economic climate.

These wages, combined with rising costs for housing, transportation, utilities, and food, create financial pressure on frontline staff. About [38% of DSPs surveyed in 2025](#) report feeling they are not compensated fairly.

What Does It Mean for Our Field?

High turnover doesn't just disrupt staffing, it also disrupts relationships and continuity of care, and it increases recruitment and training costs for agencies. [Research indicates that nearly 575,000 new DSP hires are needed annually](#) just to maintain current service levels under existing turnover trends. When staff is low or unpredictable, organizations may prioritize coverage over quality improvement. Resources that could be invested in staff development, innovation, or expanding access are instead redirected toward constant hiring, training, and crisis management. Over time, this cycle erodes organizational capacity and makes it harder to deliver truly person-centered, community-based supports. Additionally, when agencies struggle to recruit and retain DSPs, people with disabilities are more likely to experience service disruptions, reduced hours, and frequent changes in support staff. These disruptions can undermine trust, stability, and progress toward personal goals.

Service provider organizations may try to come to the aid of frontline workers by implementing wellness programs or other initiatives to help employees deal with the stress of the job and economic strain. But focusing only on individual coping strategies without addressing systemic issues like low pay, inconsistent schedules, and limited career paths places the burden of “fixing the workforce crisis” on the very workers who are most challenged by it. Efforts to support systemic and organizational change are needed to advance long-term sustainability, as well as building connections with external organizations who can also support the workforce and inclusive, community-based services.

Research from the NLCDD's 2024 national study [Leading Our Values](#) and [related NLCDD findings](#) highlight that external facilitators such as engagement with outside organizations, networking, and outreach with community partners help agencies deliver community-based supports and build broader support networks. Leaders inside disability service organizations described external engagement and networking as key to facilitating community inclusion and expanding opportunities for the people they support and as ways to elevate the visibility and reputation of their agency in the broader community. When agencies are known and connected within their community, from recreational centers and libraries to advocacy groups and local businesses, staff can feel a stronger sense of purpose and belonging. Likewise, community ties can open doors to non-traditional resources, volunteers, and informal supports that enhance both service quality and workforce morale.

What Does It Mean for Me?

The challenges facing the direct support workforce are well documented. The question now is how practitioners — from provider leaders to state administrators — can act in ways that meaningfully improve conditions for frontline staff even amid fiscal constraints.

Here are some practical action steps that professionals across the disability field can take to better support frontline workers now.

- **Center frontline voices in decisions**
Facilitate structured opportunities (focus groups, surveys, regular check-ins) for DSPs to share feedback on schedules, training, wages, supervision quality, and job satisfaction — and act on what you hear.
- **Expand and strengthen onboarding and supervision**
Data shows only about half of DSPs feel well-prepared after onboarding. Investing in robust, reflective supervision and training improves retention and supports quality services.
- **Advocate for rate reforms that reflect inflation and workforce realities**
Use research-based evidence (e.g., turnover costs, wage gaps, retention predictors) when advocating with state policymakers for sustainable reimbursement rates that allow agencies to raise pay meaningfully.

- **Prioritize accessible, relevant well-being supports**
Ensure that mental health and wellness programs offered are truly accessible, not just on paper, and communicate clearly about what is available and how to access it.
- **Build career ladders and professional growth pathways**
With many DSPs saying they're more likely to stay if advancement programs exist, strategic investment in career development (certificates, leadership tracks, mentorship) is critical.
- **Strengthen community partnerships**
Proactively build and nurture relationships with local organizations, schools, civic groups, and advocacy coalitions. These connections can include:
 - ♦ Serving on local boards, councils, and stakeholder groups
 - ♦ Collaborating with schools, employers, and civic organizations
 - ♦ Partnering with managed care organizations and advocacy coalitions

These connections can expand support networks, enhance agency visibility, and bring new resources and opportunities to staff and the people they support.
- **Elevate recognition systems**
Recognition matters. Regular feedback, supervisor praise, and meaningful celebration (in alignment with DSP preferences) contribute to worker satisfaction and retention.
- **Offer flexible scheduling and predictable work hours where possible**
Structures that prioritize predictability and worker input can reduce stress and increase job commitment during financially strained times.
- **Link workforce support to service quality and outcomes**
Connect workforce investments to quality outcomes for people with disabilities when communicating with stakeholders by reframing workforce support as essential infrastructure, not optional enhancement.

The direct support workforce has long sustained the disability service system through dedication and resilience. But dedication alone is not a workforce strategy, and resilience is not a substitute for systemic support. By responding to frontline priorities, building external community connections, and advocating for meaningful investment, leaders can help stabilize and strengthen the workforce that people with IDD depend on for community inclusion and better quality of life.

Cory Gilden is the Research and Evaluation Manager of the NLCDD. Cory holds a Ph.D. in Urban Affairs and Public Policy and works with local and national organizations, conducting research and advocating for people with disabilities and their families. Contact Cory at cgilden@natleadership.org.



A Workforce Under Pressure: How Shifts in Public Benefits Disrupt DSPs and the People They Support

By Joseph M. Macbeth

- Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) do essential, skilled work, but their pay has not kept up with the cost of living, so when public benefits like SNAP or Medicaid rules change, they feel the impact immediately.
- Benefit changes are pushing DSPs out of jobs they want to keep, not because they lack commitment, but because they can't afford groceries, health care, or stable housing.
- When DSPs leave, people with disabilities lose trusted relationships and daily routines, making community inclusion, stability, and independence much harder to maintain.
- The National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) is calling for better policy recognition, stable benefits, and fair pay, because strong communities depend on a workforce that can afford to stay.

Direct support professionals hold up a part of the disability world that most of the public does not really see. Even people who work in related fields don't always understand the range of things that direct support professionals do in a single day, often helping someone navigate a work shift, supporting complex medical routines, figuring out and training public transportation, listening to, and calming someone during a tough moment, or just being a steady presence so the person can live their own life. It's big work. It's constant. And lately, it's gotten harder in ways that don't always make headlines.

There have been changes to the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), to [Medicaid reporting](#), and to the kinds of benefits that direct support professionals rely on to keep their own households stable. And because wages in this field have never actually matched the skills required to do the work, those benefit changes hit fast. Some folks don't notice them right away, but direct support professionals do. Service providers do. Families most definitely do.

