

# COMMISSION ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ANNUAL REPORT 2025



**Commission on People with Disabilities**  
October 23, 2025

*Via Letter of Transmittal Electronically*

Honorable Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Executive  
Honorable Kate Stewart, President, Montgomery County Council  
James C. Bridgers, Jr., Ph.D., MBA, Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

The Commission on People with Disabilities is pleased to present a summary of its activities for the past year. We continue to advise and consult with you on issues of concern to the safety and well-being of an estimated 99,331 people with disabilities who live in the County, according to the 2024 U.S. Census Bureau. Please note the County resident disability data on page 14 — 25,128 with hearing, 16,233 with vision, 36,808 with cognitive and 41,502 with ambulatory disabilities. The census does not include mental health data. We continue to work to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

- The Commission continues to promote greater employment opportunities for people with disabilities who want to work of all ages and all types of disabilities. OHR should continue to promote the Hiring preference for People with Disabilities and Disabled Veterans and the County's non-competitive hiring initiative. The Commission collaborated with DORS and Worksource Montgomery to promote hiring in the private and public sectors.
- Housing continues to be an issue that County residents face challenges with, including locating and sustaining affordable and accessible housing. Programs need to be promoted to increase the amount of accessible and affordable housing. The Commission provided feedback about the Design for Life tax credit in an effort to increase its usage and successfully saw changes to the tax credit to help encourage adding accessibility features to a owner's home. The Commission created a housing subcommittee to focus on researching potential useful strategies regarding countywide universal design elements for certain newly constructed residential homes and a disability property tax credit. Collaboration with HOC and other housing agencies such as Habitat helped increase the Commission's knowledge.
- Residents with disabilities need to be able access varieties of transportation around the County. Pedestrian safety is a big priority for the Commission members in traversing sidewalks with or without bike lanes. Sidewalks and street design should ensure equal access and equity for people with disabilities by minimizing or eliminating designated bike lanes or providing consistent design. Locating accessible parking is a growing barrier within many parking lots and increased enforcement of accessible parking spaces and placard use is needed. The number of wheelchair accessible taxicabs are successfully increasing with the help of financial incentive changes made by the County. The Commission encourages taxi drivers to drive accessible vehicles on a regular full time basis.
- Assistive technology enables persons with disabilities greater independence and technology is vastly progressing. The Commission was successful in supporting statewide legislation for power wheelchair repair. Encouraging the increased use of assistive technology for those with various disabilities as well as Deaf individuals was recommended.
- The Commission increased its collaboration with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission, Commission on Aging and Commission on Veterans Affairs and county agencies such as DHHS. Respite and Caregiver Supports is an important concern that many Commissioners of those Commissions are discussing and making recommendations for improvements, including increased funding for respite services.

We wish to recognize and give our personal thanks to all Commissioners, community members, and agency staff who participate in our meetings for their commitment and dedication in promoting the civil rights and independence of people with disabilities. For the upcoming year, Tonya Gilchrist will be serving as Chair and Jamila Michael-Sobratti will serving as Vice-Chair. It has been a pleasure to work with you and the members of the Commission. We are confident that you will continue to support the Commission's efforts to enhance the lives of people with disabilities in our County. Our meetings are open to the public, and we invite you to join us at our meetings.

Sincerely,



Tonya Gilchrist, Chair



Jamila Michael-Sobratti, Vice-Chair

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
Membership List	3
About the Commission	4
Commission Presentations 2024 – 2025	5
Celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act	6
What the Americans with Disabilities Act Means	7
FY27 Top Policy Issues	8
Letter to County Executive and Council President on Universal Design Legislation	9 – 10
FY26 Operating Budget Priorities	11
Montgomery Parks Adds Accessible Boat Launch at Black Hills Park in Clarksburg / Montgomery Parks Adaptive Paddling at Seneca Landing Special Park (Rileys Lock) & Black Hill Regional Park / Montgomery Parks Expands Meaningful Day Programs	12
Montgomery Parks Rolls Out New Grit Freedom Chair / Outdoors For All: Adaptive Mountain Biking Programs Offered by Montgomery Parks	13
Who Has A Disability in Montgomery County, Maryland? An Overview	14
Developmental Disability Resources and Information	15
Community Support Network Programs	16
Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration Waiting List	17
Montgomery College Workforce Development and Continuing Education	18
Design for Life Property Tax Incentive Program	19
Disability Network Directory	20
Commission on People with Disabilities Commemorates 46 <sup>th</sup> Year	21 – 22
COVID-19 Pandemic Portal / Text-to-911 Now Available in Maryland	23
Safety and Emergency Resources	24
How to Contact Your Elected Officials	25

## AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE UNIT (ADRU) MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



Provides hands-on assistance, referrals to service, and information to adults 60+, caregivers and persons with disabilities of any age. It is the primary entry point for most DHHS Aging and Disability services.  
240-777-3000 (Voice) • MD Relay 711 • 240-777-4000 (Emergency After Hours)

Email: [ADS@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:ADS@montgomerycountymd.gov)

[Aging & Disability Resource Unit Website](#)

# COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP LIST

## Public Voting Members (13)

Tonya Gilchrist  
Karen Goss  
Leslie Green Lyles  
Cindy LaBon  
Ricardo Lopez  
Rebecca Murphy  
Deborah Rozell  
Mary Simons  
Teresa Villani

## Parent Voting Member (3)

Shameen Anthanio-Williams  
Jamila Michael-Sobratti

## Organization / Agency Voting Members (9)

Azeb Adere, *Ethiopian Eritrean Special Needs Community*  
Jennifer Berzok, *Jennifer K. Berzok Consulting*  
E. Felicia Brannon, *Rare Disease Advisory Council – State of Maryland*  
Tria Gray, *Service Coordination, Inc.*  
John Whittle, *Consultant, Service Coordination, Inc.*

## Non-Voting Members – Public Agency Representatives

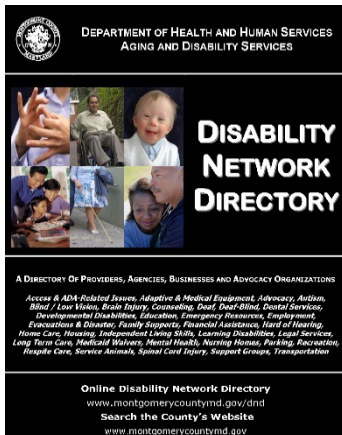
Matthew Barkley, *ADA Title II Compliance Manager, Department of General Services*  
Jennene Blakely, *M-NCPPC, Montgomery Parks*  
Patricia Cochrane, *Montgomery County Public Schools*  
Rebecca Grayson, *Housing Opportunities Commission*  
Candace Groudine, *Human Rights Commission*  
Denise Isreal, *Department of Transportation*  
Elizabeth Lang, *Montgomery County Public Libraries*  
Angela Luskey, *Department of Recreation*  
Soumya Nukala, *Targeted Recruitment Specialist, Office of Human Resources*

## Department of Health and Human Services – Staff Members

Betsy Tolbert Luecking, *Community Outreach Manager*  
Carly Clem, *Program Specialist II*

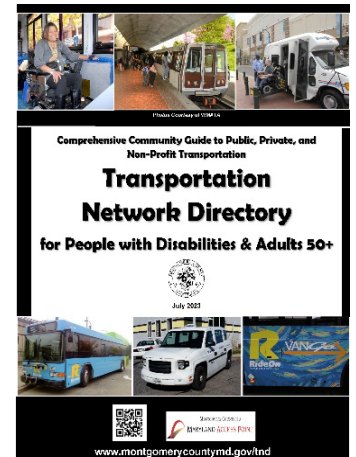
## ONLINE DISABILITY RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE COMMISSION

**Montgomery County Disability Website:** If you are looking for information available to you on a broad range of disability issues including such information as how to apply to the Developmental Disabilities Administration to Caregiver Support go to [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/disability](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/disability)



**Disability Network Directory:** A directory of provider agencies, businesses and advocacy organizations that offer local, state and national resources for people with disabilities. The Disability Network Directory is available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dnd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dnd).

**Transportation Network Directory:** Comprehensive listing of public, private and non-profit transportation in the Washington Metropolitan Region, State of Maryland and beyond. Includes information for people with disabilities and adults 50+. This guide was compiled to assist County residents to better coordinate their transportation needs. To download a copy of the guide visit [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/tnd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/tnd).



To request alternative formats of these publications, please call 240-777-1252 (V), MD Relay 711, or email [mccpwd@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:mccpwd@montgomerycountymd.gov).

