
DOUGLAS COUNTY'S

LONG RANGE PLAN TO INCLUDE ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

April, 2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the Long Range Planning Team brings to close their tenure, we would like to acknowledge all those who have been a part of this effort. The entire team has been invested in this Plan for several years. A special gesture of gratitude, though, goes to Gail Whitman and Beryl Jacobson for their ceaseless leadership, support, encouragement, and detail mopping up for the team. Thank you, good friends, for your work on behalf of persons with developmental disabilities in Douglas County. We would also like to thank the following individuals:

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

How did the Plan Come About?

In 1996 families approached the County Commissioners' Health Advisory Committee to express their concerns regarding lack of support and services for their family members with developmental disabilities. Those services that were available within the county were minimal and lacked coordination, purpose, and meaningful support. Families and adults had no choice but to leave the county in order to seek supported living, employment, housing, and transportation. Families with young and school age children, in considering their child's future, became concerned with this lack of coordinated services. Parents of adults with developmental disabilities wondered what would happen to their children if they were no longer able to care for them. The parents made their concerns known. The County Commissioners, recognizing that the needs of all residents of the county need to be addressed, took action.

The County charged the Health Advisory Committee with assessing the needs of citizens with developmental disabilities in the community. A county-wide survey was conducted, analyzed, and resulted in the development of a committee to create a long range plan to include persons with developmental disabilities in Douglas County.

The committee set forth guiding principles and a mission statement that recognized the values expressed by the citizens of Douglas County. The purpose of these guiding principles and mission statements is to serve not only as a guide to the planning process, but to serve as benchmarks against which we evaluate our inclusions of persons with disabilities in our community.

These guiding principles represent the committee's values and set forth their intent.

The countywide survey conducted in 1997 found that people with developmental disabilities want the following:

- *To belong;*
- *To feel welcome in all aspects of the community;*
- *To be supported and valued in the community;*
- *To live in a community with a vision that supports and values all members;*
- *To contribute;*
- *To establish connections with others;*
- *To have access to centralized information; and,*
- *To have access to supports and services.*

Guiding Principles

- 1. That all persons with developmental disabilities have inherent value, a desire to belong, to be safe, and to be contributing members of their community.**
- 2. Those persons with disabilities, because they have a disability, need support.**
- 3. Such support is the responsibility of the community at large.**
- 4. Throughout the process, the committee must consider the impact of their decision-making and planning as it relates to the unique needs of all, especially those not traditionally represented, forgotten, or marginalized in our community.**
- 5. The entire community wins if this plan is successfully crafted.**

Mission

The Douglas County Steering Committee for the Community Plan to Include Persons with Developmental Disabilities is directed to develop a plan for services and support that will focus on the varied needs of adults with developmental disabilities. In so doing the committee shall:

- Plan for services that are workable, flexible, sustainable, accountable, can be funded, and that are considerate of the needs of all.
- Develop a plan that will recognize the ability of each individual to contribute to his/her fullest capability.
- Include (but not be limited to) plans for the following areas of concern:
 - Life in Common,
 - Housing;
 - Transportation;

- Employment;
 - Recreation/Leisure; and,
 - Health.
- Communicate to the public throughout this effort in a meaningful way to raise awareness and to gain further insight into what should be included in the Plan.

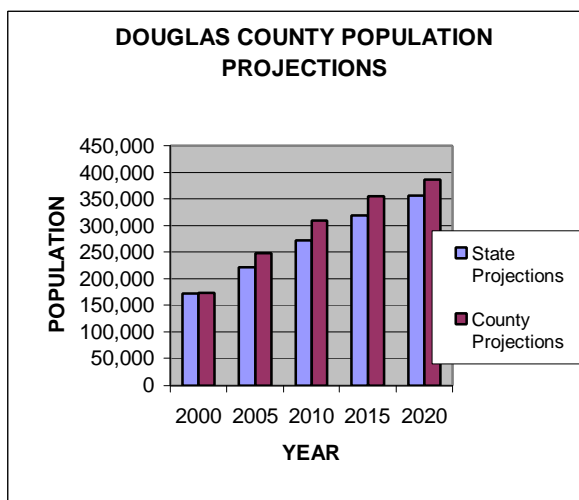
Developmental Disabilities Defined

For purposes of developing this plan, persons with developmental disabilities are those with a significant, chronic mental and/or physical disability that is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitations of major life activities: self care, communication, learning, mobility, self direction, capacity for independent living and economic self-sufficiency.

The intent of this Plan is to address the concerns of adults with developmental disabilities in Douglas County. We encourage the development of similar plans, the application of this plan (where appropriate), or the expansion of this Plan to address the specific and unique needs of persons with physical disabilities, medical disabilities, mental illness, and/or any other marginalized people in our communities.

Douglas County Demographics

In the past ten years, Douglas County has been among the fastest growing



counties. On several occasions it was the fastest. The state and County demographers predict that the population will continue to grow rapidly. Although the respective demographers' projections differ slightly, the population of Douglas County is projected to increase 123% in the next twenty years, from an estimated 172,718 people in 2000 to 385,685 by the year 2020 according to the County. The State Demographer indicates that the population will increase

from an estimated 172,634 people in 2000 to 356,716 residents by 2020, or a 107% increase.