What Direct Support Professionals Themselves Are Saying

NADSP recently worked with DSPs across the country in a campaign to develop Op-Eds (opinion columns) to submit to their local papers about their current hardships.

Robbie Blackburn

– Former Direct Support Professional; NADSP-Certified in Pennsylvania

Robbie Blackburn wrote about what it felt like to work as a direct support professional in Pennsylvania in his Op-Ed in The Valley Ledger "[Pennsylvania Must Address the DSP Crisis Now](#)" and then feel pushed out of a job he didn't want to leave. He cared about the people he supported, but the paychecks didn't stretch, and losing certain benefits was basically the last straw. Robbie talked about doing the math every month, or maybe every week, and realizing he wasn't going to make it. His story isn't unusual. It's happening all over, and it's not because direct support professionals aren't dedicated — it's because dedication can't pay for groceries.

Treana Anderson

– Direct Support Professional in New York

Treana Anderson pointed out something different, something you only really understand if you've lived it: a direct support professional's schedule changes constantly. Overtime, shift swaps, and last-minute coverage. And Medicaid reporting doesn't always line up with the chaos of real life. Treana said that one missed deadline, a deadline a person might miss because they were working, can kick a direct support professional off their health insurance. When that happens, the people receiving support lose someone they've built trust with, and that's not a small thing.

Kim Lamberton

– Direct Support Professional in Minnesota

Kim talked about how staff shortages change a person's world. She supports people who rely on specific routines and clear communication. When a coworker leaves because they can't afford to stay in the job, the whole rhythm changes. Important community activities are missed. Opportunities with friends shrink. The person supported ends up paying a price for a policy change they may have never even heard of.

Jason Coombs

– Direct Support Professional in Massachusetts

Jason has said openly that direct support professionals in Massachusetts often rely on SNAP. And when SNAP rules change, they feel it immediately. He's watched coworkers leave, not because they've lost interest in the work, but because they're tired of holding together two parts of their lives that don't line up: caring for others while barely holding on themselves.

All these stories circle around the same issue, even if they come at it from different angles:

- Direct support professionals are losing benefits they depend on.
- When direct support professionals leave, the people they support lose far more than staffing. They lose continuity.
- Community inclusion can't survive high turnover. It just can't.

The Human Side No One Likes Talking About

People sometimes imagine "community inclusion" as a big concept written into a strategic plan. It is, but it's also small. It's Tuesday afternoon routines. It's the direct support professional who knows which grocery store entrance is easiest for someone. It's the same face showing up every morning, so a person feels safe and grounded.

When we lose too many direct support professionals, the whole idea of inclusion becomes unsustainable. Families feel the pressure first. Providers feel it next. Eventually the community notices too, though sometimes only after something bad happens.



What NADSP Is Trying to Do with All This

At NADSP, we've tried to push the bigger policy conversations forward. A federal [Standardized Occupational Classification \(SOC\)](#) for direct support professionals has been a long fight, and we're still in it. Without professional recognition, the workforce keeps getting miscounted, misunderstood, under-supported, and under-funded.

We've also been talking more with people who work just outside our field; mental health advocates, leaders in homecare, and folks studying the workforce crisis across sectors, because these issues overlap service systems. You start seeing the same themes: wages too low, benefits unstable, and expectations high.

And we're encouraging agencies to document what's really happening. When a direct support professional leaves because they lost SNAP or their Medicaid stemmed from a reporting glitch, that shouldn't be brushed off. It's a sign of a system, and public policy, that's straining the wrong people.

At the end of the day, direct support professionals want to stay in the work. Most say that outright. But wanting to stay and being able to stay aren't the same thing. Benefits matter. Stability matters. And the people who rely on direct support professionals feel every crack in the foundation.

If we want stronger communities, we start by making sure the people holding everything together can afford to stick around.

Joseph M. Macbeth is the President/CEO of NADSP, the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals and has worked in the disability field for more than 40 years. Joe is recognized as a national leader in the advocacy and advancement of the direct support profession and a speaker of workforce crisis affect. Contact Joe at jmacbeth@nadsp.org.



Leading Beyond Typical Systems: A Strategic Blueprint for DSP Well-being

By Jess Perez

- Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) often struggle to afford basic needs. Organizations should help them directly through internal programs rather than relying solely on external referrals.
- An internal “Resiliency Program” creates a one-stop hub. This creates a dignified space for food access and adds vital services like on-site health screenings through community partnerships.
- Investing in DSP health and stability saves money. Proactive support reduces turnover and sick leave, ensuring consistent, high-quality relationships for the people we support.

In the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), our mission is rightly centered on “person-centered planning” for the people we support. We build elaborate systems to ensure their choices are honored and their needs are met. However, true leadership allows us to extend that same level of person-centered thinking to the workforce that makes our mission possible.

Leading beyond typical systems starts with recognizing where our current systems are failing. For too long, the “typical system” of support for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) has been reactive. When a staff member faces a crisis — financial or health-related — the standard response is a passive referral to an external agency. This approach represents a systemic failure; it treats the instability of a full-time professional as a personal error rather than an organizational risk.

I know this system is broken because I lived through it.

The Crisis on the Front Lines: A Leader’s Origin Story

My journey began in 2010. I found a job in a residential home and immediately realized: “I can’t believe I love coming to work.” I had found my calling. However, I soon faced a crushing contradiction: I was pouring my heart into this essential work, yet I could not afford to feed myself.

I worked two different DSP positions just to pay rent. I vividly remember the shame of relying on my landlord to bring me groceries and the humbling trips to the food bank. Later, in Supported Living Services (SLS), the struggle evolved from poverty to exhaustion as I logged 70-hour weeks to survive.

That evolution — from food insecurity to burnout — defines my leadership today. Leading beyond typical systems means acknowledging that DSP well-being is an organizational risk. When a DSP is hungry, stressed, or neglecting their physical health, the quality of care is jeopardized. Therefore, securing the basic needs of our staff is not charity — it is an operational imperative.

When a DSP is hungry, stressed, or neglecting their physical health, the quality of care is jeopardized. Therefore, securing the basic needs of our staff is not charity — it is an operational imperative.



Phase I: The Dignity Pilot Program

To move from passive referrals to active intervention, we are implementing a new vision at Milestones of Development. Serving our community since 1985, we now employ 155 staff members who support 85 individuals across Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties. We are leveraging my dual perspective as a former DSP and current fundraiser to build a system based on dignity and sustainability.

