Thank you for recognizing March as Disabilities Awareness Month in Iowa!

Make decisions WITH people with disabilities!

- Disability touches everyone eventually.
- 393,816 Iowans report having a disability.
- Some Iowans are born with disabilities, others acquire disabilities through accident, illness, or aging.
- Six out of 10 people with disabilities vote.

People with disabilities and family members of people with disabilities are often excluded from decisions that have great impact on their day-to-day lives. As lawmakers you are doing what is best for your community. However, without having the experience of living with a disability, a proposed change to a policy intended to be helpful could actually be hurtful to the disability community.

It is important that people with disabilities are involved in policy decisions and solutions that affect their lives.

A seat at the table

People with disabilities are ready to share their lived experiences to help solve the problems facing Iowans. They deserve a seat at the table. Self and family advocates are encouraged to develop relationships with their legislators. The Iowa DD Council encourages legislators to do the same. The Iowa DD Council invests in resources to help advocates tell their stories and be leaders. We also know that you want to hear their personal stories.

Suggestions for making decisions WITH people with disabilities:

- Seek out! people with disabilities- advocacy groups are here to help you connect.
- Invite! people with disabilities to the table.
- Include! Make sure meetings are accessible AND communication is inclusive for all! (interpreters, large print, screen readability).
- Ask! “How will this impact you?”
- Listen! It can be scary to share very personal details—it means the issue is very important to them.
- Follow-Up! Let advocates know how you stand on policies and the actions you may take.
- Work together for an inclusive Iowa!

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What is a developmental disability?

Developmental disabilities are disabilities that occur from birth to the first few years of development, and usually last someone’s entire life.

Common developmental disabilities include: autism, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, spina bifida, learning or intellectual disabilities, hearing loss, blindness, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Developmental disabilities effect all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

There are no cures for developmental disabilities.

Estimates in the United States suggest that one in six, or 15% of all kids from ages 3 – 17 have one or more developmental disabilities or delays.

People with developmental disabilities are your:

- classmates
- co-workers
- customers
- neighbors
- friends

They are thriving in our communities but not without challenges. You can help eliminate those challenges by working together!