



TEXAS COUNCIL for
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

*Inclusive.
Innovative.
Impactful.*

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ABOUT TCDD

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD) works with advocates, families, and organizations to share best practices, provide technical assistance, and offer tools for people to take action on issues important to their lives. In 2025, we embraced our role as a connector and resource for the disability community.

Throughout our state, Texans with developmental disabilities (DD) have goals that many of us share. Getting a good education. Finding jobs that satisfy personal interests and support independent living. Nurturing friendships and building families.

As universal as these aspirations are, people with DD often face unique barriers to education, employment, housing, transportation, health care, and other things necessary for healthy and happy lives. TCDD connects with communities to understand and address these barriers.

Led by people with DD and their families, our Council offers personal experience and valuable expertise. Through grant projects, public policy, and community engagement, we approach complex problems with people-centered solutions. This annual report highlights how our efforts have helped build capacity, foster collaboration, and create pathways for impactful change across Texas.

Left: Participants create vision boards in the Partners in Academic Leadership program coordinated by Paso del Norte Children's Development Center.



Our mission is to create change so that all people with disabilities are

fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives.



Brianna Garcia (right) shows a completion certificate from Project Amistad's TCDD-funded Money Basics program. With Garcia are Angeline Austin, Money Basics volunteer, and Jose Martinez, Project Amistad resource coach.

TCDD helps people with DD achieve their goals for independence, productivity, and community integration by enhancing a comprehensive system of services and support across Texas. Through community engagement, grant projects, and policy advocacy, TCDD offers ways to change how statewide systems work. TCDD is one of 56 state councils on DD in the U.S. and its territories. DD Councils were created through the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, also known as the DD Act.

HOW WE WORK



GRANT PROJECTS



LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



PUBLIC POLICY

TCDD FUNDING

2025 Federal Award: \$6.2 million

53% Grants to statewide partners

34% TCDD-led training, policy analysis, and engagement

13% General administration

LET'S CONNECT

We invite you to get involved in our work to improve the lives of Texans with DD! You can visit us online at tcdd.texas.gov to connect with a disability community coordinator in your area, contact our staff, find useful resources and information, sign up for our email alerts, follow us on social media, and discover more ways to engage with TCDD and the disability community across Texas.

OUR COUNCIL

TCDD is led by a governor-appointed Council that includes people with DD, family members of people with DD, and representatives from programs and organizations that provide DD services and support. Council members accomplish directives outlined in the DD Act. They serve as a resource for Texas decision-makers and community leaders on issues that impact all aspects of life for people with DD.

2025 Council Members

Andrew “Andy” Crim, Chair, Fort Worth
Jamie Thomas, Vice Chair, Abilene
Edward Baffoe, Forney
Deborah “Debbie” Carlisle, San Antonio
Kyle Cox, College Station
Beatrice Degree, Missouri City
Roni Jo Frazier, Porter
Shana Halvorsen, Sugar Land
Barbara Knighton, Spring
Abigail “Abby” Maddux, North Richland Hills
Lisa Marengo, El Paso
Wendy Maurer, Conroe
Scott McAvoy, Cedar Park
Amanda Miles, Alvin
Angela “Angie” Panzica, Houston
Michael Peace, Poteet
Ashley Sattler, Beaumont
Robert Schier III, Elgin
Eric Shahid, Somerville
Meridith Silcox, Splendora
Lora Taylor, Katy
Kimberly Torres, Houston



TCDD Council members and staff in the central court rotunda of the Texas Capitol Building Extension.

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“DD Councils are important because they are made of unique individuals from diverse backgrounds who consistently strive to improve and use their knowledge and expertise to ‘move the needle’ by funding programs and supporting public policies that seek to educate, empower, and improve the lives of people with disabilities.”