It is estimated that nationally just under 1% of the population is developmentally disabled. It is difficult to determine the exact number of people with special needs, particularly adults, living in Douglas County. Many people do not seek services so they are unable to be tracked by providing organizations.

“I know of one family [that] has a 35-year old son. They’ve never asked for any services, but they came across something and now is the first time in his life that they’ve ever asked for services for him.”

— Focus Group Participant, 4/26/00 —

It is known, however, that Developmental Pathways is currently providing services to 210 individuals living in Douglas County. An additional fifty-five (55) people are on a waiting list to receive services. Furthermore, of the 210 people receiving services, 117 of them would like to receive additional services. These numbers will grow as the population grows. In addition, approximately 10% of the school district’s 1999 student population of 32,446 students is in the special education program – or just over 3,000 students. Approximately 7.5% of that number, or roughly 200, are students with developmental disabilities. These individuals will continue to need comprehensive services (e.g., jobs and housing) when they graduate from high school.

Furthermore, as the population of Douglas County ages the need for services such as those discussed in this Plan will increase. The most recent estimate (1998) indicates that 3.4% of the population is over the age of 65. The County estimates that this number will increase to 43,368, or just over 11% of the population.

Desired Key Outcomes

Providing an environment of acceptance and integration is at the very heart of this Plan. To promote the implementation of the goals and policies in this Plan, the committee believes that two key events must occur:

Support hiring a County Coordinator to provide assistance to county residents. Consider partnering with Developmental Pathways, the county’s municipalities, and others to fund and support this position. This person would be responsible for coordinating and monitoring all aspects relating to persons with disabilities including, but not limited to, acting as a liaison with the business community; serving as a clearinghouse of information concerning people with disabilities; coordinating public/private partnerships; seeking state, federal, and private dollars; and, advocating for persons with

developmental disabilities in all areas of county government and the community.

Establish an advisory committee for people with disabilities. The purpose of this committee would be to ensure that the needs and concerns of people with disabilities be considered as county policy is developed. The

committee would act in an advisory role to the Board of County Commissioners. The advisory committee will be officially recognized by the Board of County Commissioners via the enactment of a resolution that sets out the purpose, role, and duties of the advisory committee. The County Commissioners and county staff will notify the advisory committee (likewise, the board will notify the County Commissioners and county staff) when issues arise that may affect people with developmental disabilities.

CHAPTER 2: PLAN SUMMARY

Legal Status of the Plan

The Douglas County Commissioners adopted this Plan on _____, 2000. The Plan is intended to give decision-makers and citizens alike a vision for the preferred future for those with developmental disabilities living in Douglas County. The Plan should be periodically reviewed and amended if conditions warrant. Within

seven to ten years, county staff should undertake a comprehensive review of the Plan to ensure that the stated goals and policies are consistent with the changing needs of individuals with developmental disabilities in this community.

“The Plan is intended to give decision-makers and citizens alike a vision for the preferred future for those with developmental disabilities living in Douglas County.”

How the Plan Was Developed

The development of this Plan was guided by a dedicated group of volunteers. The steering committee worked on the plan over several years. The steering committee was comprised of professionals in the field as well as parents of sons and daughters with developmental disabilities. This Plan would not have been completed without the determination and hard work of a dedicated group of concerned citizens.



Great efforts were made to ensure that those most affected by this Plan were included in its development. Two well-advertised public forums were held. The forums were designed (one in Castle Rock and one in Highlands Ranch to ensure greater participation) to obtain input from individuals with developmental disabilities and their families regarding their concerns and to gain a better understanding regarding how to improve the quality of their daily lives. In addition, work groups were formed to develop goals and policies and further research the issues for each of the areas of concern (e.g., transportation, housing, etc.) addressed by this Plan.

Later in the process a series of focus groups were held to receive input on the draft plan. Six focus groups were held with nearly people participating. Two of the groups were comprised of consumers, 2 were made up of providers, and 2 of the focus groups were attended by citizens-at-large. Some common

concerns were presented during these forums and were incorporated into the final Plan.

How to Use the Plan

- The Plan should be used to guide decision-making in issues that affect individuals with developmental disabilities such as new development, public improvements (including transportation and parks and recreation planning), community services, economic development, and housing.
- The County Commissioners, staff and various boards and commissions should use the Plan to more fully integrate the needs of people with developmental disabilities into their planning efforts.
- The Plan should be available to aid other community organizations, local agencies or businesses in their investment decisions or short and long-term goal setting.
- The Plan should also prove useful to Douglas County residents, businesses, property owners, and developers as it will increase awareness.
- The Plan should be made available to all prospective businesses, employers, and residents to help them understand the needs of people with developmental disabilities and how they might contribute to meeting these needs.

Issues Addressed by the Plan

The following is an outline of the **Issues** addressed in this Plan.