Our first step is the Dignity Pilot Program. Recognizing that sending a professional staff member to a public food bank can carry a heavy stigma, we are establishing a confidential internal system focused on immediate relief.

- **The Grocery Distribution Pilot:** We are acquiring high-quality, donated food and essential goods from commercial partners.
- **Confidential Access:** The application process allows for minimal bureaucratic barriers, upholding the professional dignity of our staff.

By catching a financial stumble early, we aim to retain valuable employees and maintain continuity for the people we support.

Phase II: Strategic Expansion to the Internal Resiliency Program

Based on pilot data, our future goal is to expand into a comprehensive Internal Resiliency Program. This shifts from simple distribution to becoming a Holistic Wellness Hub.

To provide holistic support, we will forge partnerships that position the program as a central coordinator:

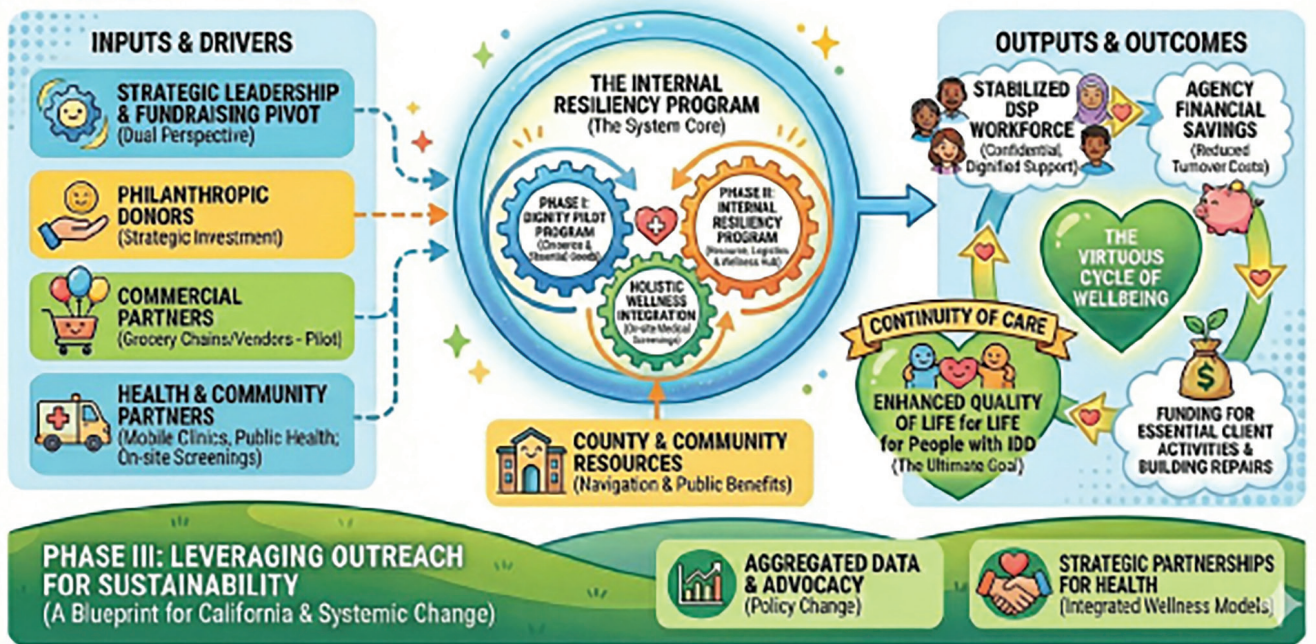
- **Field Collaboration:** We intend to open this resource to the broader professional community, allowing fellow providers to refer their own DSPs, fostering regional stability.
- **Health & Wellness Integration:** DSPs often neglect preventative care due to demanding schedules. We will partner with Mobile Health Units and Community Clinics to offer on-site screenings (blood pressure, glucose, flu shots) during food distribution days. This removes barriers to care, ensuring our workforce is physically healthy enough to support others.

Phase III: Leveraging Outreach for Sustainability

In my current role in fundraising, I am shifting the narrative. We are disrupting the norm by pitching “DSP Stability” as a direct investment in the quality of care.

Using concrete data, we show donors that investing in our internal support system is the most efficient use of philanthropic capital. Instead of funding the high costs of recruitment and retraining, donors contribute to employee retention. Every employee retained saves the organization turnover costs that can be redirected back to funding rich, individualized experiences that align with the personal goals of the people we support.

THE STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: A SYSTEMIC MODEL FOR DSP WELLBEING & ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE



Conclusion: A Blueprint for the Field

I went from needing the food bank to helping build the systems that ensure my colleagues don't have to. This evolution is the heart of leading beyond typical systems.

We cannot demand high-quality outcomes from staff who are struggling to meet their own basic human needs. True leadership demands that we build safety nets within our own organizations.

This is not just a local solution; it is a blueprint for the field.

If other vendors across the sector were to adopt this system of integrating food security with medical screenings, we could see a systemic improvement in the stability of the entire IDD workforce. A shared network of Internal Resiliency Programs would create economies of scale for donations and produce powerful data to advocate for legislative change. We must stop looking for external solutions to internal problems and build the systems that treat our DSPs with the same dignity they provide the people they support every single day.

Jess Perez is the Associate Director of Strategic Initiatives and Development at Milestones of Development. She holds a certificate of completion from the 2025 Fall Leadership Institute. Jess is a passionate advocate dedicated to transforming service models and finding new ways to elevate the standard of care in the IDD community. Contact Jess at jessicap@milestonesofdevelopment.org.



Building a Culture of Care in Challenging Times

By Rachel Milano-Davis

- Direct Support Professionals are under a lot of financial and emotional stress. When staff are struggling, it becomes harder to provide consistent, high-quality support.
- Leaders need to look beyond the disability service system and see staff as whole people. Showing care, flexibility, and understanding when life challenges arise helps staff stay engaged and supported.
- A culture of care is built through everyday leadership actions. This includes listening to staff, being honest, sharing decisions, and creating a safe and respectful workplace.
- Strong leadership during uncertain times means taking action, not just offering words. Using community resources, communicating openly, and making fair decisions help staff feel seen, valued, and cared for.

