



# GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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## OPPORTUNITY FOR INCLUSION IN RECOVERY

by Claudia Browner

As more and more Missourians are vaccinated against COVID-19 and the number of cases is on the decline, the State of Missouri is returning to a new normal. Businesses around the state are reopening and many are looking for employees to fill vacancies. This provides a great opportunity for job seekers of all abilities to find employment, and for employers to embrace inclusive hiring practices to fill those vacancies. People with disabilities are an important part of the economy and are willing and able to contribute to America's recovery from the pandemic. There are many resources available for employers or organizations who have questions about the employment of people with disabilities and creating an inclusive workforce, including educational training on disability-related employment topics provided by the Governor's Council on Disability.

The U.S. Department of Labor has announced the theme for this year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) as "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion." NDEAM is observed annually in October and celebrates the contributions of America's workers with disabilities and educates employers and others about the importance of disability-inclusive employment policies and practices. Employers of all sizes and all industries are encouraged to participate. Read the [press release](#) or learn more about [NDEAM](#).

In preparation for NDEAM, and to raise awareness about the importance of including people with disabilities in the workforce, the Governor's Council on Disability is now accepting entries for the annual

[Disability Employment Awareness Month Poster Contest](#).

Please submit your entries by August 15. More information can be found at <https://disability.mo.gov/PosterContest>



## COVID—19 INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

COVID-19 Vaccine Information—<https://covidvaccine.mo.gov>

Disability Web Portal—COVID-19 Resources page—<https://disability.mo.gov/covid-19.htm>

## How Missouri's Advisory Committee on Equitable COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Is Including People with Disabilities

*Article by: Sara Hart Weir, Special Advisor on COVID-19 (Disability Services) & Co-Chair of the Missouri Advisory Committee on Equitable COVID Vaccine Distribution*

The **Missouri Advisory Committee on Equitable COVID Vaccine Distribution** was formed in 2020 to work directly with and engage the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services' (DHSS) external partners and stakeholders, including the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD), to inform an equitable distribution of Missouri's COVID-19 vaccine supply. The Committee's mission is to solicit stakeholder feedback across the state of Missouri to ensure equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine across all communities with a focus on the disability, aging and underserved and underrepresented minority communities.

This Advisory Committee is working hard with community leaders to help Missouri strategize and deploy new resources to vaccinate those individuals who need them most, inform our State's process on the COVID-19 vaccine distribution and help expand COVID-19 vaccine awareness, education and promotion. As co-chair of this Committee, alongside Mr. Adam Crumbliss, Director, Division of Community & Public Health, our goal since day one has been to ensure Missouri's most vulnerable, people with disabilities and those who support them (i.e., their families, caregivers and disability service providers (DSPs)) were at the front of the line to receive the free vaccine throughout our vaccine roll-out process. Throughout the year, we have also been working to deploy new strategies and resources to meet the disability community where they are.

You can also access some of our new COVID-19 resources (and our website, [MOStopsCovid.com](https://mostopscovid.com), can provide translation in multiple different languages):

- [“Get a Ride”: a list of statewide and regional resources for individuals who face transportation as a barrier to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Elijah Mayfield's PSA with Governor Parson](#)
- [Missouri's Seniors & Homebound Adults](#)
- [COVID-19 Accessible Resources by Accessibility](#)
- [Vaccine Considerations for People with Disabilities](#)
- [Caring for People with Disabilities COVID-19](#)
- [CDC YouTube American Sign Language \(ASL\) Video Series](#)

In early June, we will also launch the new “Missouri Plain Language Guide for People with Disabilities, their Families and Caregivers” on COVID-19 and the vaccine.

This work is also deeply personal for me. I spent 20 years working in the disability community where I started as a DSP in college, and ultimately became the CEO of the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS). A few weeks after joining the team at DHSS, I lost my best friend, Kasey, who happened to have Down syndrome, to COVID-19 before she had access to the vaccine in Kansas.

It's important that we continue to work together to win the fight against COVID-19 and protect our most vulnerable. I hope you will join us either by participating in our weekly meetings (which are open to the public, and take place each Thursday at 1 p.m. CST) or reach out to me with any questions at [sara.weir@health.mo.gov](mailto:sara.weir@health.mo.gov).



*Sara Weir and her friend Kasey*

To learn more about our efforts and get involved, please visit: [MOStopscovid.com/equity](https://mostopscovid.com/equity).

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION RESULTS

by Laura Mueth

The 2021 legislative session concluded on May 14. Even though it initially appeared not to be a big year for disability related legislation, when scrutinizing all the bills Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed by the General Assembly, it turned out not to be the case.

Several disability related bills ended up being part of [House Bill 432](#) which was the Birth Match Program bill and not followed by the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) during the session. The items in this bill include:



- School seclusion and restraint policies
- Parent/guardian recording of IEP meetings
- Sheltered workshop employee wage changes
- Alzheimer State Plan Task Force creation in the Department of Health and Senior Services
- MO HealthNet antipsychotic drug restriction prohibition
- Hospital psychiatric treatment for children in the custody of the State of Missouri
- Pediatric hearing aid insurance coverage requirement
- Mental health condition insurance coverage to meet the requirements of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act
- Step therapy override exception determinations modifications
- Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders established in the Department of Mental Health

Two bills not monitored by GCD, [SB 63](#), and [SB 72](#) included a provisions related to disability. SB 63 extends the MO Rx program in the final version, and SB 72 included a piece designating the month of April as "Limb Loss Awareness Month". The mental health insurance coverage requirement was also included in [HB 604](#). One Senate Bill ([SB 45](#)) regarding firefighters who contract cancer as a result of their employment was the only stand-alone disability related bill which was Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed. These bills have been delivered to Governor Parson and are awaiting his action to be signed into law.

