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National Autism Coordinator Update

Committees, News, and Events



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Non-Governmental Updates

[INSAR: Autism and the Criminal Justice System: Policy Opportunities and Challenges](#)

- In October 2022, the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) released a new policy brief with recommendations for preventing, reducing, and improving interactions between autistic people and the criminal justice system. This policy brief was developed by the Global Autism and Criminal Justice Consortium. The Consortium included a team of autistic adults, family members, researchers, criminal justice system professionals, and policy makers. The brief includes recommendations that are specific to different aspects of the justice system – community services, law enforcement, confinement and re-entry.

[PCORI Awards UNC Researchers \\$4 million to Evaluate Mental Health Interventions for Autistic Adults](#)

- The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) announced the approval of funding totaling \$96 million for 18 new research studies, including \$4 million for a study to assess which mental health intervention, either cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or mindfulness-based therapy, is the best fit to help autistic adults. Dr. Brenna Maddox and Dr. Micah Mazurek will co-lead the study, pending the issuance of a formal award contract. Autistic adults are at a greater risk for mental health problems compared to the general population, exhibiting symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and suicide. The researchers partnered with **Autistic Adults and other Stakeholders Engage Together** (AASET) to develop this proposal.

[U.N. Secretary-General Statement for International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)

- In his December 2, 2022 message, UN Secretary-General António Guterres discusses the role of innovation and technology in achieving an accessible and equitable world. The [United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy](#) presents a roadmap for advancing disability inclusion and accessibility globally.

Launch of the WHO Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities

- At the 74th World Health Assembly in May 2021, Member States adopted resolution WHA74.8 on [The highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities](#). The WHO Director General, was asked to develop a Global Report on the highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities by the end of 2022. In response, the **WHO Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities** was developed in consultation with Member States and disability and health sector stakeholders. Report can be accessed [here](#).

Updates from Federal Entities and Committees

White House Updates

- President Joseph R. Biden issued a [Presidential Proclamation](#) to recognize the International Day of Persons With Disabilities on December 2, 2022. In his proclamation, he reaffirmed his administration’s commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities are afforded opportunities, independence, and respect. He emphasized his Administration’s support for equity in healthcare and employment, as well as disability rights and disability pride.

Legislative Updates

- The newly approved [Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023](#), includes funding towards autism and disability-related programs, such as the CDC’s Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network, ED’s IDEA grants for special education, DoD’s Autism Research Program, grants under Kevin and Avonte’s Law, and Medicaid’s Money Follows the Person program that helps people move from institutions to community-based settings. (Press releases: [Disability Scoop](#), [Autism Speaks](#), [Autism Society](#))
- Kevin and Avonte’s Law was reauthorized with the passage of the [National Defense Reauthorization Act](#) on December 23, 2022. The program supports grants to protect children with autism and DD who wander.

Federal Interagency Workgroup on Autism (FIWA)

Managed by the HHS National Autism Coordinator/NIMH/NIH

- This all-federal working group includes multiple federal agencies and departments with programs related to autism and disabilities.
- Departments and agencies on the working group assist with the development of Reports to Congress required under the Autism CARES Act and other cross-agency reports.
- The group fosters interagency collaborations to enhance implementation of IACC Strategic Plan recommendations.
- Recent activities:

- The NAC is keeping the FIWA updated on progress on the IACC Strategic Plan and planning for future interdepartmental reports to Congress on autism (e.g., the Reports to Congress required in the Autism CARES Act of 2019) and other cross-agency activities.

[Interagency Committee on Disability Research \(ICDR\)](#)

Managed by the Administration for Community Living

- An all-federal committee established under the 1973 Rehabilitation Act to promote coordination and collaboration among federal departments and agencies conducting disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research programs.
- Recent activities include:
 - The ICDR held an Executive Committee Meeting on [September 14, 2022](#). The Committee heard input from Federal Partners on the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)'s upcoming 2024-2029 Long-Range Plan. The Disability Data & Statistics Work Group and the Government Wide Inventory (GWI) Work Group both provided updates to the Committee.
 - On [December 7, 2022](#), ICDR held another Executive Committee Meeting and discussed possible topics for upcoming Lunch & Learn webinars. The Committee also heard updates from the GWI Work Group and the Disability Data & Statistics Work Group, which subsequently held its first meeting on December 12, 2022.
 - Following publication of ICDR's white paper on the [Impact of COVID-19 on Disability Research](#), the Committee published an [updated paper](#) in December 2022 that presents recent information on how the field of disability research has changed and adapted throughout the pandemic, highlighting important areas of new research and how the shift to virtual research methods has modified the research landscape.

[RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council \(FCAC\)](#)

Managed by the Administration for Community Living

- The RAISE Family Caregivers Act directs the Secretary of HHS to develop a national family caregiving strategy. The RAISE Act also directed the establishment of the FCAC, a federal advisory committee charged with providing recommendations to the HHS Secretary on effective models of both family caregiving and support to family caregivers, as well as improving coordination across federal government programs. The [Administration for Community Living](#) (ACL) manages this council.
- Recent activities include:
 - ACL recently made their [2022 National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers](#) (the Strategy) available for public comment through November 2022. Details on a 2023 meeting are forthcoming.

National Council on Disability (NCD)

- Independent federal agency charged with advising the President, Congress, and other federal agencies regarding policies, programs, practices, and procedures that affect people with disabilities.
- Recent activities include:
 - NCD released a report which examines weaknesses in the HCBS ecosystem, entitled [*Strengthening the HCBS Ecosystem – Responding to Dangers of Congregate Settings During COVID-19*](#). NCD found that about 14 million Americans of all ages need HCBS, with 40% being adults under 65 years old, and people younger than 30 years old making up the fastest growing nursing home population. Chairman Andres Gallegos says that severe worker shortages are compounding the large demand for services.

Federal Partners in Transition (FPT)

Managed by U.S. Department of Labor

- An all-federal workgroup that was formed in 2005 with representatives from several federal departments and agencies, including ED, HHS, DOL, and SSA, to support all youth, including youth with disabilities, in successfully transitioning from school to adulthood.
- Recent activities include:
 - Members are continuing to work on developing a new Strategic Plan for transition age youth with disabilities.
 - The FPT Steering Committee met on December 15th, 2022.

Interdepartmental Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee (ISMICC)

Managed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

- The ISMICC was established in 2017 by the 21st Century Cures Act. The ISMICC is a federal advisory committee that reports to the Secretary, Congress, and any other relevant federal department or agency on advances in serious mental illness (SMI) and serious emotional disturbance (SED), research related to the prevention, diagnosis, intervention, and treatment and recovery of SMIs, SEDs, and advances in access to services and supports for adults with SMI or children with SED.
- Recent activities include:
 - The ISMICC met on October 28th at 10:00 a.m. ET. [The full agenda is here.](#)

Disability Advisory Committee (DAC)

Managed by the Federal Communications Commission

- The DAC is a federal advisory committee that provides advice and recommendations to the FCC on a wide array of disability issues, including communications and video programming access.

- Recent activities include:
 - The previous iteration of the DAC held its [last meeting](#) on Tuesday, November 1st at 1:00 p.m. ET. The meeting is available online through [FCC Webcast](#).
 - The DAC will meet again this year in 2023 with new membership. This iteration will last until 2024.

[President’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities \(PCPID\)](#)

Managed by the Administration for Community Living

- The PCPID is an advisory committee that aims to provide advice and assistance to the President of the U.S. and the HHS Secretary on a broad range of topics that impact people with intellectual disabilities as well as the field of intellectual disabilities, with the goal of improving the quality of life experienced by people with intellectual disabilities by upholding their full citizenship rights, independence, self-determination, and lifelong participation in their communities. [Here is a fact sheet](#) detailing the committee’s duties to the President.
- No new updates since the July 28, 2022 meeting.

[National Advisory Committee on Individuals with Disabilities and Disasters \(NACIDD\)](#)

Managed by the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response

- NACIDD is an advisory committee that evaluates issues and programs and provides findings, advice, and recommendations to support and enhance all-hazards public health and medical preparedness, response activities, and recovery related to meeting the unique needs of individuals with disabilities. The NACIDD will advise the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) on actions HHS can take before, during, and after disasters and emergencies to meet the unique needs of individuals with disabilities.
- No new updates since the August 4, 2022 meeting.

[NIH Request for Information \(RFI\): Innovative approaches to prevent mental health problems and promote mental wellness in populations that experience health disparities](#)

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Advancing Prevention Research for Health Equity (ADVANCE) initiative is seeking public comment from community-based health and service providers and organizations on interventions or programs that prevent mental health problems or promote mental health wellness in populations that experience health disparities. Comments related to [individuals with disabilities as a group that experiences health disparities](#) are welcome, though not listed specifically in the announcement. Comments are due by March 1, 2023 and can be submitted [here](#).

[COVID-19 and Employment Trends for People with Disabilities](#)

Blog Posting by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

- As the economy continues to recover from setbacks related to the COVID-19 pandemic, people with disabilities have re-entered the labor force in greater numbers and have even surpassed the pre-pandemic level. This encouraging trend improves the historically persistent, substantial gaps between workers with and without disabilities. Structural changes in business practices prompted by the pandemic, such as greater flexibilities in work schedules and more opportunities to telework, may have opened additional opportunities for workers with disabilities who had fewer such opportunities in the past. Read more [here](#).