



## Advocacy and Public Policy Activities

### What does the DD Act say?

The Council shall serve as an advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities and conduct or support programs, projects, and activities that carry out the purpose of this subtitle.

### What does the “final rule” say?

“Advocacy activities” definition:

“[A]ctive support of policies and practices that promote systems change efforts and other activities that further advance self- determination and inclusion in ***all aspects of community living*** (including housing, education, employment, and other aspects) for individuals with developmental disabilities, and their families.”

## **What can DD Councils do?**

The DD Act includes information about strategies that support educating policymakers. Specific reference to educating policymakers is found in the following State Plan strategies listed in the DD Act.

- Coalition Development and Citizen Participation.
- Informing Policymakers.
- Demonstration of new approaches to services and supports.

## **Coalition development and citizen participation - Section 125 (c) (5) (I)**

The Council may support and conduct activities to:

- Educate the public about the capabilities, preferences, and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, including training in self-advocacy, education of policymakers, and citizen leadership skills.
- Support coalitions that support the policy agenda of the Council, including training in self-advocacy, education of policymakers, and citizen leadership skills.

## **Informing Policymakers - Section 125 (c) (5) (J)**

The Council may support and conduct activities to:

- Provide information to policymakers by supporting and conducting studies and analyses, gathering information, and developing and disseminating model policies and procedures, information, approaches, strategies, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Provide the information directly to Federal, State, and local policymakers, including Congress, the Federal executive branch, the Governors, State legislatures, and State agencies, in order to increase the ability of such policymakers to offer opportunities and to enhance or adapt generic services to meet the needs of, or provide specialized services to, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

## **Demonstration of new approaches to services and supports - Section 125 (c)(5)(K)**

The Council may support and conduct time-limited activities to:

- Demonstrate new approaches to serving individuals with developmental disabilities that are part of an overall systems change strategy.
- The strategy may involve the education of policymakers and the public...that contribute to the achievement of the DD Council purpose.

### **Program Instruction information**

**Councils are free to advocate a position or viewpoint AS LONG AS the Council:**

- Presents a full and fair description of the issue to help the policymaker form an independent opinion or conclusion.
- Does not present unsupported opinions or facts.
- Does not use inflammatory or derogatory terms.
- Avoids conclusions based on emotions or feelings rather than objective factual conclusions.

Councils can advise legislators and others on the adoption of legislation AS LONG AS the

- Approach is balanced

- Discussion includes the advantages and disadvantages and comparisons to other proposals under consideration is included.
- A Council does not have to be neutral about outcomes for people with developmental disabilities but must demonstrate an unbiased attitude when considering alternatives for meeting needs.

### **What is allowed and not allowed?**

HHS Grant recipients cannot lobby.

In general, recipients of federal funds *are not allowed* to use federal funding to lobby federal, state, or local officials or their staff to receive additional funding or influence legislation such as:

- Spending federal funds to influence an officer or employee of any agency or Congressional member/staff regarding federal awards;
- Using grants funds provided to influence an election, contribute to a partisan organization, or influence enactment or modification of any pending federal or state legislation; or

- Expending federal funds to influence federal, state, or local officials or legislation.

### **Council are allowed to engage in:**

- Technical or factual presentations on topics related to the performance of a grant in response to a documented request made by the member of congress or legislative body.
- Nonpartisan analysis, study, or research reports and examinations and discussions of broad social, economic, and information provided upon request by a legislator for technical advice and assistance, as defined by the Internal Revenue Code.
- *Any activity specifically authorized by statute to be undertaken with funds from the federal award.*

### **Leading the way**

- DD Councils provide valuable information to policy makers at all levels of government in their advocacy role on behalf of people with DD and their families. It is left to the DD Councils to determine how to work to inform policymakers, but they must follow state and federal laws.

- DD Council employees may and should describe the good work that councils. Educate and inform!
- Members of Councils should only speak on behalf of the Council when authorized to do so consistent with its policies. When authorized to speak on behalf of the Council, members must represent the Council's interest and not their own.

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