



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD UPDATES

by **Claudia Browner**

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) team has been off to a busy start in the new year with several of GCD's programs being underway! We continue to offer opportunities to get educated about the legislative process in Missouri and how to get involved in public policy making, and about pending legislation affecting the disability community in Missouri. See page 2 for information about the Legislative Education Project (LEP) and the 2024 Disability Rights Legislative Day (DLRD).

Our team is also in the midst of planning and preparing for the 2024 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) for high school students with disabilities. This year marks the 20th year the MO-YLF will be held! Go to page 3 to learn more about this program and how to apply or get involved.

The GCD is excited to introduce the newest team member, Reece Ellis. Reece joined our team on February 1 as the new program coordinator for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum.

With his educational background in political science and his working experience as a summer internship supervisor, legislative assistant in the Missouri legislature and engagement specialist with the Office of Equal Opportunity, he brings a well-rounded background to this position. We are excited to work with Reece in his new role.

Another important role of the GCD is to serve as a hub for information and [resources for the disability community](#) by sharing important updates and events on the [Disability Portal](#), in this newsletter, and on social media. This issue includes information about upcoming events and trainings, tips on filing taxes, and getting registered to vote in the upcoming elections. So check out this issue to find out what's new, and be sure to sign up for our emails and follow us on social media to stay informed.

Check out the links on the left to stay connected with the GCD!



2024 LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT UNDERWAY

by Laura Mueth



**Governor's Council on Disability
Legislative Education Project
(LEP)**

Empower yourself to champion public policies that affect individuals with disabilities in Missouri. A comprehensive understanding of the legislative process can equip you with the necessary tools to effect lasting change.



**Join us for one of our free
online webinars by
signing up now!**

- January 11, 2024, 9:00–10:30 AM
- February 8, 2024, 7:00–8:30 PM
- March 7, 2024, 9:00–10:30 AM
- March 21, 2024, 1:00–2:30 PM



REGISTER ONLINE

Get Ready for the Webinar!
Visit the [LEP website](https://tinyurl.com/LEP-webinar-registration) to access educational videos about the legislative process in Missouri and gather more information.

If you have any questions, please contact us at 573.751.2600 or visit disability.mo.gov/gcd/LEP.htm

Empower yourself to champion public policies that affect individuals with disabilities in Missouri.

A comprehensive understanding of the legislative process can equip you with the necessary tools to effect lasting change.

Refresh or increase your knowledge of the legislative process in Missouri. Register for one of the remaining Legislative Education Project webinars.

Thursday, February 8, 2024 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM

Thursday, March 7, 2024 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

Thursday, March 21, 2024 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

These are provided at no cost to you. However, registration is required via the [LEP Registration Form](#). If you require accommodations to participate, you must register a minimum of two weeks prior to the webinar you will be attending.

To learn more about the LEP or to view related videos, modules, and/or documents, visit the [LEP web page](#).

If you have any questions, contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

To stay informed about pending legislation impacting the disability community, please check out the weekly [Legislative Update](#) provided by the Governor's Council on Disability. You can find it on our [website](#) or subscribe to receive it by email.

JOIN THE 2024 DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY

by Claudia Browner

we are here.

**DISABILITY
RIGHTS
LEGISLATIVE DAY
2024**



The 2024 Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD) is scheduled for Wednesday, March 13, and the organizers are looking forward to another great turnout this year. The theme for this year's event is "We Are Here".

All advocates and members of the disability community are invited to come to the capitol in Jefferson City for a day of visibility and making their voices heard. There will be a rally, followed by opportunities to speak with legislators about the issues that matter most to you.

For those who are not able to attend the rally in person, a virtual option will be available to watch the event from your home or community. In addition, there will be conversations with legislators via Zoom.

Don't miss out on this exciting and empowering event!

Registration is now open on the [DRLD website](https://drlld.org/events/drlld/) at <https://drlld.org/events/drlld/>

APPLY NOW FOR THE MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability is now accepting applications for the 20th [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum \(MO-YLF\)](#) for high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21)!

The MO-YLF is a great learning opportunity for students who are looking to build on their leadership qualities and gain the skills, resources, and knowledge for a successful transition from high school to post-secondary education or employment and independent living. All while getting a college life experience, making friends, meeting mentors, and making statewide connections with others in the disability community. The MO-YLF combines learning and team building activities with fun, engaging social activities including a national keynote speaker, an adaptive sports night, a talent show, and a dance social. The MO-YLF will be held July 16—20 at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

We are excited to announce the keynote speaker for this year—Colleen Young! Colleen is a 2014 alum of the MO-YLF and world famous paralympic athlete, who has competed and won multiple medals in the paralympic games in London, Rio, and Tokyo, and is getting ready to compete in the paralympics in Paris this summer.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity for personal growth and professional development. The application deadline for student delegates is March 31, 2024. [Delegate applications can be completed online at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf>](#)

MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM



MO-YLF is offering volunteer opportunities!

It takes a great team of dedicated volunteers and staff members to facilitate the MO-YLF!