- 1. Life in Common**
- 2. Transportation**
- 3. Recreation and Leisure**
- 4. Employment**
- 5. Housing**

6. Health

Common Themes

Although the Plan separately addresses six “key issues,” many of the issues are interconnected and / or are affected by similar influences. The links between these should be considered when prioritizing activities or funding. The common themes are as follows:

- **Awareness.** Everyone in this community knows someone with a disability. Nonetheless, many of the problems facing adults with developmental disabilities stem from a lack of understanding of their needs and desires. Any effort to implement this Plan should include a public awareness component. Building awareness and empowering individuals with information and opportunities for shared life experiences will build a deeper sense of inclusion in our community.
- **Transportation.** Access to transportation is critical to each of the six issues addressed by this Plan.
- **Regulatory Requirements.** Presently there are many regulations that make it difficult for people to get the services they need. Flexibility needs to be built into the regulations to make them more user-friendly and more able to respond sensitively to a wide variety of needs.
- **Planning.** More coordinated planning needs to occur. Due to the rapid pace of growth in Douglas County, public agencies are now being forced to play “catch-up” and revise development, facilities, and service standards. It is amidst this growth that the County Commissioners have acknowledged the need to address the concerns of all residents, including those with special needs.
- **Local Support.** The county should have a person on staff to provide consistent communication to all community members regarding issues faced by persons with developmental disabilities. This person should be responsible for the following: coordinating programs and activities; disseminating

“I was surprised to be honest...I was not as much aware as I am now after reading the plan...[It] just never dawned on me the issues the developmentally disabled have. Our human resource manager also read through [the plan] and she’s a little more familiar with some of these issues...it was an eye-opener for her as well.”

— Focus Group Participant, 4/20/00 —

information; assisting individuals and families identify and obtain benefits they are entitled to; ensuring all Federal and

state laws are being implemented; and, generally improving the quality of life for those with developmental disabilities who chose to live in the county.

Plan Goals and Policies

This Plan contains goals and policies to guide the decision-making in Douglas County in issues that affect people with developmental disabilities.

Goals are general concepts that should guide all decision-making. They address and summarize the concerns and desires of people with developmental disabilities in our community.

Policies provide more specific direction for the County Commissioners, county staff, and other boards and commissions regarding public investments and community form and function. Policies state the desired direction for Douglas County.

CHAPTER 3: LIFE IN COMMON

How can Douglas County Create a Deeper Sense of Belonging?

In this rapidly growing part of the state, it can be a struggle to create and maintain a sense of life in common. For many of our residents life is fractured between work and home settings. Intentional steps should be taken to build a common life – a true community – which sustains and supports all of us. As our community develops a sense of identity and welcome, it is absolutely necessary to take into account the needs and desires of persons with disabilities.

Thoughtful citizens have collected a number of recommendations to be considered and implemented that would enhance our life in common. Expanding and maintaining friendships are ways all of us feel more connected to our communities. These guidelines will help ensure that persons with disabilities will have opportunities to feel this connection as well.

Life in Common: Goals and Policies

Goal 1. Ensure the Douglas County Advisory Committee for Adults with Developmental Disabilities will include a working committee on Life in Common. (See *Desired Key Outcomes* on page 6).

Policy 1.1. Ensure the Committee on Life in Common, comprised of persons with disabilities, advocates for the disability community and families of persons with disabilities. The committee will advise and make recommendations on how decisions and policies impact persons with disabilities and our common life.

“We came from a segregated sight [in California] to Ponderosa High School. We moved here when [Andrew] was 15. For us it was an eye-opener. In ...California, they feel financially they can serve a greater population with diverse needs by basically pooling them all, and what we have found now ...is it was worse in California...he had opportunities here that were never presented to him [there]. [T]he socialization and the ability for him to be with age-appropriate peers and people who talked...was much better. [H]e opened up.”

— Focus Group Participant, 4/18/00 —

Goal 2. Create a sense of belonging for persons with disabilities residing in Douglas County.

Policy 2.1. Ensure that persons with disabilities will have opportunities to meet friends in our community, enhance friendship skills and sustain a sense of belonging in their community. The working committee on Life in Common in cooperation with community partners will monitor success in this area.

Policy 2.2. Continue to develop and enhance existing community sites (library, recreation, educational, community clubs, etc.) where individuals and families have opportunities to gather, talk, share, support, and become more integrated into its community life. The county will call on the expertise of the Commission on Disability as new development occurs.

Policy 2.3. Continue supporting a life in common by encouraging more neighborhood activities, providing more pedestrian areas in public places, and by providing access to non-competitive recreational activities.

CHAPTER 4: TRANSPORTATION

What are the Transportation Problems Faced by People with Developmental Disabilities in Our Community?