We are living in unprecedented times. Inflation has made everyday living increasingly unaffordable, and resource insecurities are a reality for many. Our system has long recognized the financial challenges faced by our direct support workforce. Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are the backbone of our services, yet they earn the least and often rely on public assistance for basic needs such as food, healthcare, and housing.

As leaders, we must go beyond the disability service system to create a culture of care that prioritizes staff well-being and resilience. This is not only the right thing to do but it is essential for sustaining quality services.

Recent delays in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the [Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#) distributions highlighted the fragility of relying on public resources and underscored the need for organizations to step up in support of an increasingly vulnerable workforce. While SNAP and LIHEAP have been reinstated for now, fears about future resource cuts remain. Leaders must anticipate and prepare for the next crisis, just as we do for the people we serve and the organizations we lead.

Why Leading Beyond the System Matters

When staff are struggling, their ability to provide quality and consistent support diminishes, and so does organizational stability. We must acknowledge the realities of financial stress, insecurity, and mental health challenges. Leading beyond the system means recognizing that staff well-being is inseparable from service quality. It requires empathy, adaptability, and proactive strategies that honor the humanity of those who serve.

Recognizing the whole person and supporting both staff and those they serve to maintain long-lasting relationships is vital. Life stressors can manifest as lateness, missed work tasks, and callouts. Leaders who build relationships with their teams can gently address changes in behavior by offering support and understanding. A simple, “Hey, I’ve noticed [insert what was noticed] and it’s not like you. What is going on? Are you OK?” can go a long way. Demonstrating concern and a willingness to help within boundaries leads to a stronger, healthier workforce. I’ve seen this firsthand when employees face life challenges. More often than not, this human-centered approach leads to greater levels of engagement and satisfaction and better retention.

Creating a Culture of Care

A culture of care is intentional. It's not a set of perks or a one-time initiative; it's a way of leading that embeds empathy and psychological safety into everyday practices. Core principles include:

- **Empowerment:** Give staff voice and choice in shaping solutions.
- **Consistency:** Ensure leaders model respect and reliability.
- **Transparency:** Communicate openly about organizational challenges and decisions.

At Values Into Action, we are doing this in a variety of ways, including:

- **Transitioning to Self-Managing Teams:** Decision-making moves closer to those doing the work and the people they serve, fostering autonomy and collaboration. Flexible, team-based scheduling respects personal circumstances while ensuring service continuity, reinforcing trust and shared accountability. This flexibility and accountability are present throughout all phases of employment, from scheduling interviews to customizing orientation to working within a support team.
- **Supervision as a Service:** Rather than focusing solely on compliance and performance, supervision is a supportive resource. Leaders provide gentle check-ins and coaching, encouraging teams to self-organize. Some supervisors use the [Charting the LifeCourse](#) framework to help staff explore, plan, and problem solve in their personal lives. This is done with acknowledgement that well-being at home impacts well-being at work.
- **Community Conversations:** Open forums create transparency and connection. Staff hear updates on policy changes and organizational initiatives and can ask questions. This builds trust, reduces uncertainty, and reinforces that leadership cares.

Supporting Staff Well-Being and Community Connection

Supporting staff well-being requires both proactive and responsive strategies, paired with strong community connections:

- **Mental health support:** Normalize conversations about mental health, provide access to [Employee Assistance Programs \(EAPs\)](#), and encourage breaks and PTO to prevent burnout.
- **Financial resilience:** Share community resources such as food banks, LIHEAP, and emergency assistance programs. Partner with local nonprofits for immediate relief.
- **Connection and belonging:** Foster peer support networks and create spaces where staff can share challenges without fear of judgment.
- **Community resourcing:** Anticipate workforce issues and maintain a rich network of local resources. Sharing these resources often sends a powerful message: *"We see you, and we care."*

Recent real-life examples from our organization:

- An employee experiencing domestic violence and related housing and transportation instability felt safe sharing personal circumstances with her supervisor. In response, her supervisor arranged for time off and, with the support of our Culture & Talent Team, connected her with the EAP and local resources. To further show care and concern, the supervisor bought and dropped off a food gift card. This support enabled the employee to tend to her personal circumstances and return to work more focused.
- During recent SNAP and LIHEAP freezes, we led a coordinated effort to compile and share food and energy assistance resources with our community at large. With this, we offered to help connect staff with resources in their local community, just as we do for the people and families we serve.

Leadership Strategies for Uncertain Times

Challenging times call for adaptive leadership with flexibility, empathy, and innovation.

Leaders must:

- **Stay proactive and responsive:** Continuously review and adjust policies and practices as needs evolve.
- **Reinforce purpose:** Remind staff of the meaningful impact of their work.
- **Lead with authenticity:** Share challenges honestly while offering hope and clarity.

At Values Into Action, we secured board approval for staff bonuses to provide financial relief during the holiday season, prioritizing the largest bonuses for those in direct support roles and earning the least. This decision reinforced our commitment to equity and care.

We address the topics of budget management, organizational sustainability, and community care transparently in our monthly *Community Conversations* webinar. Rather than avoiding hard conversations, we educate our workforce and invite action, such as sharing personal stories with elected officials or joining our advisory group.

Currently, we are watching Medicaid changes and preparing for rising healthcare premiums while making plans to keep our commitment to affordable coverage. Much like during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are bringing our community together to adapt proactively, support one another, and work to build a resilient future.

Leading beyond the disability system means prioritizing staff well-being as much as individual outcomes. A culture of care is not a temporary fix; it is a long-term strategy for a thriving organization.

Rachel Milano-Davis is the Chief Operating Officer for Values Into Action. She holds a master's degree in social work and is a senior certified professional through the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM-SCP). Rachel is passionate about bringing a human touch to leadership. Connect with Rachel Milano-Davis on LinkedIn or at RachelM@viapa.org.



Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) as a Leadership Framework for Whole Lives

By Sheli Reynolds, Katharine Ragon, and Colette Cox

- People's lives include many connected parts, beyond services or programs.
- Charting the LifeCourse helps leaders focus on whole lives and long-term outcomes.
- Leading beyond the system means using strengths, relationships, community, technology, and services together to support a good life.

Leaders in intellectual and developmental disability services are navigating increasing complexity. Workforce challenges, evolving policy expectations, and heightened attention to quality of life outcomes are pushing organizations to rethink what services they provide, how they make decisions, and how success looks. In this context, effective leadership requires looking beyond programs and compliance toward the lives people are trying to build.