# ABOUT THE COMMISSION

## HISTORY

The Commission on People with Disabilities was established by County legislation October 17, 1978 to advise the County Executive and County Council on the coordination and development of the County's policies affecting residents with disabilities.

## MISSION

The Commission provides advice, counsel, and recommendations to the Government of Montgomery County, Maryland in general, the County Executive, and the County Council in particular. Its responsibilities involve those matters influencing the provision of services, County policies and procedures, development and implementation of state and federal laws, and any other issues affecting the lives, rights, and welfare of the people it represents. The Commission operates in belief that people with disabilities have the right to the same opportunities in life as people without disabilities; and that this right can best be ensured by a commitment to enhancing the image, status, and quality of life of all children and adults with disabilities.

## MEMBERSHIP

The Commission on People with Disabilities is composed of 25 voting members who serve in a volunteer capacity. Members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. The Commission includes:

- ▶ 13 people with disabilities,
- ▶ 3 parents of people with disabilities, and
- ▶ 9 representatives of public and private service providing agencies

The Commission also includes ex-officio members that are appointed to represent the Departments of Health and Human Services, Transportation, Recreation, Libraries, General Services, Office of Human Resources, and the Human Rights Commission. There are also members who represent Montgomery College, Montgomery County Public Schools, Housing Opportunities Commission, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission/Montgomery Parks.

## MEETINGS

All Commission and Committee meetings are open to the public. The Commission welcomes visitors to join us as we serve the County and its residents. Meetings are subject to change without advance notice. Please call to confirm day and time of meetings and to request any special accommodations. As possible, we adjust meeting dates in order to accommodate days of major religious observances. You can view the Commission meeting minutes or check meeting schedules and times online at:

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd).

## MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2025 – 2026

### Full Commission Meeting

2nd Wednesday of the month,  
except for July and August  
virtually via Zoom  
6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

### Steering Committee Meeting

3rd Wednesday of the month  
virtually via Zoom  
5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

### Workgroups

Meet, as needed, virtually via Zoom

## COMMISSION STRUCTURE

The Commission operates through a structure that is re-evaluated annually to respond to changing needs. The Steering Committee is responsible for planning and directing the activities of the Commission and for overseeing the activities of the committees. The work of the Commission is done by Commission members and interested persons from the community. In addition, coordinators are assigned to take lead responsibility for public relations and legislation. The Nominating and Selection Committees, required for administration purposes, were also established. *The Commission encourages that all residents with disabilities and their families communicate with their elected officials about their needs for programs and services. Go to the Office of Governmental Relations website for information on how to contact your elected officials: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OIR](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OIR).*

## INCLUSION MONTGOMERY

Dedicated to the inclusion of people with disabilities in our community. We believe that people with disabilities have a right to equitable treatment, a fair allocation of community resources and social connectedness through engagement in the community at the level of their choice. Self-determination and supporting caregiver families should be at the core of short or long-term support planning. Individuals indicate their need for transportation, medical, legal, housing, respite, employment, volunteerism and leisure activities and the activities that will make for a meaningful day. We are dedicated to planning with, for, and serving the whole community regardless of disability, race, color, religion, ancestry, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic status, family responsibilities, gender identity, presence of children, and family structure or any other characteristic.



Sign up for eSubscribe to receive emails about disability information and resources:

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/govdelivery)

