

Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities (MCDD)

State Plan 2027–2031

Introduction

Montana is defined by its people, its communities, and a strong sense of independence and Montana works best when communities are strong and people can live where they choose, contribute, and belong. People with developmental disabilities are part of every Montana community. This Plan is built to help ensure they have real opportunities to lead, participate, and remain connected in the places they call home.

In Montana, community is not abstract. It is local, it is personal, and it is often spread across long distances across a large and diverse state. Needs and resources are different in cities, small towns, rural communities, frontier areas, and Tribal communities. This Plan recognizes that reality and focuses on strengthening the conditions that allow people to live, stay, and thrive in their communities—whether in a city, a small town, or a frontier area—and focuses limited resources where they can make the greatest impact.

Executive Summary

This Five-Year State Plan guides the work of the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities from 2027 through 2031.

The Plan was developed using:

- statewide survey input
- Council work sessions
- stakeholder feedback
- community discussions
- national technical assistance guidance

The Plan focuses on three practical goals:

Goal 1 — People Lead and Shape the System

Increase leadership, self-advocacy, and participation.

Goal 2 — Living in the Community with Real Access and Choices

Strengthen the ability of people to live and remain in their communities.

Goal 3 — A System That Works: Easier to Navigate, Better Connected, and Responsive

Improve how systems work together so people can access what they need.

The Council will pursue these goals through partnerships, grants, convening, advocacy, education, and systems change efforts.

How This Plan Was Developed

The Council gathered input from:

- people with developmental disabilities
- families and caregivers
- providers
- advocates
- public agencies
- community partners

Common themes included:

- housing challenges
 - transportation barriers
 - difficulty navigating systems
 - workforce shortages
 - family caregiver strain
 - desire for leadership opportunities
 - need for stronger emergency preparedness
 - rural, frontier, and Tribal access gaps
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How the Council Works

The Council does not run direct service systems.

Instead, the Council helps improve systems and opportunities by:

- bringing partners together
- funding strategic projects
- supporting leadership development
- identifying barriers and solutions
- promoting policy and systems improvements

- sharing information and best practices
- focusing resources where gaps are greatest

The Council may place added focus on rural, frontier, Tribal, and other communities with fewer existing resources or partnership opportunities.

Guiding Principles

The Council will approach this Plan with:

- plain language communication
 - practical solutions
 - partnership and collaboration
 - local flexibility
 - respect for self-determination
 - efficient use of resources
 - accountability and learning
 - statewide reach with focused attention where barriers are greatest
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GOAL 1 — People Lead and Shape the System

Goal Statement

By 2031, people with developmental disabilities in Montana will have increased opportunities to lead, advocate, and participate in decisions that affect their lives, services, and communities.

Objective 1.1 — Self-Advocacy, Leadership, and Participation

Annually, people with developmental disabilities will have increased access to Council-supported self-advocacy, leadership development, peer mentoring, and participation opportunities that strengthen influence in communities and systems.

Potential Activities

Leadership and Self-Advocacy

- support self-advocacy organizations
- expand leadership training opportunities
- promote peer mentoring networks
- provide accessible leadership tools and materials

Participation and Representation

- increase participation on boards, councils, committees, and coalitions
- connect individuals to leadership opportunities
- encourage participation in cross-disability groups

Rural, Frontier, and Tribal Focus

- expand outreach to areas with fewer leadership opportunities
- support local leadership pathways in underserved communities

Performance Measures

The Council's work often focuses on systems change, partnership development, and community capacity-building. Performance measures therefore include both direct outputs and expected outcomes that Council-supported activities are intended to influence over time.

Output Measures

- Number of Council-supported activities expected to strengthen self-advocacy organizations
- Number of Council-supported leadership and peer mentoring activities
- Number of Council-supported opportunities for participation in boards, councils, and coalitions
- Number of Council-supported activities reaching rural, frontier, or Tribal communities

Expected Outcome Measures

- Increased participation of people with developmental disabilities in leadership and decision-making roles
- Increased opportunities for self-advocacy and peer leadership across Montana
- Increased representation of people with developmental disabilities on boards, councils, coalitions, and community groups
- Increased leadership opportunities in rural, frontier, and Tribal communities

GOAL 2 — Living in the Community with Real Access and Choices

Goal Statement

By 2031, people with developmental disabilities and their families in Montana will have increased opportunities to live, participate, and remain in their communities with choice, stability, and connection.

Objective 2.1 — Ability to Remain in Home Communities

By 2031, people with developmental disabilities and their families will have increased access to opportunities, supports, and community conditions that help them live and remain in their communities, including rural, frontier, and Tribal communities.

