



Fall 2020

Informing Families...Today and Tomorrow

A resource of the Washington State DD Council

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Finding Our Way Forward



As the summer days grow shorter and the air gets cooler, many families have settled into a sort of “new normal” during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, there are still many challenges that lay ahead—the state is facing an unprecedented budget crisis, many folks are worried about paying bills and putting food on the table, and families have serious questions about what the new school year will look like.

At what point will school buildings be safe enough for students and teachers to return? Will all students benefit from virtual learning options, including those with limited access to internet and technology?

How will the needs of students with disabilities be met, including those who rely on specialized services like speech, physical, occupational, and behavioral health therapies?

On top of that, working parents are concerned about juggling

the demands of their jobs and supporting their child’s education. This crisis is truly highlighting many issues and inequities throughout the system.

There is a saying that, “in the middle, everything looks like a failure.” However, we can (and must!) continue working together through “the middle” to create a better and stronger system.

In the meantime, please know there are resources available to many families. Much of it looks different from before, but it is important to know how to access it, which is the focus of this issue.

My door is always open. Feel free to call me at 360-586-3558 or email jeremy.norden-paul@ddc.wa.gov.

Jeremy Norden-Paul
Executive Director
Washington State DD Council



Job Foundation Pilot Program

Early Start = Better Results

The Job Foundation Pilot Program provides more employment supports at an earlier age to help high school transition students leave school with a job at 21.

Participants will have access to employment experts and supports, such as assistive technology, or technical assistance, to help create improved job outcome for people with higher support needs.

During this pandemic, protocols and precautions will be observed to help ensure everyone’s safety while receiving services.

Eligibility

DDA eligible clients, age 19-22, enrolled in high school within a county that is participating in this project. For a list of participating counties and to learn more, visit: informingfamilies.org/jobs.



WHERE THERE IS A WILL, WE MUST FIND A WAY

by Adrienne Stuart

photo credit- Adrienne Stuart

Before COVID-19 devastated our world, students with disabilities were already struggling to get the education guaranteed to them under the law.

Our family has had to spend thousands of dollars on attorney fees and hundreds of hours on citizen complaints just to get our kids the inclusive education they're entitled to under IDEA.

When it became clear in March that it was going to be difficult to educate students in person, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction initiated rule making which allowed schools to collect all of their funding by merely making educational opportunities "available" to students.

This is problematic for all students, but it is especially cruel for students with disabilities who rely on in person services to access a free and appropriate public education.

As with most kids with disabilities, our son Jack receives several therapies at school, including speech therapy and occupational therapy.

He is an emerging communicator and just got his Tobii eye gaze device in January, so we've been heavily reliant on the school to help us learn how to communicate with Jack, and to help him learn how to communicate with his peers.



When school abruptly ended in the middle of March, Jack was immediately cut off from his beloved paraeducator, his friends, his teachers, and his therapies. In fact, we were told that he could not have his paraeducator read a story to him on a Zoom call once per week because paraeducators are not allowed to be alone with 1:1 with students.

“Jack was immediately cut off from his beloved paraeducator, his friends, his teachers, and his therapies.”

What is frustrating is that reopening public schools is not prioritized. We have private schools and daycares open, but not public schools.

This is a problem for children with disabilities because, for the most part, private schools and daycares do not receive federal funds are not required to extend the protections of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) to students with disabilities.

IDEA requires public schools to deliver not only traditional education services, but also accommodations, therapies, and itinerant support services for disabled children.

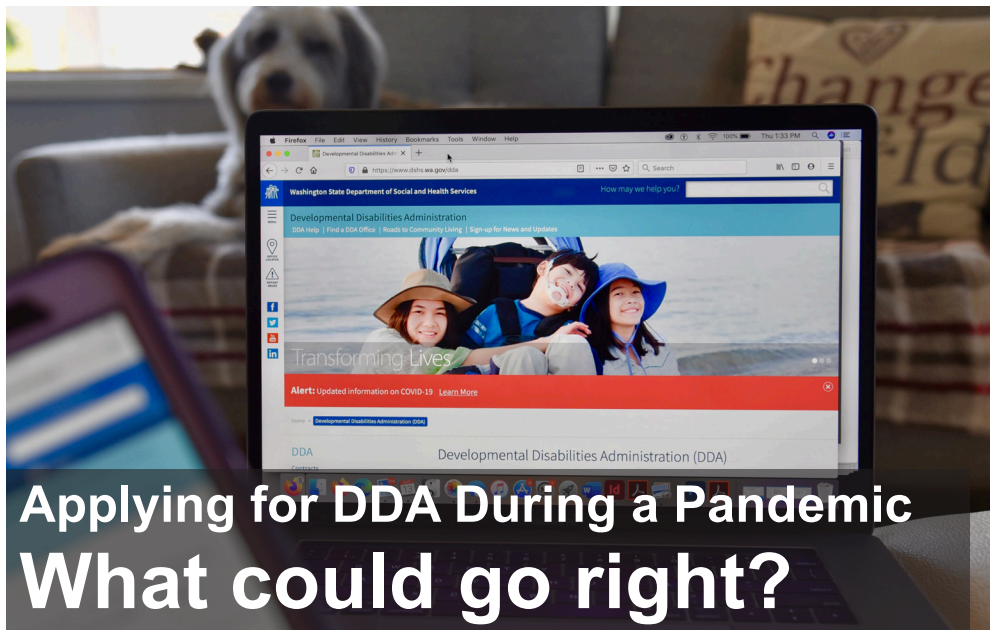
Families who do not want to send their children to school should have the means and resources to help their kids be educated in the relative safety of their homes. But families who do want or need to send their children to school should also have that option.