Transportation is probably the most significant problem faced by people with developmental disabilities living in Douglas County. It affects every aspect of their lives including their ability to find and retain employment, obtain needed medical care, get to and from recreational and leisure events, form and maintain relationships, and obtain everyday goods and services. Improving transportation would go a long way in improving the quality of life for all residents of Douglas County. However, without consideration of the accompanying needs, such as how an individual with developmental disabilities gets to/from the bus stop (both the originating and destination stops), any transportation improvement will be of substantially less value.



Although portions of Douglas County are part of the Regional Transportation District (RTD), fixed routes typically run only on major traffic corridors making accessibility a big issue for individuals with disabilities. Access-a-Ride service is also very limited in that it does not provide service for those residing outside of a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius from a fixed route. This leaves a large segment of the population without RTD service. Many times the only option is taxi service, which is extremely costly for

people who are often on fixed incomes.

Improved transit service, particularly individualized service or paratransit, must become a priority for Douglas County. As the population continues to age, mobility will become an increasing concern. Addressing the problem now will help people with disabilities now as well as ensure that Douglas County is well versed in providing transit as its population ages.

Transportation: Goals and Policies

Goal 1. Work with RTD and other private service providers to improve transit's local and regional service.

Policy 1.1. Work with RTD, other agencies, and private service providers to expand special transit, both fixed-route and individualized routes, with region-wide service. For example, urge RTD to increase Access-a-Ride's service area (current policy prohibits service outside of a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius from a fixed route).

Policy 1.2. Consider the difficulties those with limited mobility may have in reaching fixed-route transit stops and make the necessary accommodations (e.g. snow removal, sidewalk curbs cuts, companion program, etc.).

Policy 1.3. Appoint a local coordinating agency to gain access to additional federal dollars through programs that require the establishment of a local agency to provide necessary organizational, administrative, and operating support in order to release funds.

Policy 1.4. Assign the task of coordinating service between RTD and other public and private service providers to a county planner or engineer that deals with transportation issues.

Policy 1.5. Work with RTD and other service providers to ensure that drivers are adequately trained to provide sensitive service to passengers with disabilities.

Policy 1.6. Strive to ensure that key community facilities (e.g. libraries, recreation centers, post offices, medical facilities, etc.) are served by transit and that when new community facilities are built they are located along existing bus routes.

Goal 2. Assist in the funding and coordination of other transportation services for persons with developmental disabilities.

Policy 2.1. Work with local cab companies to institute a program to offer lower fares to people with disabilities. Consider subsidizing this service.

Policy 2.2. Research the possibility of homeowners' associations or Metro Districts sponsoring vans to provide either a fixed route system or individualized service.

Policy 2.3. Work with senior centers to use their shuttle systems when they are not in service. Contact

Policy 2.4. Developmental Pathways (and / or other agencies) and utilize Supported Living Services dollars to fund this effort.

CHAPTER 5: RECREATION AND LEISURE

How Can Recreational and Leisure Activities be Improved for the Developmentally Disabled Community?

Recreation and leisure is vital to our existence. Consideration needs to be given to the needs of the developmentally disabled as they undertake these activities. As with all people, a feeling of belonging and inclusion is sought by people with developmental disabilities. Separate classes to accommodate individuals with special needs are not the desired solution. Ideally the inclusion of people with special needs should be second nature. However, in a world that values competitive play, sensitivity to adults with developmental disabilities must often be taught.

As Douglas County is a new and rapidly growing community, care must be taken to ensure that all recreational and leisure activities and facilities are planned and designed for all members of the community. Compliance with Federal and state regulations is essential. Raising the awareness of the community as a whole is equally critical.

Recreation and Leisure: Goals and Policies

Goal 1. Create more opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities to participate in the recreational and leisure activities in Douglas County.

Policy 1.1. Increase the amount of time that recreational facilities, particularly ball fields, are available for non-competitive activities.

Policy 1.2. Encourage the formation of non-competitive athletic leagues.

Policy 1.3. Consider the accessibility of recreational activities when designing recreational facilities (e.g. ensure adequate amount of space around a pool table).

Policy 1.4. Facilitate / coordinate the institution of a recreational companion program to team people together who have similar interests (e.g. post a sign so that someone who does pottery can offer to work with an adult with developmental disabilities who is also interested in pottery).

Policy 1.5. Work with recreational districts and sports league directors to ensure that regulations are written flexibly enough to allow a person with a disability to be able to contribute to a team in some capacity.

Policy 1.6. Educate coaches and sports league directors regarding the benefits of including people with disabilities on their respective teams.

Policy 1.7. Initiate a staff awareness program to encourage greater understanding of the needs of adults with developmental disabilities and to allow some flexibility of regulations (e.g. waive the fee for a recreational companion).

Policy 1.8. Ensure that the Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities is involved in the review of all park and recreational facility planning projects.

Policy 1.9. Consider adding an additional staff person at all recreational facilities to ensure that someone is available to assist people with special needs.

Policy 1.10. Work with developers to ensure that private entertainment facilities meet, and exceed when possible, all Federal and state laws to ensure those entertainment venues can be enjoyed by all Douglas County residents.

Policy 1.11. Evaluate existing public facilities to ensure they are ADA compliant.