Potential Activities

Housing and Community Living

- facilitate partnerships that support affordable, accessible housing opportunities
- identify housing barriers and collaborative solutions
- connect partners to housing resources and best practices

Transportation and Mobility

- improve collaboration around transportation access
- identify transportation gaps and local solutions
- promote flexible transportation approaches

Employment and Economic Participation

- support partnerships that improve local employment opportunities
- align employment, transportation, education, and support systems

Family and Community Supports

- expand respite and caregiver support partnerships
- strengthen local support networks
- identify family support gaps

Local Capacity and Stability

- strengthen local provider and community capacity
- identify delays, waitlists, and access barriers
- support community-driven solutions

Emergency and Disaster Preparedness

- improve inclusion in emergency planning
- support community preparedness planning
- promote continuity of supports during emergencies
- identify risks related to power, medical equipment, transportation, and disruptions

Performance Measures

The Council's work often focuses on systems change, partnership development, and community capacity-building. Performance measures therefore include both direct outputs and expected outcomes that Council-supported activities are intended to influence over time.

Output Measures

- Number of Council-supported activities expected to strengthen the ability of people to remain in their communities
- Number of Council-supported partnerships related to housing, transportation, employment, or family supports
- Number of Council-supported efforts expected to reduce barriers in rural, frontier, or Tribal communities
- Number of Council-supported preparedness and continuity initiatives
- Evidence of increased local opportunities and supports for community living

Expected Outcome Measures

- Increased opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to remain in their communities
 - Improved coordination among housing, transportation, employment, and support systems
 - Increased community-based supports and local partnership capacity
 - Increased inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in emergency and disaster preparedness efforts
 - Reduced barriers affecting community living in rural, frontier, and Tribal communities
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GOAL 3 — A System That Works: Easier to Navigate, Better Connected, and Responsive

Goal Statement

By 2031, people with developmental disabilities and their families in Montana will have increased access to systems that are easier to navigate, better connected, and more responsive to community needs.

Objective 3.1 — Coordinated and Responsive Systems

By 2031, people with developmental disabilities and their families will have increased access to coordinated supports, clearer pathways, and expanded opportunities for independence, employment, and community participation.

Potential Activities

Navigation and Information

- improve access to clear, centralized, and accessible information
- promote plain language communication
- identify navigation barriers and solutions

Cross-System Coordination

- convene agencies, providers, advocates, and partners
- reduce duplication and fragmentation
- improve referrals and handoffs between systems

Policy and Systems Improvement

- support policy changes that improve coordination and access
- review barriers in rules, practices, or systems
- explore ombudsman or navigation support models

Opportunity Pathways

- improve connections to employment, independence, and transition opportunities
- strengthen coordination between schools, workforce, and disability systems

Rural, Frontier, and Tribal Systems Access

- support locally responsive coordination models
- identify geographic barriers and practical solutions

Performance Measures

The Council's work often focuses on systems change, partnership development, and community capacity-building. Performance measures therefore include both direct outputs and expected outcomes that Council-supported activities are intended to influence over time.

Output Measures

- Number of Council-supported activities expected to improve coordination across systems
- Number of Council-supported initiatives expected to improve navigation or information access
- Number of Council-supported efforts expected to reduce duplication or barriers
- Number of Council-supported policy or systems improvement efforts
- Number of Council-supported rural, frontier, or Tribal access initiatives

Expected Outcome Measures

- Increased access to clear and coordinated information and supports
 - Improved coordination across systems and service pathways
 - Reduced duplication and fragmentation across systems
 - Increased opportunities for independence, employment, and community participation
 - Improved responsiveness to community needs, especially in rural, frontier, and Tribal communities
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Definitions

- **Council-Supported** – Activities led, funded, convened, facilitated, coordinated, or strategically advanced by the Council.
 - **Systems Change** – Improving how organizations, agencies, and partners work together to create better access and outcomes.
 - **Community Conditions** – Local factors that affect quality of life and opportunity, such as housing, transportation, employment access, supports, and safety.
 - **Rural / Frontier / Tribal Communities** – Areas that may face greater distance, fewer resources, limited service infrastructure, or reduced access to opportunities.
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Annual Review and Updates

The Council will review progress each year and may adjust strategies based on:

- community input
- data and performance results
- emerging opportunities
- changing statewide needs
- available resources

The Council will focus on continuous improvement while staying aligned with this Five-Year Plan.

Closing Statement

This Plan reflects a practical belief: when people have the opportunity to lead, when communities are strong, and when systems work better, Montana is stronger for everyone.