



**NCCDD Executive Director  
Chris Egan**

## Rooted in Historic Successes and Moving Forward

What a year it has been!

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) started off the year

with renewed commitment and dedication by promoting self-determination, inclusion and equal opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD)!

2015 marked significant milestones for many laws which strengthen the lives of individuals with disabilities across the nation and throughout North Carolina: The 80th anniversary of the Social Security program; the 50th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid; the 40th anniversary of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – an event we celebrated by honoring history as well as the next generation of advocates. The legacy of the ADA continues – new partnerships with federal and state legislators and community leaders were created throughout our statewide ADA celebratory events.

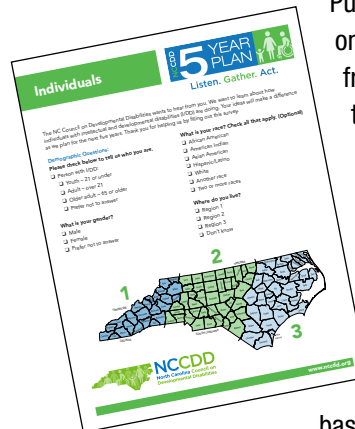
We witnessed milestones as the NC legislature passed the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, which supports qualifying individuals with disabilities and their families to save money without being penalized with loss of benefits. Additionally, North Carolina General Assembly approved legislation to require certain health plans to cover the screening, diagnosis and treatment of autism. Both bills were signed into law by Governor Pat McCrory.

Despite all of these successes, we have more to do and NCCDD is ready! To honor and strengthen advocacy here in North Carolina, NCCDD provided additional funds for people with I/DD and their family members to attend conferences and increase their networking skills as a goal of the Council's Jean Wolff-Rossi

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## NCCDD Seeks Input on Five Year Plan Goals and Objectives

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) has released a new Five Year Plan for 2017-2021. The Council held 13 public listening sessions across the State over the past five months. The plan includes three goals focused on financial security; increase community living for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and increasing advocacy within North Carolina's I/DD community.



Public comment is being sought on the proposed Five Year Plan from people with disabilities, their families, professional caregivers and the public at large. Public comment is welcomed from December 1 through January 14, 2016.

The new plan focuses on specific goals and supporting objectives

based on input from the listening sessions and, upon final adoption in August,

will set the Council's course for the future as it strives to improve the quality of life for people with I/DD. The plan must be adopted by the Council in August and submitted to the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) for approval on the federal level. The new Five Year Plan will take effect on October 1, 2016.

Review and submit your comments to <http://bit.ly/1MRMuGL>



**Listen. Gather. Act.**

## Two Leaders Recognized for Advocacy Work



*Becky Garland Hopper (center) with the Hefner family and Chris Egan (far left) and Ron Reeve (far right).*

The North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD) honored two community members for their outstanding contributions in the intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) community in North Carolina at its annual awards celebration on November 18 at the North Raleigh Hilton Hotel.

Becky Garland Hopper (center) with the Hefner family and Chris Egan (far left) and Ron Reeve (far right). The awards reception included the presentation of the Jack B. Hefner Memorial Award and the Helen C. “Holly” Riddle Distinguished Service Award honoring advocacy and leadership for people with I/DD.

Becky Garland Hopper of Andrews, NC, who has tirelessly advocated on behalf of her 26-year-old son born with Down syndrome and mentored families whose lives have been touched by I/DD, received the Jack B. Hefner Memorial Award. The award celebrates the vision and achievement of advocacy by North Carolina’s families and people with I/DD.

Michael (Mike) Mayer of Mebane, NC posthumously received the Helen C. “Holly” Riddle Distinguished Service Award that honors leadership by a professional in the field of I/DD. Mayer oversaw the development of community residential, vocational, and other support and treatment services for over 700 people with disabilities, specializing in individuals with more severe and/or complex disabilities with a focus on inclusion in community.

Donna Meltzer, CEO of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), gave a



*Joan Johnson (second, left) accepts the Riddle Award on behalf of the late Michael Mayer with Chris Egan (far left), Holly Riddle and Ron Reeve.*

stirring keynote speech on leadership and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities. The night honored advocacy and Meltzer paraphrased from David Bornstein’s book, *How to Change the World*, about how ideas, like inclusion, need good producers and promoters.

Explaining that no matter how good an idea, such as inclusion is – unless it moves to the mainstream, then it’s not going to effect change. Meltzer said, “It’s not easy to speak up, but the payoff when you do is enormous.”

“It was a wonderful evening to honor Becky Garland Hopper and Mike Mayer and the work they have done to promote inclusive and integrated communities across North Carolina,” said NCCDD Executive Director Chris Egan.

“There are many community and professional leaders like Becky and Mike who are working behind the scenes to support people to be fully included in their local communities and we are so pleased to have the opportunity to recognize their hard work and impact through these awards.”



*Chris Egan with keynote speaker Donna Meltzer, CEO of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities.*

## DHHS Secretary Rick Brajer Visits NCCDD

During the November meeting of the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD), newly appointed Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Rick Brajer joined the Council to introduce himself and also to learn what matters most for the I/DD community of North Carolina.