## COMMISSION PRESENTATIONS FOR 2024 – 2025

Month / Year	Presentation Topic and Presenter(s)
October 2024	<b>Update on Maryland Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Service – Adam Travepiece, MA, Program Manager II for Region 6, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)</b>
November 2024	<b>Designated Bike Lanes, Sidewalks and Floating Bus Stops – Matthew Barkley, ADA Compliance Manager; Patrick Sheehan, American Council of the Blind; Trish Gallalee, past Chair and access issues impacting drivers who use wheelchairs; Seth Morgan; past Chair; Haley Peckett, AICP Deputy Director, Transportation Policy and Planning, Director's Office, Montgomery County Department of Transportation; Matt Johnson, Bikeways Coordinator, Division of Transportation Engineering, Montgomery County Department of Transportation</b>
December 2024	<b>Design for Life Property Tax Incentive Program: Issues and Follow-Up – Tonya Gilchrist and Deborah Rozell</b>  <b>Accessible Parking Enforcement – Commissioners</b>  <b>Designated Bike Lanes, Sidewalks and Floating Bus Stops – Commissioners</b>
January 2025	<b>Prince Georges County Universal Housing Bill CB-085-2024: Challenges and Possible Incentives for Montgomery County to Establish Same Legislation – Sarah Reddinger, Vice President of Housing &amp; Community Strategies, Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland</b>  <b>Update on Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles as Taxicabs – Walton Harris, Program Manager, Taxicab Regulation Unit, Montgomery County Department of Transportation</b>
February 2025	<b>Housing for People with Disabilities – Rebecca Grayson, Disability Program Coordinator, Housing Opportunities Commission</b>  <b>Housing Committee Update - Deborah Rozell and Jamila Michael-Sobrati</b>  <b>Property Tax Programs for People with Disabilities – Rebecca Murphy</b>  <b>Governor's Proposed \$200 million Budget Cut to the State's Developmental Disabilities Administration – John Whittle and Karen Morgret</b>
March 2025	<b>Design for Life Property Tax Credit Application Process &amp; the Prince Georges County Universal Design Legislation – Rabbiah Sabbakhan, Director, Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services</b>
April 2025	<b>Moderately Priced Dwelling Units in Montgomery County MD Accessibility and How to Access – Jackie Simon, Realtor, R.E. Broker, GRI</b>
May 2025	<b>Deaf or Hard of Hearing Resources and Services – Lori Berrong, MFA, ATACP, AT Specialist, Executive Director, Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) Maryland Department of Disabilities and Dr. Noe Turcios, Ed.D., Statewide Coordinator for Deaf Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services</b>
June 2025	<b>Two Year Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Roadmap – Strategic Plan for the Priorities of the Department – Patrice L. McGhee, DPA, Chief, Aging &amp; Disability Services, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services</b>
September 2025	<b>Montgomery County Parking Lot Design Guide: Project Introduction and Discussion – Jim Elliott, AICP   Senior Planner, TOOLE DESIGN, and Eli Glazier, Transportation Planner III, Montgomery County Planning Department</b>



## CELEBRATING THE 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT



Montgomery Parks and Montgomery County Government co-hosted its annual "Disability Pride Outside" event on Saturday, July 26, 2025, at Black Hill Regional Park. The family-friendly event celebrated Disability Pride Month and the 35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Activities included adaptive and therapeutic recreation, adaptive mountain biking demos, birding, kayaking, pontoon boat rides and family-friendly sensory activities.



*Accessible floating launch for kayakers and canoers. Adaptive supports such as transfer benches, hand and wrist support, outriggers, supportive seating systems, and support staff are available if needed.*



*Demonstrations of adaptive cycling equipment. The adaptive mountain bikes featured have hand controls, seated and laying positions, e-assist, and other adaptations.*

*Photos courtesy of Montgomery Parks*

# WHAT THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT MEANS

## Montgomery County, MD Commission on People with Disabilities What the Americans with Disabilities Act Means July 26, 2025

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is landmark civil rights legislation that was signed into law 35 years ago on July 26, 1990. But, the history of the disability movement and the ADA did not begin at the signing ceremony at the White House in 1990.

The fight for disability rights began more than 70 years ago in the 1950's when parent groups throughout the country refused to accept that institutionalization was the only option for their children who had a disability. They wanted their children to lead fulfilling lives in the community and not shuttered away in dark institutions.

In the 1960s, people with disabilities began to take charge of their own advocacy organizations and moved away from the patriarchal and charity-based model that dominated many existing disability organizations. Additionally, people with various types of disabilities began to join together in their advocacy efforts. It became apparent that the old system of single disability organizations had separated people with disabilities from each other resulting in advocacy that too often contradicted each other.

The wave of self-advocacy led to the establishment of local groups like the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities, established in 1978, to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. The history of the ADA and the Commission is a testament to the movement's commitment to solidarity among people with different disabilities. The Commission was established to be a cross disability group and has members who have a developmental, psychiatric, sensory or physical disability. It also includes parents, and agencies that serve people with disabilities. The Commission addresses county policy issues such as transportation, housing, health care, mental wellness, telecommunications, and recreation. Cross disability input is critical to best advising the County Executive and County Council on what programs and services have barriers or meet the needs of all people with disabilities.