Angie Panzica, Council member from Houston

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Agency Representatives

Disability Rights Texas: Sean Jackson, Patty Anderson; Texas Center for Disability Studies at The University of Texas at Austin: Dr. Sandra Magaña, Dr. Nina Zuna; Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University: Dr. Dan Zhang, Robin Miller; Texas Education Agency (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act): Elizabeth Danner, Katherine Snelling; Texas Health and Human Services Commission (Title XIX Medicaid): Kate Layman; Texas Health and Human Services Commission (Older Americans Act): Sara Damiano, Katelyn Le; Texas Workforce Commission (Rehabilitation Act): Jonas Schwartz; Texas Department of State Health Services (Title V Maternal and Child Health): Kristi Miller, Ivy Goldstein

YOUR GO-TO EXPERTS ON DISABILITY

The decisions of Texas lawmakers should be rooted in evidence and informed by real-life experiences. TCDD serves as a resource for legislators and their staff to help them better understand the scope and impact of disability-related legislation. Our Council is led by people with DD and their family members, giving TCDD the vital perspective of lived experience. By connecting with legislators, agency officials, and the public, Council members represent and improve the lives of people with DD across Texas.

Right: Rep. Donna Howard; Shana Halvorsen, TCDD Council member; Rachel Quevedo, policy director for Rep. Christian Manuel; and Dr. Beth Stalvey, TCDD executive director.



LEGISLATIVE
ANALYSIS



UNDERSTANDING
CONSTITUENTS
WITH DISABILITIES



POLICY
EDUCATION

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR RESPONSIVE POLICY

Public policy engagement is essential to creating change so that Texans with DD are fully included in their communities and lead self-determined lives. TCDD serves as a bridge between policymakers and the disability community. By building relationships with the public and policymakers, our Council facilitates conversations for sustainable, impactful change.

Texas lawmakers handle a wide range of legislative issues. But many legislators might not have a full background and understanding of issues that impact their constituents with disabilities. TCDD has first-hand knowledge of these topics. We are not lobbyists. As a nonpartisan organization, we have a simple goal to serve as a resource. We gather public input and evidence-based research to give policymakers reliable, unbiased data to make their decisions. We are here to inform.



CONNECT WITH
PEOPLE WITH DD



BE A RESOURCE
FOR LEGISLATORS



HOST COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS



GATHER INPUT &
EVIDENCE-BASED
RESEARCH



PROVIDE POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS



SHARE ADVOCACY
OPPORTUNITIES

PUBLIC POLICY

The Texas Legislature convened for a 140-day biennial session in 2025. TCDD informed lawmakers of the needs of people with disabilities and ensured the public was aware of how disability issues were addressed at the State Capitol. This began by distributing Council-approved Public Policy Priorities on the following topics:

- Accessibility
- Attendant Wages and Training
- Early Childhood and Inclusive Education
- Employment
- Funding for Services
- Health and Safety
- Personal and Civil Rights

TCDD held a series of virtual roundtables on our Public Policy Priorities and used the comments from attendees to better inform the conversations we had with lawmakers and their staff. The roundtables also resulted in the filing of two new pieces of legislation!



Scott Daigle, TCDD public policy director; Linda Logan and Lauren Gerken, TCDD senior public policy analysts.

ENGAGING LAWMAKERS & THE PUBLIC



From left, Marisa Iannaccone, TCDD public policy analyst; Scott Daigle, TCDD public policy director, Kenya Rodriguez and Kendra Gardiner, TCDD public policy interns.

19

Bills of the Week Featured

9

Bills of the Week Signed Into Law

3,620+

Bill of the Week One-Pagers Distributed at the Capitol

In conjunction with TCDD's quarterly meeting in February, Council members visited their lawmakers' Capitol offices to discuss disability issues. The Council also held a Meet & Greet that lawmakers and dozens of legislative staffers attended. The event was a great opportunity to discuss the Council's work, answer questions, and offer TCDD as a resource for lawmakers.

Throughout the session, TCDD provided regular updates on legislative activities. This included our Texas Legislative News, which featured recaps of the Council's work, explanations of legislative processes, and notices of relevant committee hearings. We also continued our popular Bill of the Week feature, which provided important details on key disability measures. Each Bill of the Week feature included a one-pager for individuals to share with their networks and lawmakers. We delivered printed copies to the offices of all 181 legislators every week.

COLLABORATION WITH ADVOCACY PARTNERS

TCDD works with a number of organizations to advocate on behalf of people with disabilities, including The Arc of Texas, the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, Disability Rights Texas, Texas Advocates, Texas Parent to Parent, and others. TCDD staff facilitated a weekly virtual call with partners throughout the legislative session to discuss the latest developments, bring attention to bills and issues, prepare for committee hearings, and coordinate advocacy strategies.