The [Charting the LifeCourse \(CtLC\) Framework](#) offers leaders a practical way to do this. Initially developed to help people with disabilities and their families articulate a vision for a good life, CtLC is increasingly adopted as a leadership framework that helps align values, practices, and policies supporting meaningful lives across the lifespan. It reinforces a critical, straightforward idea that services are not the outcome; they are one of many tools used to support a good life, as defined by the person and their family.

A Leadership Lens Focused on Whole Lives

CtLC is grounded in a holistic understanding of life focused on supporting all people in the context of family, across life domains and stages, through integrated and diverse services and supports, addressing the informational, emotional, and service needs. People's lives are made up of interconnected domains, including daily living and employment, community living, relationships, health and wellness, safety and security, social and spiritual life, and participation and advocacy. Life domains influence one another in meaningful ways. For example, employment stability can impact housing options, transportation access shapes community participation, and relationships play a role in health and well-being.

For leaders, this reinforces the importance of resisting narrow, siloed approaches. Focusing too heavily on one area, such as health or safety, may unintentionally limit growth and opportunity in others. CtLC helps leaders maintain a balanced, whole-life perspective and ensures that organizational priorities support what matters most over time.



Leading Across Life Stages and Trajectories

CtLC emphasizes that people move through a series of life stages, from early childhood through older adulthood. Experiences and opportunities at each stage build and shape future possibilities. Leadership decisions made today about staffing, funding, or program design will either expand or restrict choice for years to come.

Using a life stage and trajectory perspective encourages leaders to think beyond immediate needs and consider long-term outcomes. Early life experiences influence adult employment and community participation by building responsibility, confidence, and social connection. Anticipatory leadership helps ensure that systems support these building blocks rather than responding only when challenges arise.

CtLC highlights the importance of experience and learning, including reasonable risk-taking. Society often denies people with disabilities opportunities to try new things or make mistakes. Leading beyond the system means recognizing that growth comes from experience and creating environments that support people in learning, adapting, and growing.

Integrated Supports for a Good Life

A core principle of the LifeCourse Framework, and a practical tool for leaders, is the [Integrated Supports Star](#). This principle helps leaders, individuals, and families think intentionally about how different types of supports work together. The star highlights five sources of support: personal strengths and assets, relationships, community-based supports, technology, and eligibility-specific services. Rather than defaulting to paid services,

the Integrated Supports Star encourages leaders to identify the support needs and consider the most effective combination of supports to achieve the desired life outcome. This approach promotes flexible problem-solving, helping leaders move beyond service silos toward more sustainable, person-driven solutions.

Leaders are using this way of thinking to guide program development, address gaps in community supports, and strengthen cross-system partnerships. Whether addressing transportation, housing stability, or high support needs, integrated supports help align resources with life outcomes instead of filling in gaps, one service at a time.



Leaders are applying LifeCourse principles to:

- Align strategic planning with long-term life outcomes
- Look beyond formal services with the Integrated Supports Star
- Guide program development and cross-system collaboration
- Support staff decision-making with a shared framework
- Evaluate success based on quality of life, not just service delivery

Leadership Beyond the System

When used as a leadership framework, Charting the LifeCourse provides a shared structure for decision-making across roles and levels of an organization. It enables leaders to model values, reinforce expectations, and ensure that supporting whole lives is a collective responsibility. Leading beyond the system means keeping people's lives, rather than programs, at the center of decisions. It means using LifeCourse principles to guide strategy, strengthen partnerships, and support choice, stability, and belonging across all stages of life. In doing so, leaders create systems that are better equipped to navigate change while staying grounded in what matters most.

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Mara's Story: How Community Connections Propelled a Deep Devotion for Art

A conversation with Mara and Michelle Clawson by Cory Gilden

Mara is a self-taught award-winning visual artist who has her own business, When Colors Get Along®. She was born with Familial Dysautonomia and has been painting since age 12, creating visual stories using pastels, oil sticks, and acrylic paint. She has done two art residencies, received professional development grants and artist awards, and her work has been juried into exhibitions by curators from well-known museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. We spoke with Mara and her mom, Michelle, to learn more about how community connections and recent times of unstable public financial support have influenced Mara's art career.

- Mara Clawson is an artist who turned her love of color and painting into a career. She started making art as a teenager, developed her skills over time, and now runs her own art business and shows her work across the country.
- Community connections helped Mara's art career grow. Programs like Art Enables, mentors, art residencies, and a documentary about her life helped her meet other artists, gain exposure, and open new opportunities.
- Collaboration benefits everyone. As Mara meets and works with other artists, they support each other. Working with other artists helped Mara try new ideas, build her network, and share her perspective, while others learned from her creativity and experiences as an artist with a disability.
- Supportive people and flexible services matter. Family, mentors, and service providers helped Mara find funding, legal support, and business resources, showing how listening to someone about what they really want can lead to a meaningful and fulfilling life.

A Promising Passion

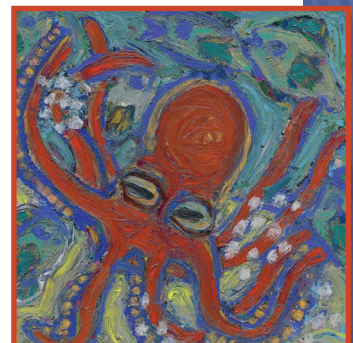
Michelle: At age 12, Mara attended an art-focused mainstream day camp that had an art show at which we saw some amazing art. We said, 'Wow, some parents will be lucky to take that work home.' And Mara's one-on-one supporter said, 'What are you talking about? Those are Mara's paintings!' That's when we knew that Mara could tell stories with her art. Her new passion led her to continuing to tell visual stories via various media.

Mara: I love mixing colors and seeing what shapes and designs I can draw.

Michelle: I think you [Mara] also had a desire to hang out with other artists, so we started looking for artists and other organizations that could support that, and we found [Art Enables](#).

Mara: Art Enables discovered me when I was 14.

Michelle: The director said, 'I'll just come to your house to take a look.' She selected one of Mara's pastel paintings and invited Mara to be in their first exhibition in a Washington DC gallery [Outsider Art Inside the Beltway Exhibition](#); and from then on Art Enables regularly invited Mara to submit artwork to be considered by their jury for their shows.



*Catching Around
with the Fishes, 2021*

Mara: I had to wait until I was 21 to be invited to be one of their resident artists.