The Commission has for years advised the Recreation Department and the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning on such things as the development of the accessible floating fishing pier, ramps and boats at Black Hills Regional Park and working with Recreation on the development of Hadley's Park. At this time, the Commission is advising the County and Park and Planning on the safety issues posed to individuals who are blind or who have a physical disability regarding bike lanes and floating bus stops. The Commission advises the Montgomery County, MD and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in establishing priorities to come into compliance with the settlement agreement with Project Civic Access of the Department of Justice:

[www.ada.gov/montgomery\\_co\\_pca/montgomery\\_co\\_sa.htm](http://www.ada.gov/montgomery_co_pca/montgomery_co_sa.htm)

Therapeutic Recreation has had a long-time member of the Commission and seeks advice on many programs. We know that the Montgomery County Recreation Department is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provides reasonable accommodations upon request.

Within Montgomery County, people with disabilities have been preferentially able to gain employment, receive tax incentives to make homes accessible, access safe public transportation, recreational programs and facilities previously unavailable to them.

Thus, the importance of the ADA is readily apparent: by specifically prohibiting discrimination and mandating equal opportunity and access for both employment and public services. The ADA has empowered individuals with disabilities and enabled people with disabilities to take an active role in society and make choices for themselves in how they live their life. The saying goes "Nothing about us, without us."

Thank you for your role in ensuring that County agencies comply and celebrate the ADA!

Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager  
Commission on People with Disabilities - Commission on Veterans Affairs

# FY27 TOP POLICY ISSUES



## Commission on People with Disabilities

Meeting with Montgomery County Council HHS Committee

Top Policy Issues October 22, 2025

Tony Gilchrist, Chair

### Promote Greater Community Engagement and Inclusion of All People who have a Disability

- Promote Greater Employment Opportunities for people with disabilities who want to work of all ages and who have all types of disabilities. OHR should continue to promote the Hiring Preference for Veterans, Disabled Veterans and People with Disabilities and the County's Non-Competitive Hiring Initiative. At the same time, work with DORS and Worksource Montgomery to promote hiring in the private and public sectors.
- Encourage MCPS to implement more one on one family/student assessments of students who are marginalized or of immigrant populations in special education to access needed programs and resources. Promote avenues for greater parent advocacy.
- Continue to support the annual Development Disability supplement as it remains a cornerstone for providers who receive funding for services from the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) enabling them to sustain quality services and support for people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). This funding ensures the provider community can navigate cost disparities and workforce challenges of recruiting and retaining Direct Support Professionals while meeting the evolving needs of the people they serve. The DDA FY 26 COLA rate adjustment for this year did not fully cover the extra cost of inflation. The DD supplement increases do not fully cover the cost of annual expansion of hundreds of new people who are newly admitted into services DD providers in the County, including Transitioning Youth who graduate from MCPS. DDA funding reductions have impacted providers, and it is not known how Medicaid will play out. Depending on what happens with Medicaid, DDA could have a major challenge supporting individuals with IDD.
- Increase funding of Respite and Caregiver Supports. Respite care is occasional, short-term temporary physical and emotional relief for families with adults with functional disabilities, children or adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, children with challenging behaviors, and frail seniors ages 60+. Caregiver supports promotes community engagement.

### Greater Enforcement of Disability Laws: Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance, Fair Housing Act

- Transportation – Designated bike lanes and floating bus stops can present specific barriers, confusion, and danger to people who have low vision, blindness, hearing loss, mobility limitations or intellectual disabilities. Because there is not one standard design for floating bus stops, the issue should be studied for changes leading to consistency. Minimize or eliminate designated bike lanes and better monitoring of those installed by the state as they are confusing to the public such as Old Georgetown Road and Rock Spring Drive. Provide incentives to taxi drivers to drive accessible vehicles on a regular full-time basis. Greater police enforcement of accessible parking spaces/placards.
- Funding for new and innovative assistive listening devices such as Auracast broadcast audio which is a new Bluetooth capability to enhance hearing accessibility.
- Promote programs that increase the amount of accessible and affordable housing – Such as: Design for Life Montgomery, encourage the building and renovation of accessible homes. Seek legislation for the County to adopt the Prince Georges Universal design Bill CB-085-2024 AN ACT CONCERNING UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR HOUSING - REVISIONS generally regarding Universal Design elements for certain newly constructed residential homes.
- Implementation of property tax credit for people with a disability that is in Montgomery County Code, **ARTICLE X. PROPERTY TAX CREDIT** [ARTICLE X. PROPERTY TAX CREDITS](#) **Sec. 52-84. Real property tax credits for permanently and totally disabled homeowners.**

Lastly, It is critical for Boards, Committees and Commissions (BCC) have commissioners appointed in a timely manner so that they can be most effective and also respecting the volunteer service of community members who serve. We ask that the County ensure proper staffing for the County Executive's Office for timely recruitment and appointments of BCC members.