We provided presentations to a variety of groups, sharing the status of specific bills and tips for being an effective advocate. We also partnered with organizations to host “A Capitol Recap”, an informational webinar that detailed the legislative outcomes on topics such as attendant wages, education savings accounts, student discipline, and more.



From left, Lauren Gerken, TCDD senior public policy analyst; Michael Clarke, deputy director of public policy and advocacy at The Arc of Texas; Rep. Claudia Ordaz; and David Feigen, director of early learning policy at Texans Care for Children.

TCDD LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS

Following the close of the session, the Council recognized a group of lawmakers as TCDD Legislative Champions for their work on measures to improve inclusion, remove barriers, and enhance the quality of life for Texans with DD.

This year's set of TCDD Legislative Champions authored bills on numerous disability-related topics, including special education, postsecondary opportunities, DD-service coordination, and more.

TCDD named 11 lawmakers as champions:

- **Rep. Alma Allen** (HD 131, Houston)
- **Rep. John Bucy III** (HD 136, Austin)
- **Rep. Mary González** (HD 75, El Paso)
- **Rep. Ana Hernandez** (HD 143, Houston)
- **Rep. Suleman Lalani** (HD 76, Sugar Land)
- **Rep. Christian Manuel** (HD 22, Beaumont)
- **Rep. Claudia Ordaz** (HD 79, El Paso)
- **Rep. Toni Rose** (HD 110, Dallas)
- **Sen. José Menéndez** (SD 26, San Antonio)
- **Sen. Tan Parker** (SD 12, Flower Mound)
- **Sen. Judith Zaffirini** (SD 21, Laredo)

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“I am honored to be recognized by the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities as a Legislative Champion during the 89th Legislative Session. ... I remain committed to continuing this work, building momentum, and championing policies that uphold dignity, safety, and stronger support systems for individuals with disabilities and their families.”

Rep. Suleman Lalani, Texas House District 76

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LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

Beyond sharing information, TCDD creates pathways for people with DD to speak for themselves on issues that matter most to them. In 2025, we strengthened engagement across all audiences by offering tools, opportunities, and platforms for advocacy and leadership. These included interactive webinars, intensive advocacy sprints, and programs that successfully prepared individuals to apply for and serve in leadership positions. As a result, self-advocates and families played an active role in policy efforts throughout the year. They participated in legislative visits, testified at hearings, and attended coalition meetings to ensure their voices shaped decisions that affect the disability community. Through TCDD-supported civic engagement and participatory action training, we equipped advocates to engage in community-based research and speak confidently on issues such as Medicaid services, education, and community supports. This brought lived experience directly into policy conversations and drove meaningful change at both state and local levels.



Trained nine youth ambassadors and facilitated **two public virtual showcases** where ambassadors presented their final projects designed to educate peers on alternatives to guardianship and build medical choice-making skills.



Hosted the **first-ever Texas Partners in Policymaking Advocacy Day at the Capitol**, giving participants and alumni the opportunity to meet with their legislators and share their advocacy goals.



Advancing From Training Participants to Statewide Leaders of Disability Advocacy

This year, two former participants of TCDD leadership and advocacy trainings were appointed by Gov. Greg Abbott to serve as TCDD Council members.

Ashley Sattler was first introduced to TCDD as a Youth Ambassador. Through this youth-focused advocacy program, Sattler learned self-determination options for people with disabilities and how to implement change in her community. Sattler also participated in TCDD's advocacy sprint trainings and served as a peer support specialist through the University of Massachusetts TCDD-funded peer support grant project.



Wendy Maurer is a 2020 graduate of the Texas Partners in Policymaking program. During this advanced disability advocacy training, she developed resources and created opportunities that expanded access to essential supports and services for individuals with disabilities, particularly in South Texas.

Top: From left, Council Member Ashley Sattler and Brianna TenBrink, TCDD leadership and advocacy program manager. Bottom: From left, Council members Shana Halvorsen, Meridith Silcox, and Wendy Maurer.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



TCDD deepened our commitment to inclusion by focusing on initiatives that helped us understand how communities connect and thrive. In partnership with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension (AgriLife), our efforts centered on practical solutions that remove barriers and create opportunities. TCDD's Disability Community Coordinators curated two training curricula: AgriLife Aspire Course: Serving All Texans and the Adapted Texas Food Handlers Training. These curricula created accessible pathways for community inclusion and employment for people with disabilities.