We are looking for individuals who can contribute to this empowering program and make a positive impact on the lives of young leaders with disabilities. Your role as a staff member or volunteer will involve guiding and supporting participants, and creating an inclusive and empowering atmosphere. We welcome MO-YLF alumni and other interested individuals (staff from independent living centers, disability organizations, college students, or teachers) to apply as staff to support, lead and mentor the delegates!

This is a great opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young individuals with disabilities while growing professionally. [Apply now at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf/volunteer.htm>](#).

The staff application deadline is April 15. Questions? Call 573.751.2600 to speak to our team.

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR MO-YLF WEBINARS

by Claudia Browner

Are you interested in learning more about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF)?

Are you interested in learning more about this program?
Join us for one of the upcoming webinars:

Thursday, February 15, 2024	2:00 - 3:00 PM	<div style="background-color: #e91e63; color: white; padding: 5px; border-radius: 15px; display: inline-block;">REGISTER HERE</div>
Tuesday, March 5, 2024	5:30 - 6:30 PM	

More information at disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf
If you have any questions, please contact us at 573.751.2600 or gcd@oa.mo.gov

The Governor's Council on Disability is offering two more free, informational webinars about the program. Each webinar includes detailed information on what takes place during MO-YLF, the benefits for students to attend, the application process, how to get involved as volunteers, plus time for questions & answers.

All prospective delegates, educators, service providers, and families are welcome to register and attend!

The webinars will be offered on Thursday, February 15 from 2:00—3:00 PM and Tuesday, March 5 from 5:30—6:30 PM. Registration is required to attend.

Please complete the Registration Form at <http://tinyurl.com/ylfwebinar>

NEWS AND UPDATES FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

by Claudia Browner

Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) needs your input

Every three years, the Missouri Statewide Independent Living Council (MOSILC) and the 22 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Missouri collaborate with people in the disability community to create the SPIL. SPIL requires the input of people in the disability community to develop Missouri's new SPIL for October 2024–September 2026. Please participate by completing the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MOSPILSurvey2023>



Missouri Master Plan on Aging and Disability Town Halls—Attendance and feedback invited

The goal of the Master Plan on Aging and Disability is that all Missourians, regardless of age or ability, will have access to person-centered programs and services necessary to help them age in their environment of choice in a safe and healthy manner. There are 10 in-person town halls scheduled around the state in February and March, and two virtual options on March 21. The Advisory Council is asking for input and feedback from Missourians and invites you to participate in a town hall meeting! Find a date and location near you or register for a virtual town hall at <https://health.mo.gov/seniors/masterplanaging>

Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training (EMDAT)—Registration open

There are two opportunities to participate in upcoming, free EMDAT events: The first is **March 4–5 in Jefferson City**—this training is intended for those who have an emergency management role in Region F counties (Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Camden, Cole, Cooper, Gasconade, Howard, Miller, Moniteau, Montgomery, Morgan, and Osage) and the second is **March 6–7 in Poplar Bluff** for those in Region E counties (Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Dunklin, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Scott, Stoddard and Wayne). Individuals who want to learn about the process and take an active role in assisting peers and colleagues can sign up for a half-day session on the second day of each event. Click on the location to get to the registration link.

Digital Days coming to Macon and Hannibal in February

The Missouri Assistive Technology (MOAT), Missouri DD Council, County Connections, and LOQW, Inc. are offering two free events for individuals with developmental disabilities, families, and advocates. The events will be held in February 5 at 10 AM at First Christian Church in [Macon](#), and February 6 at 2 PM in [Hannibal](#). Sign up for FREE or low-cost internet, explore assistive technology, learn about digital safety, and understand the need for digital literacy. Click on the location to get to the registration link.

Tax Season is here—Free Information and Assistance available

Tax season is here and for many people filing taxes can be confusing and stressful. The National Disability Institute has put together some great information and resources to help you prepare and find out where to file our taxes for free, tax credits you might be eligible for, and how you can make the most of your tax refund money.

Check out the information at <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/financial-resilience-center/taxes-and-tax-prep/>

Learn about Accessible Voting and how to Register to Vote

It's not too early to get prepared for this year's elections so you can participate and have your voice heard. The Disability Portal provides a page with [information about voting](#) including a video about accessible voting, and how to [register to vote](#).

Warming Center Sites in Missouri

Winter weather has brought cold temperature, ice, and snow in January, and more winter weather may be headed our way before we get to Spring. Extreme cold weather can be especially dangerous to small children, older adults, and those who are critically ill or individuals with disabilities. Warming centers provide a warm, safe place for people during cold weather. If you need assistance due to cold weather, click on the link to find a [warming center near you](#) or call 800-392-0210.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D, Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **February 14, 2024**
[Black History Month celebration, Truman Building, Jefferson City](#)
- **March 13, 2024**
[Disability Rights Legislative Day, State Capitol, Jefferson City \(and virtual\)](#)
- **April 8—9, 2024**
[Power Up Assistive Technology Conference/GCD Awards presentation, Columbia](#)
- **June 9—12, 2024**
[National ADA Symposium, Minneapolis, MN](#)
- **June 12—14, 2024**
[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference, Osage Beach](#)
- **June 17—20, 2024**
[National APSE Conference, Charlotte, NC](#)
- **June 26—28, 2024**
[Transition Training Institute, Columbia](#)
- **July 16—20, 2024**
[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, Columbia](#)

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.