

Summary: [Social Engagement: How do we create welcoming communities and prevent social isolation?](#)

Everyone deserves the opportunity to have friends, engage in activities they enjoy, and continue learning. However, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) often face significant barriers to community engagement. These barriers include a lack of personal care support, limited access to transportation, and insufficient funds to participate in activities. While some Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) programs—such as Community Inclusion, Community Engagement, Respite, and Personal Care—are available, they often do *not provide enough* hours for a robust schedule of activities.

The Issue: Isolation and Loneliness

Without adequate support, individuals with I/DD experience increased isolation and loneliness. This is now recognized as a critical public health issue, with serious consequences for mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Social connections are vital for overall health, yet individuals with disabilities, particularly those in rural or underserved areas, often face chronic isolation due to systemic barriers.

Why Inclusion Matters

- **Strengthening Communities:** Creating inclusive communities benefits everyone by fostering diversity and ensuring all members contribute to and enjoy shared spaces.
- **Breaking Isolation:** Accessible transportation and inclusive programs are essential in reducing loneliness and enhancing the well-being of individuals with I/DD.

What is Needed

- **Investment in Person-Centered Supports:** Strengthened services that help individuals with I/DD explore their interests, participate in meaningful activities, and build lasting friendships.
- **Funding for community spaces, programs, and transportation** to ensure they are welcoming and accessible for individuals with I/DD.
- **Public Awareness:** Education initiatives to highlight the value and contributions of individuals with I/DD in the community.

What to watch for this session: [Tiered Rates for Respite](#)

Investing in inclusion is investing in a healthier, stronger, and more connected society.