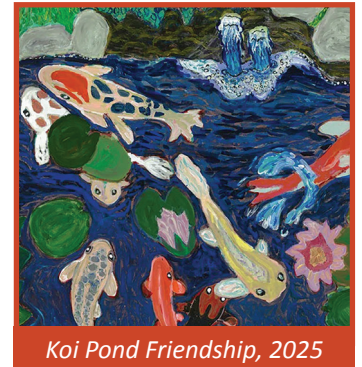
The Importance of Community Connections

When Mara turned 21, she became a resident artist with Art Enables. Being a resident artist there gave Mara's artwork a great deal of exposure. In 2016, while working and exhibiting at Art Enables, a documentary filmmaker, David Rochkind of [David Rochkind of Ground Media](#) visited their studio and approached Mara about her work.

Mara: He asked me, 'Why do you want to become an artist?' I said, 'I like to make people happy.'

Michelle: He said he wanted to pursue what she meant by that. So, his idea to do a little 3-minute film became a 37-minute documentary film called [Living Art](#) and that opened so many doors for opportunities for Mara.

In association with the documentary, Mara was asked to [speak at screenings at film festivals and other venues, host pop up shows, participate in exhibitions, and was interviewed by the press.](#)



Michelle: Art Enables 'builds an inclusive arts community through public engagement and awareness' and gives their artists invaluable opportunities to engage with the public in their workshops, their retail gallery store, and all sorts of speaking and licensing opportunities. Mara's career as a professional artist was advanced greatly by all of the public facing interactions, she has had that have also opened many doors for her. But for Art Enables, there would not be the documentary film Living art about Mara, and she would not have been flown to Houston for the [ReelAbilities](#) film festival and plugged it on NBC, nor would she have shown her artwork at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Cleveland when they screened the film there.

The Benefits of Networking and Creating Community Connections

The Living Art documentary and her work with Art Enables introduced Mara to even more opportunities for mentorship and art programs. Michelle and Mara also recommend that people use any existing connections they may have in the field of their passion.

Michelle: Connections that your family or friends may have can prove to be key for career development. For example, we happened to have a friend who was a professional artist who volunteered to be a mentor to Mara.

Mara: My new mentor recommended that I make art on an iPad.

Michelle: Mara branched out from using pastels and paints on paper, to creating digital paintings. Mara's mentor also encouraged and helped Mara to apply to the Kennedy Center's [VSA Emerging Young Artists with Disabilities Program](#) and Mara's submitted artwork won an award before it traveled to several museums across the United States. So, Art Enables, mentors, and the documentary film have led to many opportunities for Mara to exhibit her work, meet lots of artists, curators, and collectors, and find more openings for contacts and exposure.

Mara was an artist in residence at the Byrdcliffe Artists Colony for a month during the last two summers, which connected her with other artists.

Michelle: An art residency is where artists go to just focus on their art. For the past two summers, Mara applied to and was accepted to be an artist in residency at the [Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild's](#) oldest artist utopian community in the United States. It's a place where emerging and professional artists (including art teachers and professors) go to create; and Mara was amongst them. What she brings to them and what they bring to her is amazing to watch and experience.

Mara: I also collaborated with a few of the artists.

Michelle: At the start of the residency, each artist gives what's called an 'artist practice talk' where each person gets about seven minutes to show or demonstrate their work and say what it's about. Mara has an ending slide that said, 'If any of you want to collaborate, let me know.' So, as they all got to know each other, a potter asked you [Mara] to paint on his plates, and a poet asked you to illustrate one of her poems.

Mara: I painted a clown on a piece of cardboard.

Michelle: And later, when the curator of the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild's gallery visited Mara's studio and saw her artwork on cardboard, the curator asked if she could install it in an upcoming show in the Hudson Valley. So, connection after connection after connection. During the art residency, Mara coined the word 'collabyrinth' – a fusion between collaborate and labyrinth.

Mara: Collabyrinth - It's a made-up word for a maze of people connections.

Mara says she has benefitted from various collaborations, friendships made, and the inspiration that comes with working around other artists in residencies. But the artists she has met along the way have also benefited from spending time with her.

Michelle: We've asked them what they've gotten out of having Mara in the residency and they say, 'You've added so much to the residency!' We've tried to drill down into what that means. For some of the artists, they may never have talked to someone with a disability. They learned how to interact with and to appreciate someone like Mara. I also think they gained a new perspective from the way Mara sees things. Mara, you say that you like to make people happy; and I think you made a lot of people happy.

Mara: That's my biggest reward, the shiny big trophy!

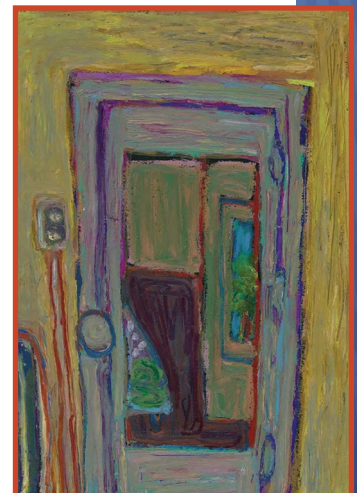
Michelle: I think people see their own art in different ways too, when they collaborate, like when you did the illustration for the poem.

Mara: A woman did a poem about 'between the moon and the stars.'

Michelle: The poem was very much a metaphor; however, Mara illustrated the poem very literally. Then, I think the poet saw her words in a different light.

And when Mara was commissioned by the [Art Center of the Blue Grass in Kentucky](#) to create two 'significant artworks,' there was another opportunity for Mara to share her knowledge and lived experience at a museum in Kentucky.

Michelle: When the museum first contacted her, they learned about person first language from us - which I think proved helpful when they wrote their NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] grant that did get funded for their exhibition "Connections: Celebrating Artists with Disabilities" in 2023.



Looking up to Yourself, 2025

Supporting Passion in Current Harder Times

Michelle: The cutting of DEI programs and funding impacted a lot of people. The opportunities for inclusion-type exhibitions suddenly halted, just like they have for minorities and others.

Michelle said they are searching for alternative resources for professional development funding that could help Mara to create more of an income stream through her artistic skills and/or her artwork.

