

**Association of County Human Services**  
**Developmental Disabilities Program Committee**  
**2025 Legislative Priorities**

**1. Protect opportunities for employment and meaningful inclusion in the community for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) by:**

- **Increasing Provider Rates:** Adjust the rates for Employment and Community Inclusion provider rates to align with recommendations from the [October 2022 State Developmental Disabilities Administration \(DDA\) Employment and Day Rate Study](#). Supporting providers to maintain quality staff recruitment, retention, and training directly benefits individuals with I/DD by ensuring the continuity and quality of the services they rely on.
- **Addressing Personal Care and Transportation Needs:** Explore options to provide personal care and transportation as stand alone waiver services that can meet the needs of participants while they are engaged in all community activities. These elements are essential for ensuring individuals with I/DD can participate fully and safely in all community activities.
- **Prioritizing Pathways to Employment:** All DDA services should be individualized and focused on inclusion to support individuals' opportunity to access and engage in employment. Protect the coordination of employment with community inclusion services under County oversight. Local coordination allows individuals to benefit from comprehensive support and connect more effectively to other service systems such as behavioral health and school districts.

Employment and community inclusion services support individuals with I/DD in reaching their financial, vocational and social goals. In 2022, the Legislature permitted "Concurrent Services" which allows individuals to have Supported Employment and Community Inclusion services simultaneously. However, provider capacity challenges, compounded by underfunded rates linked to rate caps, have reduced access to these supports and kept budgeted funds from being spent.

It is critical to prioritize increased rates to help individuals with I/DD to receive services without delay or interruption and provide access to employment and meaningful community participation. When access is limited, individuals with I/DD face greater barriers to employment and social engagement, contributing to isolation, reduced health and wellness, and missed opportunities to be included in their communities.

## **2. Continue high school transition funding for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)**

- Ensure that the Basic Plus Medicaid Waiver Program is available to support employment and other essential services for all state Developmental Disabilities Administration eligible students leaving high school.
- Leverage and build upon state investments in High School and Beyond Planning, special education services, and the expansion of School to Work to ensure students with I/DD have access to career pathways, establish independence, and reduce dependency on long-term government supports.

Comprehensive preparation, planning, and resources during the critical high school transition period are necessary for students with I/DD to transition smoothly into adulthood and become active, engaged members of their communities. As the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction continues to improve and expand inclusionary practices in Washington State, it is critical to ensure that individuals with I/DD can access services that support their inclusion in the community after they leave high school.

## **3. Increase investments in special education funding for infants and toddlers ages 0-3.**

Funding for the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program that provides vital special education services to children ages 0-3 with developmental delays or disabilities is falling behind funding levels for other special education services. ESIT providers are facing staffing shortages, impacting young children and their families. In the past, the 0-3 special education cost multiplier that determines funding for ESIT increased along with the multiplier for children ages 3-5. However, when ESIT's special education funding moved to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families in 2020, these coordinated adjustments stopped. In 2023, the multiplier for children aged 3-5 increased, while the 0-3 multiplier remained unchanged.

**Legislative action is needed to realign the 0-3 and 3-5 special education multipliers and ensure they remain linked in the future.** This change is critical to providing equitable support for young children with developmental delays and disabilities during their most critical developmental years. Realigning and linking the multipliers will aid in staff recruitment and retention, improve service availability, and increase access to culturally relevant ESIT services for children and families.