Policy 1.12. Initiate outreach programs with other agencies dealing with similar issues to gain insight and to participate in existing programs, when possible.

CHAPTER 6: EMPLOYMENT

CASE STUDY

John Smiley, a resident of Castle Rock, is 19 years old. John has a strong desire to work and be a productive, integrated member of his community. John searched for a job near his home, but was unsuccessful in finding employment. John did, however, find work at a public school in Highlands Ranch. Interestingly, there are similar businesses nearer to his home in Castle Rock. It took a business in Highlands Ranch willing to provide a supportive environment to employ John. Commuting, though, requires a significant time commitment by John and his family. Adequate public transportation is not available to get John to and from work. Consequently, he must rely on family-members to maintain employment.

This case study, in addition to demonstrating the transportation needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, highlights the need for more outreach and training for the employers of Douglas County. If more employers were aware of the help available (provided the employer creates an environment of acceptance), people like John would have greater opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the community.

What are the Obstacles to Finding Employment?

The ultimate goal regarding employment is to see the majority of people with developmental disabilities in Douglas County successfully and gainfully employed. Therefore, the focus must be on establishing employment opportunities that pay a living wage (without loss of benefits) and appropriate training and supports for living wage work. For example, computer-related jobs are expected to increase in the near future; consequently, we need to make sure that training reflects this trend in the marketplace.

The problems faced by those seeking employment in Douglas County are faced by many throughout the country as confirmed by Judy Emery of the JFK Center, the University Affiliated Program for Colorado.

Research shows that 1.6-1.8% of the population has developmental disabilities.¹ Within that 1.6-1.8% of the population, it is estimated that

¹ Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. The figures do not reflect the disparity between people with developmental disabilities and people with aging and chronic illnesses.

75%² of the people are unemployed – employable but not working. This is due, in part, to people’s inability to collect Medicaid/Medicare and

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)³ if they work. It is a good example of how regulatory requirements work against an individual who wants to work – if you work, you lose the benefits you have. It also raises the issue of the type of jobs available to an adult with developmental disabilities. Often times the jobs available offer no benefits and provide little satisfaction to the employee. A concerted effort to find more rewarding (both financially and emotionally) employment opportunities for those adults in the community with developmental disabilities needs to be made. Helping people find quality jobs, not only in the low-skilled service sector, should be a priority in Douglas County.

Fortunately, Colorado’s economy is booming. Research shows that the employment rate of persons with disabilities in Colorado is very high compared to the rest of the nation. It is also assumed that people with milder forms of developmental disability are considered to be more employable. In Douglas County, however, the majority of people with developmental disabilities are unemployed or underemployed. This is a result of:

1. Inadequate Systems Coordination
2. Lack of public awareness of employers about the competencies of people with developmental disabilities in the work place
3. Lack of public transportation
4. Inadequate Pre-vocational skills
5. Lack of Job Matching
6. Lack of the Continuum of Employment Services

Developmental Pathways is the Community Centered Board funded by the State of Colorado to serve people with developmental disabilities in Arapahoe and Douglas Counties. Their current employment programs are: AVATRAC, two sheltered workshops (33rd and Peoria & Hampden and Santa Fe), job training and job coaching. Counselors train people with developmental disabilities to perform certain job tasks and provide coaching to maintain these skills in the workplace. Currently 60 people from Douglas County receive Supported Living Services through Developmental Pathways. Supported Living Services is a flexible funding program that can support

² Colorado Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC).

³ This assumes that the federal Work Incentives Bill will be enforced and allow people with disabilities to be able to make a living wage without losing their access to adequate health insurance -- Medicaid/Medicare. This problem statement acknowledges that the SSI income cap has already been raised so that people can make more money without losing their SSI/SSDI.

people with developmental disabilities in employment, community participation and independent living skills. However, more can and should be done.

Coordinating existing resources and raising awareness of the interplay between agencies and other service providers would be very helpful. The committee developing this Plan determined that the following services need to

be coordinated so that people with developmental disabilities can become successfully and gainfully employed:

- The Department of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- Transition Services through the Douglas County School District;
- Transportation;
- Job Coaches and Mentors;
- Health Care;
- Housing; and,
- Legal.

Employment: Goals and Policies

Goal 1. Actively support the employment of persons with developmental disabilities in businesses and agencies throughout the county.

Policy 1.1. Appoint a person within the county (the county coordinator) to act as a liaison between the county residents who are developmentally disabled, agencies working to employ those people, and business. This person's job responsibilities should include the following:

- Ensure the county coordinator can facilitate regular meetings with consumers and/or parents/guardians to enhance knowledge of the service system and increase the opportunities for people to make informed choices about employment opportunities. (e.g. topics of regular meetings could include futures planning, job

opportunities, job development, building a career profile, etc.)

- Increase awareness of the skills and capabilities that people with developmental disabilities can bring to businesses within Douglas County.

- Coordinate job training and skill development with the needs of employers to enhance opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to work in Douglas County.

- Promote the employment of people with developmental disabilities in white-collar jobs in Douglas County.