Role of Service Providers

Mara's support from her support brokers at [Shared Support Maryland, Inc.](#) helped tremendously in her journey to become a professional artist. They also helped find and screen studio assistants for Mara, after Mara wrote the ad for the assistants. Mara's Support Broker also helped to connect Mara with [Maryland Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts](#), who connected Mara to pro bono attorneys who helped her obtain federally registered trademarks and to federally copyright many of her artworks. Mara and Michelle also learned about Supported Decision Making from Mara's support broker, so that they could better handle various legal documents that came Mara's way in her profession and as a subject in the documentary film. Mara's support broker also helped Mara seek and obtain grant funding from the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services for Mara to pursue independence through self-employment and become a more successful entrepreneur.

Michelle: Gail [Founder and Executive Director of Shared Support Maryland, Inc.] has been the big connector in many ways.

Michelle said that Mara's Self-Direction team has exemplified how to help support people's passion by learning about opportunities and being flexible in their roles and their thinking. Mara is connected with over 25 statewide and national disability and non-disability organizations that have supported her pursuit to be a professional artist and earn an income from her work, including the [Familial Dysautonomia Foundation](#), the [Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration](#), the [Maryland State Arts Council](#), the [National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities \(NASDDDS\)](#), [Silo6776](#), and more. Connecting with a variety of programs helps diversify funding and opportunities for Mara's art development and exposure.

Michelle: It is important to be aware of opportunities out there. If Gail had not known about many of the opportunities that she introduced Mara to, then Mara may not be as far along in her career as she is, nor as content. Service providers prove how valuable they are when they are willing and able to think outside of the box, contacting others in the field, and listening to the person's interests. There is bound to be a way for an individual to explore and pursue their passions in a constructive way that can help them engage with the world around them. Rather than trying to change a person's interests, it is better to explore if there is a way you can feed into that – then you will have tapped into a critical piece for a fulfilling life. If the person comes to you with a lead, they may need help seeking it out. It can be very satisfying for the service provider, too. If their customer starts taking the ball and running with it, you can start throwing them more balls.

Advice for People with Disabilities

Michelle: First, you have to figure out what your passions are, what you love to do.

Mara: For me, it was mixing colors.



Meerkat Outing Under the Stars, 2024

Michelle and Mara also said that it is important to find and hire support staff you can trust, someone in the field of interest who is willing and capable of mentoring you, and who is open minded about your passion.

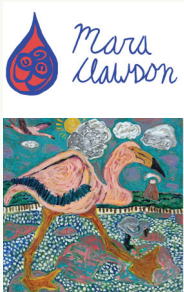
Michelle: Stay open-minded. I was willing to be proven wrong when I was not being open minded. When Mara’s mentor suggested that Mara try drawing and painting on an iPad, I initially felt strongly that Mara would not be interested in making art on a computer. However, Mara proved me wrong, and was not only willing to try drawing and painting, within three months of working on an iPad, she submitted her award-winning video of her digital art *To Survive* in 2016 for consideration for the [Kennedy Center award](#).

Michelle and Mara believe that if you follow your passion, then you’ll find your people.

Michelle: You just have to start somewhere and then push that ball so it can start rolling down the hill to collect supportive people and organizations.

Mara: It’s all about believing in yourself.

Interested in learning more about Mara’s art? Visit these websites featuring her and her work:



Mara’s website: <https://maraclawson.com/>



The *Living Art* documentary: <https://maraclawson.com/living-art>



Mara’s Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MaraClawsonArt/>



Mara’s Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/whencolorsgetalong/>



Mara’s YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/@maraclawson7646/videos>

Mara Clawson is a 34-year-old award winning visual artist who creates visual stories using pastels, oil sticks, and acrylic paint. After winning a Kennedy Center VSA Emerging Young Artists with Disabilities award in 2016, jurors from major museums selected Mara’s paintings into four different national competitions and exhibitions. She received both a Professional Development Opportunity Grant from the Maryland State Arts Council and a Pollock Krasner Foundation Award for being an Artist-in-Residence at Byrdcliffe in Woodstock NY (2024 and 2025). She was also the recipient of a Reach Independence through Self-Employment grant from the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services. She has also been an Arts Advocate, participating in Maryland Arts Day in Annapolis, sponsored by Maryland Citizens for the Arts. Contact Mara at Mara@MaraClawson.com.



Michelle Marks is the mother of **Mara Clawson**, and a retired biopharmaceutical patent attorney. Contact Michelle at beshert74@gmail.com.



Practical Tools and Resources for Leading Beyond the Disability Service System

By Amanda Rich

- Leading organizations that help people live full lives requires working outside your organization.
- Leading and connecting beyond the disability service system requires skills and resources.
- Understanding, connecting with, and at times influencing organizations and groups outside of the disability service sector will allow leaders to better support those who use services and staff.
- Tools and resources can help leaders develop their skills in understanding and engaging with their community beyond the disability service system. This chart highlights six resources that may be useful to your organization when trying to build community connections.

Resource	Resource Type			Paywall	Description
	Class/ Webinar	Toolkit/ Template	Articles/ Podcast	Yes/No/ Some	
Community Engagement Toolkit by Collective Impact Forum and Leading Inside Out		X		No	This toolkit is a practical guide that presents tools and frameworks to help organizations design and implement community engagement strategies that are intentional, equitable, transparent, and outcome oriented. It emphasizes engaging community members as real partners and provides guidance on roles, equity, power sharing, and how to build inclusive, sustainable participation in collective initiatives.
40+ Community Engagement Tools for Building Connected Communities by Visible Network Labs	X	X	X	Some	This site provides a comprehensive guide listing more than 40 frameworks, digital platforms, and practical methods designed to help organizations build and sustain connected, empowered communities.

Resource	Resource Type			Paywall	Description
	Class/ Webinar	Toolkit/ Template	Articles/ Podcast	Yes/No/ Some	
Asset Mapping Toolkit by Clear Impact		X		Some	This resource provides tools and templates to identify and map community assets and resources.
What is Community Asset Mapping? by Visible Network Labs	X		X	No	This site provides an overview, examples, tools, and resources to identify community resources and strengths.
Online Workshops and Webinars by Nonprofit Learning Lab	X			Some	The Nonprofit Learning Lab offers a wide range of rotating training and webinars for nonprofit leaders. Two trainings related to leading beyond the disability service system are on the topics of effective staff supervision and effective collaboration.
Foundations of Community Engagement and Outreach for Improving Health Outcomes Webinar Series by R4 Public Health Training Center and Emory University	X			No	This webinar series from R4PHTC and Emory University introduces the foundations of effective community engagement and outreach to improve population health. It explores key principles, practical strategies, and real-world approaches for building trust, fostering partnerships, and advancing equitable health outcomes.

