



# Pierce County **Developmental Disabilities** Advisory Board

## 2024 Legislative Priorities

The Pierce County Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board thanks the Legislature for your continued efforts to expand services and supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). In 2023 you passed legislation that supported our community in unprecedented ways. Despite these efforts, Individuals and families continue to be in crisis, unable to find housing and services in their local communities. We ask you to address these critical needs:

### Employment and Day | ESIT | Housing | Transportation



**EMPLOYMENT AND DAY: Ensure individuals are supported to live a full and meaningful life that includes employment, community inclusion, and other integrated and meaningful daytime services that support them to be part of their community.**

Employment and Community Inclusion supports provide a critical foundation of stability in the lives of adults with I/DD. We thank the 2023 Legislature for increasing provider rates; however, the funding is not sufficient to fully implement the recommended rates from the legislatively mandated 2022 Employment and Day Rate Study and the system remains unstable. In addition to stabilizing existing services, new and innovative community-based programs funded at a sustainable rate are needed to provide a range of meaningful activities that support a full life for individuals with I/DD.



**ESIT: Improve continuity of care for infants and toddlers receiving Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program services by amending RCW 43.216.580 to read: "(c) For the purposes of this subsection (2), a child is receiving early intervention services if the child has received services in the same month as the monthly count day, which is the last business day of the month."**

ESIT agencies provide entitlement services to all eligible children, and the number served in Pierce County has increased by an average of 18% annually in recent years. Currently, the RCW language reads "(c) For the purposes of this subsection (2), a child is receiving early intervention services if the child has received services within a month prior to the monthly count day." In practice, this means providers are not able to bill the Department of Children, Youth, & Families (DCYF) for Special Education funding for the first month a child receives services, even though that first month tends to be the most expensive. Adoption of the updated language would begin to address funding inequities for ESIT and increase capacity for providers to deliver timely services to families.



**HOUSING:** Address the housing crisis faced by individuals with I/DD by identifying a sustainable and permanent revenue source for DD affordable housing, increasing the Housing Trust Fund – Developmental Disabilities Set-aside, and fully funding residential supports.

In Washington state, approximately 37,000 adults with I/DD are facing housing insecurity (ECONorthwest, Housing Needs for Individuals with I/DD in Washington State ,2022. Pg. 5). Affordable housing, with support services, is needed immediately to provide housing for people with I/DD living in our communities and those that need community living options to leave institutions or hospital settings. Addressing these essential needs is critical to successful community living.



**TRANSPORTATION:** Ensure that Washington State surpasses the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-specified federal requirement of a 0.75-mile distance from a fixed bus route for Paratransit services and provides transportation options for Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) clients who live in communities without public transportation.

Individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities rely on public transportation to get to work, the grocery store, medical appointments, and community activities; currently Paratransit is only available to those that live within a 0.75-mile distance from a fixed bus route and many communities lack any bus routes at all. Communities without bus routes either lack access to accessible transportation entirely or rely on already stretched locally managed stop-gap solutions. Addressing transportation gaps will ensure that we don't leave individuals isolated and unable to care for their essential needs.



For more information, please contact:

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