Policy 1.2. Avoid segregated group work settings, as they have not been shown to be effective for people with developmental disabilities.

Goal 2. Promote the development of more informal networks of people seeking employment.

Policy 2.1. Develop employment/job clubs to reduce social isolation while people are looking for work. These “Job Clubs” give people a chance to brainstorm, expand their areas of interest, expand their opportunities, and expand their ability to make informed choices.

Goal 3. Assume a leadership role in reducing the barriers to employment for people with developmental disabilities.

Policy 3.1. Actively support the Work Incentives Bill at a federal and state level.

Policy 3.2. Actively support passage of federal bills that increase access by people with disabilities to necessary medical care through Medicaid/Medicare even though they are employed.

Policy 3.3. Work with other governmental entities to provide public transportation so that people who cannot drive can get to their place of work (Access-A-Ride is minimum, full RTD Service is best).

Policy 3.4. Employ people with developmental disabilities in positions throughout Douglas County government.

Policy 3.5. Promote awareness of the benefits of hiring/employing people with developmental disabilities in white collar and blue-collar positions through major media and targeted efforts (e.g., presentations to employers within the County.)

CHAPTER 7: HOUSING

What can be Done About the Housing Crisis in Douglas County?

Nationally, people with disabilities are in the middle of an acute and increasing affordable housing crisis. This crisis is the direct result of both the actions and inaction of the federal government, as well as the unwillingness of local and state officials to acknowledge or address the housing needs of people with disabilities.

This crisis is also present in Douglas County. A severe shortage of affordable, accessible housing exists for people with disabilities living in Douglas County. The cost of housing in Douglas County is not affordable to the average wage earner working in Douglas County let alone persons with disabilities. Many residents with disabilities rely on families and supplemental security income (SSI) for financial support. SSI currently amounts to only \$500 per month so affordability is a serious issue for those persons relying solely on SSI or SSI and a lower paying job. In addition to affordable housing people with developmental disabilities often require assisted living arrangements because of physical or mental disabilities. At the time this plan was written, no housing opportunities that provide assisted living services were available for persons with developmental disabilities in Douglas County. Currently 172 people living in Douglas County are on a waiting list for Assisted Living or Residential services. All of the people on the waiting list would currently have to move out of the county to receive this service. The wait for someone asking for this service is 8-10 years due to lack of funding and resources.

“You know, kids with different kinds of disabilities have the right to leave home just like our other kids do because that’s a right.”

— Focus Group Participant, 4/18/00 —

It is important that the County Commissioners seek the cooperation of developers, landlords, community service agencies and other city and county staff to address the severe shortage of housing opportunities as well as improvement of the standards, regulations and laws that affect integrated housing for people with developmental disabilities in Douglas County.

Housing: Goals and Policies

Goal 1. Increase the choice of housing available as well as attainable housing opportunities for people who live with developmental disabilities.

Policy 1.1. Explore the following HUD options:

Federally Subsidized Programs

- HUD 811
- Section 8 Existing Certificate Program
- Section 8 Existing Housing Voucher Program
- Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation
- Section 8 New Construction

Non-Federally Subsidized Programs

- Non-Assisted Housing
- Homeownership Programs

Policy 1.2. Consider offering incentives to developers who agree to provide a certain percentage of their development to people with disabilities (e.g., fast-tracking the building permit process, density bonus, etc.)

Policy 1.3. Explore the development of more host homes – people or families agree to support a person with developmental disabilities in their home – in Douglas County.

Policy 1.4. Find community groups, foundations, and private businesses willing to donate money or time for the development of housing that is accessible and affordable for people with special needs.

“This is what I want for my daughter when she turns 21. I want her to be able to live in a group home where I’d be able to bring her home for weekends or whatever, but I want her to live in a place where she’s well taken care of, where her needs are met – where people take care [of her] like I take care of her, make sure that her socks aren’t twisted when I put on her shoes...make sure her teeth are brushed every day, her hair is combed, she’s fed and happy, and has something to do during the day.”

— Focus Group Participant, 4/26/00 —

Policy 1.5. Request that Habitat for Humanity build a home in Douglas County that would be affordable and accessible for people with special needs.

Policy 1.6. Ensure that the availability of Private Activity Bonds⁴ are well known to those seeking to develop housing that would be accessible and affordable for persons with developmental disabilities as they can significantly lower start-up costs.

Policy 1.7. Work with the Colorado Housing and Finance Authority that administers programs designed to address the unmet housing needs of under served and lower income Americans.

Policy 1.8. Pursue funding through the federally sponsored Community Development Block Grants program.

Goal 2. Ensure that the process for developing housing for persons with developmental disabilities is fast and equitable.

Policy 2.1. Remove excessive waiting periods for all county programs geared toward providing housing that is affordable and accessible for people with special needs and advocate for the same at the state and federal level.

Policy 2.2. Streamline the application and approval process so that individuals and agencies are not unfairly made to wait for housing.