AgriLife Aspire Course Enhances Accessible, Inclusive Programs

The AgriLife Aspire Course: Serving All Texans was created for AgriLife county agents who work directly with communities across the state. This comprehensive online training equips agents with practical principles and strategies for designing and delivering programs that are both accessible and inclusive. With staff serving all 254 Texas counties, the Aspire course provides a foundation for responsive programming to meet the diverse needs of Texans. In 2025, the course was completed 1,013 times. It is now required as part of onboarding for all new employees. This ensures that accessibility and inclusion remain core principles throughout the AgriLife network – strengthening county agents to effectively serve every Texan.



The course image for AgriLife Aspire Course: Serving All Texans – Exploring Accessible Face-to-Face Programming features an example of an accessible gardening program.

Boosting Employment Through Adapted Food Handlers Training

Our Disability Community Coordinators reimagined the state's food handlers certification to include flexible formats, hands-on demonstrations, and take-home materials. In 2025, 92 Texans earned their certifications and are now finding jobs and building independence. Some participants are now employed in local restaurants, while others have joined school-based culinary groups. The program's reach expanded this year, with new interest from education service centers and work-based learning sites eager to host the curriculum. The training's growing popularity is fueling statewide expansion and the development of a Spanish curriculum. By making employment more accessible for people with disabilities, this program is changing lives and creating new opportunities.



Disability Community Coordinator Olu Motoni facilitated the Adapted Texas Food Handlers Training for six Marshall ISD students, all of whom received their certifications.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE, IMPROVING SYSTEMS

31 GRANT PROJECTS

10,446
ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS



Creating inclusive, on-campus higher education for students with DD



Developing culturally inclusive family support in the Greater Houston area



Building financial literacy, budgeting, and money management ability



Self-advocates taking active roles in disability research projects



Employment skills for Texans with DD living in the Rio Grande Valley



Civic engagement and community participation for people with DD



The West Central Texas Council of Governments hosted "color walks" and resource fairs as part of a TCDD-funded project on sexual assault prevention for people with DD.

Helping Adults with DD Become Caregivers for Aging Family Members

Building on previous support for older caregivers and parents of adult children with DD, the Alamo Area Council of Governments developed training and resources for adults with DD to learn how to provide care for their own older family members. The program also focused on providing education and support related to self-care and avoiding caregiver burnout. One participant said learning skills such as CPR gave them confidence in supporting their loved ones in emergency situations. One parent saw their son learn and demonstrate new caregiving skills, saying: "I had never thought about having him step up when one of us is not feeling well, and this program opened my eyes to the reality that my son does want to help us when we are feeling sick."

PROMOTING HEALTH & WELLNESS



Collaborative and DD-informed medical, dental, and behavioral care



Addressing complex mental health needs for people with dual diagnoses



Making telehealth more available for older adults with DD and caregivers



Healthy relationships and sexual assault response and prevention



Inclusive treatment and support for substance-use disorders



Supporting adults with DD as caregivers for their aging family members



Resources and support for people with DD to handle grief and loss

SCAN FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF FUNDED GRANT PROJETS



Enhancing Access to Collaborative & DD-Informed Medical and Dental Care

Projects at the Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Houston-Clear Lake created an interprofessional center for education in health care for adults with DD. An oral health initiative led by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston expanded collaborative care and helped families access referrals for specialized treatment. One dentistry student said TCDD-funded training went far beyond providing technical knowledge: "Prior to discussing this subject, I thought the main focus of treatment was making accommodations for behavioral or physical difficulties. I now view it as a whole process that includes clear communication, caregiver engagement, and systemic health awareness."

Creating Guidelines & Training for Treatment of Substance-Use Disorders

The University of North Texas Health Science Center is leading statewide efforts to develop practice guidelines and training materials for professionals serving people with DD seeking treatment for substance-use disorders. People with DD and families involved in these efforts described how difficult it can be to find support from providers who truly understand their needs. One provider said: "What I have found most impactful is realizing just how overlooked this population is in both research and treatment systems. I had assumed that most services were designed with at least some degree of inclusivity and adaptability, but hearing from other providers made it clear that many existing models were not accessible or appropriate for those with DD."



TEXAS COUNCIL for DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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and do not necessarily represent the official views of nor are
endorsed by the ACL, HHS, or the U.S. government.