What We're Reading, Viewing, and Listening To

Title: [Community Engagement StepByStep Action Kit, 2nd Edition](#)

Author/Editor: Hildy Gottlieb (2011)

Description: This book is a little older, but still very useful. It includes worksheets, planning guides, and tools to help you build and track a community engagement plan.

Title: [Community Engagement \(Strategic Skills for Public Health Practice\)](#)

Author/Editor: Emily Yu (2022)

Description: A practical guide for putting community voices at the center of decision-making. It offers tools for building partnerships and rethinking the *why, who, what, and how* of engagement.

Title: [Ask, Listen, Empower: Grounding Your Library Work in Community Engagement](#)

Author/Editor: Mary Davis Fournier and Sarah Ostman, Public Programs Office (2020)

Description: Even though this book focuses on libraries, the ideas apply to many nonprofits. It provides a simple, clear framework for understanding your community, building relationships, and designing inclusive programs.

Title: [Creative Instigation: The Art & Strategy of Authentic Community Engagement](#)

Author/Editor: Fern Tiger (2024)

Description: This book shares real stories of successful and creative community engagement efforts in different cities. It's helpful if you want concrete examples of what effective engagement looks like in practice.

Title: [Cooperate - Advancing Your Nonprofit Organization's Mission Through College & Community Partnerships: A Guide for Nonprofit Leaders](#)

Author/Editor: [Dr. Nathan A. Schaumleffel](#) (2014)

Description: This how-to guide aims to assist nonprofit organizations in creating beneficial partnerships that make it easier for them to implement their plans and achieve their mission and strategic objectives.

Title: [Building a New Table: A Community- Building a New Table: A Community-Centered Handbook for Transformative Social Change](#)

Author/Editor: [Brittany Lewis](#) (2026)

Description: We haven't read this book yet, but we're excited about it. It offers guidance on centering the voices of people most impacted by community challenges. It also provides strategies for creating spaces where many groups can share ideas and work together meaningfully.

Title: [Together We Grow: Building Communities That Thrive](#)

Author/Editor: Happen Films (2022)

Description: This short film tells the story of how one community built a thriving, resilient local hub. It can be a great conversation starter for your board or leadership team as you begin or refresh your community engagement work.

Title: [From the Ground Up: Community Development & Nonprofit Leadership](#)

Author/Editor: Good Growth Company (2025)

Description: This live recording of the Good Growth Podcast features a conversation between Daniel Fracavilla and nonprofit leaders Stachen Lett-Fredrick. In this conversation they discuss the relevance and practical strategies for community building by organizational leaders.

Title: [Community is the Care We Need](#)

Author/Editor: Tamela Gorden, TEDxDelthorneWomen (2024)

Description: This video highlights the vital message that if we want to support our staff and our own well-being, we must move beyond supporting self-care to focusing on community and communal support. Gorden is also the author of *Hood Wellness: Tales of Communal Care from People Who Drowned on Dry Land*.

Upcoming Events

Applications/Registration is open for the following programs:

The Spring Leadership Institute in Kansas City, MO

April 12-17, 2026

The Spring 2026 Leadership Institute will be held April 12-17, 2026 in-person in Kansas City, MO at the University of Missouri – Kansas City. Applications are open now, click [here](https://natleadership.org/week-long-institute3.html) [https://natleadership.org/week-long-institute3.html] for more information or to apply. This Institute is open to all disability sector leaders. If you are a leader with a disability or a Direct Support Professional you can apply for scholarship support to cover tuition and some travel and hotel costs!

Delaware LEAD Program – Spring Cohort

May 19 - June 30, 2026

The Leadership, Empowerment, Advancement & Development (LEAD) for Delaware Direct Support Professionals Training will be held as a hybrid program from May 19 - June 30, 2026. Applications are now open. To see exact dates and for more information, click [here](https://natleadership.org/LEADDEProgram.html) [https://natleadership.org/LEADDEProgram.html]. This 8-week program focused on the growth and development of Delaware Direct Support Professionals is open to Frontline Supervisors and DSPs currently working in Delaware.

The Wisconsin Leadership Institute in Green Bay, WI

July 12-17, 2026

The Summer Wisconsin Leadership Institute will be held July 12-17, 2026 in-person in Green Bay, Wisconsin for Wisconsin-based disability sector leaders. Applications are open now, click [here](https://natleadership.org/wisconsin.html) [https://natleadership.org/wisconsin.html] for more information or to apply. Due to generous funding through the [Inclusa Foundation](#), participation in the program is subsidized.

The Summer Leadership Institute in Pittsburgh, PA – Celebrating 20 Years of the Leadership Institute!

July 26-31, 2026

The Summer 2026 Leadership Institute will be held July 26-31, 2026 in-person in Pittsburgh, PA in partnership with [Achieva](#). Applications are open now, click [here](https://natleadership.org/week-long-institute3.html) [https://natleadership.org/week-long-institute3.html] for more information or to apply. This Institute is open to all disability sector leaders. If you are a leader with a disability or a Direct Support Professional you can apply for scholarship support to cover tuition and some travel and hotel costs!

The Wisconsin Leadership Institute in Eau Claire, WI

October 25-30, 2026

The Fall Wisconsin Leadership Institute will be held October 25-30, 2026 in-person in Eau Claire, Wisconsin for Wisconsin-based disability sector leaders. Applications are open now, click [here](https://natleadership.org/wisconsin.html) [https://natleadership.org/wisconsin.html] for more information or to apply. Due to generous funding through the [Inclusa Foundation](#), participation in the program is subsidized.

Applications will be opening soon for the following Programs:

The Fall 2026 Leadership Institute (Western Region of United States)

If you'd like to be notified when we open registration or applications for future trainings including the Institutes listed above, please add your name to the list [here](https://natleadership.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9z9rSudkRwkIVPg) [https://natleadership.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9z9rSudkRwkIVPg].



Contact Us: <https://natleadership.org/bulletin> • bulletin@natleadership.org

If you have any trouble accessing the referenced material, please email Amanda J. Rich at openroadicc@gmail.com.