We've proven that we're willing to figure out how to persevere and open private schools and daycares. We've proven that as a society, where there is the will, there is the way.

Moving forward, we must figure out ways to effectively meet the needs of students who rely on supports and therapies guaranteed under federal law, and we must consider all creative and individualized options that will help get us there.

Adrienne Stuart is Director of Public Policy for the WA State Developmental Disabilities Council. These are her views as a parent, and are not necessarily the position of the DDC. She can be reached at adriennestuart@gmail.com.

Read more of Adrienne's article, along with other parent perspectives and resources at: informingfamilies.org/as-ed.



Applying for DDA During a Pandemic What could go right?

It may be hard to imagine anything is working well during a pandemic, but that's exactly what Katherine found when she reached out to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) in late June to ask about eligibility for her 21 year-old son, Jake.

"We always hear stories about how horrible it is," Katherine says, "but it was nothing but good experiences. Everyone I talked to at DDA was amazing. I was really impressed by the caliber of people."

The whole process went smoothly. She contacted her local DDA office on June 22nd, received a phone call that lasted about an hour and a half, and was sent an intake packet to fill out.

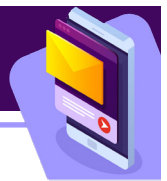
Was it a lot of paperwork? "Oh yes! I think I even left something out, but they called me in a couple days and helped me get it all together."

By July 30th, she received a call from DDA that Jake was approved for DDA eligibility. During that call, she was able to set up a phone assessment for September.

"They usually do it in person, but can't because of COVID. It's a long time to be on the phone and talk about things you need help with, so we talked about how to make it okay for Jake."

When asked for advice to give other families who fear going through the process, she says, "I always tell other families to ask: *What do I need to do to help you*

DDA News and Information



Get instant updates!

- News & announcements
- Provider information
- Resources
- Trainings & events

Sign up to receive information:

- Text "DDA" to 468311
- Visit dshs.wa.gov/dda (click on the envelope to the right)

help my child?"

"Nobody gets into this because they hate people or want to ruin lives," she adds. "They get into it to help."

She points out that this approach gets everyone thinking about how to make things work. "Try to put emotion on the back burner because it makes it difficult to find solutions when you're emotional."

She is hopeful, but realistic about getting everything in place. "It's been a long 21 years. Our hope for Jake is that he can have a place of his own one day, with support."

She knows, like everything else in life, it will take time. But she has people on their side. "It's not *us* vs. *them*. We're a team."

THE BENEFITS OF DDA ELIGIBILITY



Even if you are not yet receiving services, DDA eligibility can open the door to other opportunities, such as:

- Personal care through Community First Choice
- Additional dental services and annual medical exam through Apple Health
- Information and updates on services from Informing Families
- Additional affordable housing options
- Eligibility for participation in the DD Endowment Trust Fund
- Discounted passes with WA State Parks

READY TO REQUEST SERVICES?

Once you are determined DDA eligible, contact DDA to request services. Fill out an online Service and Information Request form, or call the DDA office nearest you. Visit dshs.wa.gov/dda to get started.

State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Developmental Disabilities Administration
P.O. Box 45310
Olympia, WA 98504-5310

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WAS STATE DEPT
OF ENTERPRISE SRVCS
98501

WE CAN DO THIS.

Resources for Mental Health



Care for Your Coronavirus Anxiety

Resources for anxiety and your mental health in a global climate of uncertainty. Ask an expert, free meditations, dealing with financial fears and more. Visit: virusanxiety.com

WA Warm Line

A peer support help line for people living with emotional and mental health challenges. Calls are answered by specially-trained volunteers who have lived experience with mental health challenges. They have a deep understanding of what you are going through. All calls are confidential. Call 877-500-WARM (877-500-9276)

Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families

Tips on how to navigate some of the emotional responses that families may experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit: doh.wa.gov