Appointed in August 2015, this was Brajer's first meeting with the Council. NCCDD Chairman Ron Reeve introduced the Secretary and explained the opportunity of the conversation.

"We are here to hopefully set expectations for DHHS," said Reeve. "Too often we only think about services and how to take care of people with I/DD, but we are more interested in how we are providing life for these individuals," said Reeve, "We want to work closely with [the Secretary] in how we achieve that."

Brajer used his time to listen and learn from the Council. "This is a very new role for me so I want to understand what you're thinking about, why you think about those things and why they are important to you. I needed to come here to understand."

He opened the floor to the Council members to provide input on three key questions:

- 1. What is DHHS currently doing well that incorporates I/DD needs?**
- 2. How should DHHS shift its focus to better serve the I/DD community?**
- 3. What are some new things DHHS should be doing in terms of funding, legislatively and more to support the I/DD community?**

In response, members of the Council raised concerns ranging from individuals potentially losing services, questions over managed care systems and crisis prevention.

Brajer spoke to the transition to a hybrid model of managed care organizations in Medicaid reform. "Both [Governor Pat McCrory] and the department are highly committed to building up the success for providers in this future form of healthcare," Brajer said. "We share your concerns

about the limitations of managed care organizations."

He acknowledged that managed care organizations have not yet been able to demonstrate the capability to create great improvements in the delivery of care and therefore the department wants to give providers the ability to succeed in this new model.

"So we think about providers who spend every day with families, who look them in the eye and treat them, we want to give them every chance to win in this new model of healthcare reform," said Brajer.

Through his time spent with the Council, Brajer jotted down feedback and engaged in the discussion by asking further questions or for examples.

One council member praised Brajer for his acknowledgment that individuals with disabilities overcome more in their mornings then he encounters in his entire day. "You are the first non-disabled person I've heard who recognized that fact," said Crystal Foreman.

Brajer joined DHHS after two decades of serving in leadership roles in the healthcare and medical technology industries.



*DHHS Secretary Rick Brajer (center) with Ron Reeve and Chris Egan.*



*Secretary Brajer meets with the Council and asks for their input on three key questions.*

## National Disability Institute and NCCDD Partner to Improve Finances for North Carolinians with Disabilities

On October 12, members of the asset development, poverty reduction and disability communities met in Cary, NC for the Upwards to Financial Stability Summit. In partnership with the Collaborative, and through funding from the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities (NCCDD), National Disability Institute (NDI) hosted the Summit, which was built on work done during last year's extremely successful series of asset development summits.

This year's summit focused on connecting the aforementioned communities to encourage them to work together to improve the financial health and advance economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities.

During the day-long event, attendees heard from keynote speaker North Carolina Treasurer Janet Cowell along



with experts in the fields of employment, public benefits programs and financial education/financial coaching opportunities. Those at the summit also identified opportunities

to increase the use of available programs by individuals with disabilities, created an action plan to put lessons learned into practice, and learned about the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act and its life-changing effect on persons with disabilities and their families.

“At a time when almost one in three North Carolinians with disabilities live in poverty, nearly double the poverty rate for North Carolinians without disabilities, events like the Upwards to Financial Stability Summit are critical to bolstering the financial reality of all people,” said NDI Executive Director Michael Morris. “We are proud to work with our close friends at NCCDD and the Collaborative to ensure more residents of North Carolina have equal opportunity to access the economic mainstream to achieve the American Dream.”

This is the second straight year NDI and NCCDD have joined forces to work toward a more inclusive North Carolina.

NDI is carving new pathways to financial self-sufficiency for all North Carolinians, with and without disabilities. To learn more about NDI, please visit: [www.realeconomicimpact.org](http://www.realeconomicimpact.org). And, for information on the ABLE Act, including frequently asked questions, related videos and content, visit NDI's website.

## Rooted in Historic Successes *(continued from front page)*

Fund for Participant Involvement. Similarly, Council members have amplified their impact with expanded opportunities to share their expertise and knowledge on national and local boards and councils. Finally, NCCDD will continue funding successful initiatives that impact people with I/DD including employment, education, health, housing, leadership and more.

To meet the needs and dreams of individuals with I/DD, we must prepare for the future. The Council began its work toward our new Five Year State Plan. Based on the listening sessions and community survey that took place earlier this year, the Council released a draft of its Five Year Plan goals and objectives and is currently seeking your review and input. The deadline is January 14, 2016 and I encourage everyone to provide feedback and share in building that vision.

Join us in 2016 as we build on this momentum, harness opportunities and strengthen partnerships. Your voice, individually and collectively, as part of NCCDD,

impacts the lives of people with I/DD and their families in North Carolina. Thank you again for your input in creating meaningful change in our state as we promote self-determination, independence, productivity and inclusion in rural and urban areas across the state.

Thank you all for a great 2015 and here's to a successful 2016 for North Carolina and its I/DD community! Happy New Year!

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