



2025 Spring Newsletter



Informing Families

Coordinator Spotlight: Debbie Chapman

In this edition of the newsletter, we hear from Debbie Chapman, a long-time coordinator with Informing Families. Throughout her career, she has supported communities across Washington State in various roles, including Informing Families Coordinator, Parent to Parent Coordinator, and Parent Coalition Coordinator. Debbie shares the journey that led her to this meaningful and impactful work.

Hello, my name is Debbie Chapman. I am a sibling, parent and grandparent of individuals experiencing developmental delays or disabilities. I am honored and humbled with the request to write this article.

I am not sure how I arrived at this point in life, Supporting, Educating and Advocating for families with Disabilities. I suppose it started at birth. I am one of three girls. My oldest sister is a social, active redhead who just happened to have a disability. I thought all families had loved ones with a disability. It was our normal. My dive into advocacy began at a very young age.

Not everybody thought my Sib was as wonderful as I did, and in the 2nd grade I was in the principal's office for hitting a 6th grade boy for teasing her. It wasn't the last time I was advised to use my words to advocate appropriately. My parents were good roll models and watching them navigate the systems and cultures of the 60's on I have come to believe in these core beliefs: "People are naturally kind, it shouldn't be this hard, pay it forward and we shouldn't be penalized because of our zip code!

I have lived in rural communities for most of my life and my current work is as much about protecting rural culture as disability rights. For me Rural culture and disabilities have merged into one conversation and concern. In my community they are the same. What works in the city isn't working here. A service isn't a service if you can't access it!

Fast forward 20 years where I launched into formal advocacy after taking Leadership training at the Arc of Spokane. I credit this program and the mentoring of the Washington State Arc and Developmental Disabilities Council for honing my craft. It led to my work as the Grant, Adams and Lincoln County Parent Coalition (GALPC), Informing Families and P2P coordinators, as well as 18 years in local government as a historic/ planning commissioner and city council member.

Along the way I have had a wonderful experience working with state legislators and state leadership. While we don't always agree, we agree to have the conversations. **Every change starts with a conversation.** (Cont.)

(Cont.) Do I see myself stopping this work? No. There is still much to do. What works is having hard conversations. What I have learned doesn't work is "He who yells the loudest maybe wrong". So, speak thoughtfully and softly. (Sometimes I forget.) I was once told that we are given two ears to hear and one to speak! Listening is an important part of a conversation!

True systems and social change happen with small, thoughtful steps. Building on each other. Advocacy is about communication and education. It is standing up for yourself and others with respect. ***Change happens, one true conversation at a time.*** And it is happening!

The world of disabilities has changed greatly in my time on earth. With grace and kindness, it continues to evolve.

Next steps:

- Change will continue to happen if we keep the lines of communication open!
- Change begins with me. My voice, my concerns and my willingness to listen.
- Communication, Compromise and Community are a roadmap to success.

Let's have coffee sometime and chat!



Debbie hosting an Informing Families table at an event.

Washington State Parks: Free and Reduced Passes

Did you know that Washington State Parks offers free and reduced passes for those who qualify?

With 124 beautiful state parks across the state, Washington offers countless opportunities for families and individuals to enjoy the outdoors. Washington State Parks provides passes that waive or reduce fees for camping, moorage, watercraft launch, day-use passes, and parking fees. These passes are offered to Washington state residents who are legally blind, profoundly deaf, or who meet the disability definition used by the Social Security Administration. To learn more visit <https://parks.wa.gov/passes-permits/get-park-pass/disability-pass>.

Finding Accessible Outdoor Spaces

Washington State Parks offers an interactive map to help you find parks with ADA features and amenities. This interactive map will help find the ADA features important to you and your family. To learn more visit <https://parks.wa.gov/find-activity/activity-search/ada-accessible-recreation>. If you cannot access the map, please call the State Parks Information Center at (360)902-8844.

Summer Camp Resources

With warmer weather on the way, summer camps are just around the corner! Now is the perfect time to explore the camps available to you and your loved ones. The Arc of Washington State offers a resource page with over 30+ inclusive camps throughout the northwest. Visit <https://arcwa.org/info-resources/camp-resources/> to learn more.

Community *Inclusion*

What it is and how it works

Community Inclusion is an individualized service that provides supports to individuals with I/DD to build meaningful relationships, be active participants in their community, and connect with others who have similar interest and hobbies.



CI services offer the opportunity to connect with people in your community, fostering an inclusive environment that promotes understanding and friendship. This service is an integral part of creating a “whole life”, helping you find fulfilling ways to spend your time outside of work and supporting your journey towards building a strong sense of community.

How does it work?

You will receive support in developing a personalized goal and action plan tailored to how you want to contribute to your community and what interests you’d like to explore. If you need assistance identifying your goals, your provider can help you discover your passions through various activities.

Once you find a group or activity you love, your provider will support you in building meaningful connections while gradually stepping back to encourage your independence. This process, known as “fading,” varies for everyone and is a collaborative effort to ensure you continue to receive the necessary support without hindering your developing relationships.



What happens when you have achieved your goals in CI? Your provider will work with you to establish new goals to pursue. If you feel as if you need extra support with your initial goal, your CI provider will be available to step back in to assist. CI is a service designed to be with you for a lifetime.

How does Community Inclusion Services vary from other services?

CI goal is to have you become an active participant in your community, not just going out into the community. CI can be cocurrent with other services; you do not have to pick or choose. CI Services are available on Basic Plus and Core Waivers. **To be eligible for CI, you must have been receiving employment services for at least 9 months or be 62 years or older.**

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

Mental health resources for youth in Washington state

Crisis services are available to youth in Washington state. A young person you care about might need help right away. Support and resources are available to youth regardless of income or insurance status. ***If someone is in immediate danger, call 911.***

988

988 is a free and confidential phone lifeline for people in distress and will connect you to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. To learn more about 988 and for additional resources, visit <https://wa988.org/>.

TEEN LINK

Teen Link is a program of Crisis Connections that serves youth in Washington State. Teen Link is a peer-to-peer support line. Phone lines are open 7 days a week from 6–10 p.m. Call or text 866-833-6546. To learn more visit <https://www.teenlink.org/>.

HEARMEWA

HearMeWA is a youth-centered crisis response program offering free support 24/7. HearMeWA can help. Call, text, or use the app at <https://hearmewa.org/>. Text HEARMEWA to 738477 to get a link to their help form.



Get instant updates from the Developmental Disabilities Administration:

- News and Announcements
- Provider Information
- Resources
- Training and Events!

How to Sign Up:

- Text "DDA" to 468311
- Visit <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dda> and then scroll down the home page and click on the GovDelivery envelope and sign up link for news and information.