Policy 2.3. Ensure that current zoning allows for the dispersal of housing that is affordable and accessible for people with special needs throughout the county and that it does not preclude the development of group homes.

⁴ Private Activity Bonds (PABs) are drawn from a pool of money with very low interest rates. The State of Colorado's Division of Housing issues the PABs. The County Commissioners determine where the money goes.

CHAPTER 8: HEALTH

How can Douglas County Address the Gaps affecting those with Developmental Disabilities regarding the Health Delivery System?

There are many obstacles to obtaining quality, affordable health care for people with developmental disabilities living in Douglas County. This chapter contains goals and policies that if applied will improve the quality of health care for the population in Douglas County with special needs.

Lack of a hospital or an acute care center is a problem for people with developmental disabilities as well as the population at large in Douglas County. At this time, a trip to Littleton or Colorado Springs is necessary to obtain care at a hospital or an acute care center.

“We’re looking maybe another twenty years down the road. I’ll be in my 80s. I don’t think I’m going to be able to take care of [my son]. He’s going to become the ward of somebody – Douglas County?”

— Focus Group Participant, 4/18/00 —

This trip may be very difficult and potentially dangerous for any population. Personal care providers, who provide care in client’s homes, are difficult to obtain as the reimbursement rate is low compared to other jobs in the county. It is also difficult to find dentists for the developmentally disabled. Similarly, there are also few specialists and medical services such as dialysis, chemotherapy, radiation, and major x-rays.

Once again the lack of centralized information and/or a county coordinator in Douglas County makes obtaining medical care even more difficult for people with developmental disabilities. The county coordinator should be trained to help and advocate for people with developmental disabilities and their caregivers.

During the development of this plan the need surfaced for a community center that provides a range of services for persons with developmental disabilities and others with special needs. It was suggested that an existing, abandoned or under-utilized facility, such as the old county jail/justice center, be used for this purpose. Currently, there is no one place in Douglas County that provides the day-to-day practical needs for people with special needs. In order to reduce the cost to the county, the goals and policies suggest using public/private partnerships to finance the facility’s development and operation. In addition, setting aside space that could be leased to private practitioners such as doctors, therapists, etc. could help to defray the cost.

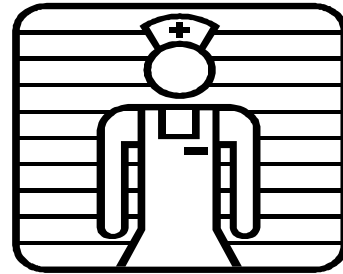
Health: Goals and Policies

Goal 1. Work with all local providers, public and private, to create successful partnerships that will enhance and promote a better health care delivery system in Douglas County.

Policy 1.1. Provide tax incentives to investors and business developers in order to initiate the growth and expansion of acute care and long term care facilities in Douglas County.

Goal 2. Assume a leadership role in advocating for better health care for those with developmental disabilities.

Policy 2.1. Support federal efforts that would ensure that all people with developmental disabilities have access to quality, affordable health care.



Policy 2.2. Support federal efforts to increase the Medicaid rates paid to providers in order to maintain and increase the availability of professional and custodial care providers to keep persons with disabilities in the community.

Goal 3. Develop a community center to serve all ages and populations relying heavily upon public/private partnerships.

Policy 3.1. Develop partnerships with medical and dental schools to allow for interns to be used on a rotation basis in the community center, provided they are under the supervision of licensed physicians.

Policy 3.2. Ensure the community center offers respite care, day and overnight. Overnight care should be offered to accommodate respite as well as protective care.

“I think that [respite care] is a huge issue for families with family members with developmental disabilities. Respite care is among the top priorities.”

— Focus Group Participant, 4/26/00 —

Policy 3.3. Ensure the community center will offer programs to meet the needs of adults with developmental disabilities including job training (See Chapter 5).

Policy 3.4. Support the provision of a van and a scheduler, either through a private or public vendor, that will pick up clients and deliver them to the community center.

CHAPTER 9: IMPLEMENTATION

Strategies to Implement the Long Range Plan to Include Adults with Developmental Disabilities

The Long Range Plan provides the vision for Douglas County with regard to Adults with Developmental Disabilities. It also contains goals and policies to assist decision-makers in making the day-to-day decisions that may affect the quality of life of people with developmental disabilities. To give the plan practical effect, however, other actions should be taken. These implementation mechanisms are discussed below.

ACTION 1⁵:

Support hiring a County Coordinator to provide assistance to county residents. Consider partnering with Developmental Pathways, the county's municipalities, and others to fund and support this position. This person would be responsible for coordinating and monitoring all aspects relating to persons with disabilities including, but not limited to, acting as a liaison with the business community; serving as a clearinghouse of information concerning people with disabilities; coordinating public/private partnerships; seeking state, federal, and private dollars; and, advocating for persons with developmental disabilities in all areas of county government and the community.