## CELEBRATING OUR 2021 GRADUATES

by Rachel Rackers



As the 2021 school year comes to a close, we take a look back at what this past year has meant to students, teachers and school officials. There's no doubt the pandemic took a toll on high school seniors, who missed out on so many irreplaceable moments like prom, homecoming, sports and college tours.

Five of our [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) alumni and fifteen of our Youth Leadership Summit alumni were seniors this year. We would like to congratulate them and recognize their accomplishments!

We present to you the 2021 High School graduates— Ava Anderson, Halle Cheek, Zachary Cox, Melina Derkum, Camryn Dickinson, Scott Easterhoff, Ashley Fisher, Claire Helmig, Maynard John, Zamira McConnell, Jonathan Morris, Michael Nilson, Zachariah Palmier, Seth Pumphrey, Katelynn Piepmeier, Tara Reznak, Kendall Scharfen, Tessa Schnizler, Austin Sobba, Taryn Stewart.

**Congratulations and best wishes for your future!!**

## MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM CELEBRATES ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

by Rachel Rackers

In July, the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) (MO-YLF) will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary! The Youth Leadership Forum was first developed by the California Governor's Committee for Employment of Disabled Persons in 1992. The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy set forth to replicate this initiative in all 50 states. Missouri held its first Youth Leadership Forum in 2001. Since inception of the program, a total of 344 alumni have graduated from the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, representing 70 of the 114 Missouri counties, plus the city of St. Louis. The next MO-YLF will be held in July 2022.



The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) held its first virtual Leadership Forum Summit on March 13 and 20, 2021. A total of 28 youth from 17 counties participated in the two-day program. After the successful virtual event, the GCD has the date for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual virtual Leadership Forum Summit for February 26, 2022.

MO-YLF has grown tremendously during its first 20 years. It's exciting to add alumni to our YLF family every year, and to watch each of them blossom after graduating the program. Our past and future successes wouldn't be possible without the collaboration and support from our partners; Paraquad, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

We hope that you will join us in celebrating the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Throughout the month of July, we will be highlighting each MO-YLF year in various ways. Be sure to visit our [GCD](#) and [MO-YLF Facebook page](#) frequently that month, to take a walk down memory lane!

In the meantime, stay tuned for additional upcoming youth leadership opportunities for 2022 throughout the remainder of the year. For more information on the [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#) program and events, please visit our website at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf.htm>.

## MEET COUNCIL MEMBER WAYNE CRAWFORD

by Claudia Browner



On March 15, 2021, Governor Parson appointed Wayne Crawford to the Governor's Council on Disability. Wayne is the Executive Director of Missouri Inclusive Housing Development Corporation (MoHousing), a not-for-profit organization that assists citizens with disabilities, as well as the agencies and individuals who support them, in the search for affordable, quality, safe, and universally designed housing. A native to Marshall, Wayne worked for 33 years in the Division of Developmental Disabilities before becoming the Executive Director of MoHousing after retirement. He works on multiple issues that impact the housing needs of our citizens with disabilities and advocates for improvement in affordable housing throughout the state and nationally. MoHousing also assists developers and builders as they design and construct quality, universally designed, affordable homes. Wayne was the recipient of the Governor's Council on Disability's 23rd

Annual Inclusion Award for his work to champion the need for quality, affordable, universally designed housing throughout Missouri. He is a member of the Missouri Access and Functional Needs Committee that provides rapid response to citizens with disabilities during a disaster and has worked with both FEMA and SEMA. Wayne serves on numerous boards and speaks nationally on the needs of citizens with disabilities.

Wayne states, "The appointment to the Governor's Council on Disability is a tremendous honor and carries great responsibility to listen, learn and support our citizens with disabilities." His goal is to represent the issues that impact housing in our state and be a voice for change. Wayne lives with his wife Marilyn and is the proud parent of two children, their spouses, and six grandchildren.

## Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Members

- Ronald Hack, Interim 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
- Traci Ritter, Cape Girardeau
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- James Trout, St. Louis
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

## Missouri Governor's Council on Disability Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Rachel Rackers, Senior Program Specialist
- Jessica Zimmer, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

## FCC BROADBAND BENEFIT AVAILABLE NOW

by Claudia Browner



Access to the Internet has become a necessity for many of us, especially during the pandemic, in order to work, attend school, shop for groceries, connect with family members, and much more. For families and households struggling to afford Internet service, there is help available through the Emergency Broadband Benefit.

The [Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#) is a temporary Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program that provides support for broadband services and certain devices to eligible families and households through a discount of up to \$50 per month toward broadband service, and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers.

Find out if you are eligible and [Apply Now](#) at [www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit](http://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit), or by calling 833-511-0311 to learn more about the benefit, including eligibility and enrollment information.

## JUNE & JULY AWARENESS EVENTS

**Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month**—to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease and take action. <http://alz.org/abam/overview.asp>

**PTSD Awareness Month**—to raise awareness about issues and the stigma associated with PTSD.

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/awareness/index.asp>

**Americans with Disabilities Act—31st Anniversary** (July 26, 2021)—Celebrate 31 years of progress in access and inclusion. #ADA31

<https://www.adaanniversary.org/>



Americans with Disabilities Act