⁵ The project's steering committee (the Long Range Planning Team) would like the advisory committee to supervise the county coordinator. This points to a need for the advisory committee to be developed first. The process for selecting an advisory committee should be thoughtful. The plan identifies six areas of concern for people with disabilities – life in common, housing, transportation, employment, recreation/leisure, and health. The committee would like to select a community-based board committed to representing these areas of concern. It proposes that a transition team comprised of members of the Long Range Planning Team and other key community leaders be established to identify, recruit, and help the advisory committee members to fully understand the expectation of their roles, expand recommendations for implementation, and then hire and supervise the staff appropriate to fulfill implementation. The transition team will also play a role in obtaining the funding to support the advisory committee and the county coordinator. The transition team will remain available for one year while the advisory committee members are being recruited and as the advisory committee becomes a cohesive team. Having an advisory committee in place first ensures community oversight and buy-in as opposed to a one-person staff implementing their particular interpretation of this Plan.

ACTION 2:

Establish an advisory committee for people with disabilities. The purpose of this committee would be to ensure that the needs and concerns of people with disabilities be considered as county policy is developed. The committee would act in an advisory role to the Board of County Commissioners. The advisory committee will be officially recognized by the Board of County Commissioners via the enactment of a resolution that sets out the purpose, role, and duties of the advisory committee. The County Commissioners and county staff will notify the advisory committee (likewise, the committee will notify the County Commissioners and county staff) when issues arise that may affect people with developmental disabilities.

“I believe [the advisory committee] ... should serve as a facilitator. For example,...Parker is full of disabled people, yet we’re unable to contact [other] families with grown-ups or children with like disabilities. [T]he [advisory committee] would...enable a network like this among people like us. People might be willing to share two or three days out of the week with somebody else, babysitting so that my wife and I can go to the movies.”

— Focus Group Participant, 4/18/00 —

ACTION 3:

Incorporate the Long Range Plan to Include Adults with Developmental Disabilities as an amendment to the county’s Master Plan. Acknowledge the importance of this Plan by making it an official part of the county’s Master Plan.

ACTION 4:

Review and revise, if necessary, the zoning ordinance to ensure it is ADA compliant. Special attention should be given to access to entrances, approaches, goods and services, and rest rooms as well as to ensuring the ordinance does not effectively preclude the development of affordable housing and/or group homes.

ACTION 5:

Evaluate all existing public facilities to ensure they are in compliance with ADA. Refer to the *Checklist for Existing Facilities (version 2.1)* attached as Exhibit A in the Technical Appendix.

ACTION 6:

Ensure that reviewing all development proposals for compliance with ADA becomes a routine part of the development review process. Ensure new construction is ADA compliant by developing a checklist of key ADA requirements.

ACTION 7⁶:

Include funding in the county's annual budget to support people with developmental disabilities. Funds should be set aside for the new coordinator position, the operating expenses of the advisory committee for people with disabilities, Developmental Pathways and other service providers.

ACTION 8:

Form public/private partnerships to aid in the funding and implementation of the goals and policies contained within this Plan. It is essential that people with developmental disabilities be ensured services to cover their lifespan. Working with other agencies and organizations can help to achieve this.

ACTION 9:

Identify sources of funding to support individuals with developmental disabilities residing in the county. Often times money is available from foundations, the business community, government programs, etc., that is not used simply because agencies are unaware of its existence or do not have the resources to complete the grant application. To ensure that the goals and policies in this plan are implemented, the county should make seeking out these funding sources a priority.

⁶ Developmental Pathways, the primary provider of services for people with developmental disabilities, is aware of 265 people with developmental disabilities residing in Douglas County. 210 of those individuals are receiving services, 55 are on the waiting list and receiving no services. Further, 172 of the 265 people with developmental disabilities living in Douglas County are on a waiting list to receive additional services. The waiting list exists because there is a lack of resources including infrastructure and monetary support as well as a lack of awareness to support the provision of the needed services.

ACTION 10:

Initiate a public education program aimed at Douglas County residents and businesses that raises awareness of the needs and desires of people with developmental disabilities. For example, develop feature articles on businesses that hire individuals with developmental disabilities in the county's newspaper or develop a program to run on DC8 (the official cable channel of Douglas County). Bear in mind, however, that the best way to raise awareness is to fully integrate people with developmental disabilities into the community's places of home, work, worship, and recreation.

ACTION 11:

Work with the municipalities in the County. In its dealings with its municipalities, the County should encourage adherence to the goals and policies contained within this Plan.

ACTION 12:

Work with other counties in the Denver metro area to see how they have dealt with this issue and to potentially pull resources and improve regional service to individuals with special needs.

ACTION 13:

Sponsor the development of a web page that provides information regarding services and opportunities (employment and otherwise) available for people with developmental disabilities. In addition, the web page could provide a way for people to connect with others.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Appendix A – Resource Directory

Resource Directory

Valuable information as well as lists of services available to people with developmental disabilities can be found at the following websites.

- www.developmentalpathways.org
- www.parenttoparent.com
- www.peakparent.org
- www.douglas.co.us (then select the human services department)
- website for Arapahoe/Douglas County Works will be added

Appendix B – Checklist for Existing Facilities