# LETTER TO COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL PRESIDENT ON UNIVERSAL DESIGN LEGISLATION



July 14, 2025

The Honorable Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Executive  
The Honorable Kate Stewart, President, Montgomery County Council

Dear County Executive Elrich and Council President Stewart:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities, I am requesting that the County initiate and pass legislation for Universal Design features in homes built in the County. This legislation would be in accordance with Prince George's County Council Bill 65-2023.

This bill passed on September 12, 2023 and mandates Universal Design features in at least 50% of new single and multi-family homes starting on January 1, 2026. "Prince George's County Bill 65-2023 is an act of legislation ensuring safe, sustainable and inclusive dwelling unit options for all county residents regardless of ability, functionality, stature, age or stability, to ensure safe, sustainable, universally designed environments and eliminate or reduce the need for grants and costly loans to renovate and/or retrofit for future housing development."

There are substantial benefits to including this bill for the residents of the County. Studies in other cities across our country have shown that there is a minimal direct fiscal impact. This legislation would decrease spending for the county for residents needing to relocate to assisted living due to injury: short or long term, or disease and would allow them to function safely in their home. Emergency responders would have greater access to the homes. Bill 65-2023 was supported by national organizations and experts such as AARP, Richard Duncan of the Universal Design Institute, Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together along with many council members and constituents.

According to the 2023 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey:

- 5.067% — County population 64 years and younger with a disability (53,160)
- 17.7% — County population 65 years and older (187,245)
- 24.2% of the total veteran population have a disability (8,707) out of the 36,011 veterans in Montgomery County.

Prince George's County requirements for Bill 65-2023 are as follows:

1. At least one accessible route shall connect all spaces and elements that are part of the accessible entry level floor of the dwelling unit.
2. The kitchen shall be on the accessible level and on the accessible route.
3. Hallways on the accessible level shall have 42" wide minimum clearance width measured from wall to wall.
4. Doorways on the accessible route shall have a minimum door width of 36" and all doors shall contain levers for accessible access.
5. Interior thresholds with levels which exceed ¼" high shall be beveled, with a slope not steeper than one inch rise to 2 inch run.
6. Accessible routes shall have flooring that allows resistance free use of wheelchair or similar mobility aid or device.
7. At least one separate room on the accessible entry level floor of the dwelling shall include architectural or design features that include but are not limited to a door that closes and a window to ensure accessibility.
8. There are also requirements that a bathroom be located on the entry level and as well as minimum clearance space in the kitchen.

## LETTER TO COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND COUNCIL PRESIDENT ON UNIVERSAL DESIGN LEGISLATION CONTINUED

- \* If a builder indicates that they cannot satisfy the step free route of travel to at least one-step free entrance to the dwelling unit they can apply for a waiver which can be applied for up to 50% of the total units, but not more than 50%.

Universal Design is no longer forward thinking, it is necessary to meet the needs of a vast majority of the residents of the County to be able to function safely in their home regardless of age, physical stature or disability. It is a step towards equitable, inclusive homes for all. Many of the same builders build homes in Prince George's and Montgomery County so the building standards would be more similar. We ask you to implement such legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tonya Gilchrist', written in a cursive style.

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair

# FY26 OPERATING BUDGET PRIORITIES

## Commission on People with Disabilities Montgomery County Council FY26 Operating Budget Priorities for April 7, 2025 Tonya Gilchrist, Chair

The Commission on People with Disabilities recommends that the County eliminate or greatly minimize the installation of designated bicycle lanes on main artery streets. This needs to be done as they cause serious safety concerns for pedestrians who have a disability and drivers from teenagers to older adults. Designated bike lanes present specific barriers to people who have low vision, blindness, hearing loss, mobility limitations or intellectual disabilities.

The FY26 Recommended Operating Budget includes \$62.9 million for Vision Zero initiatives which include increased bicycle and pedestrian initiatives. Designated bike lanes are expensive to install, and we ask, does this cost justify their installation with such little observed use? “The average cost of designated protected bike lanes can range from [\\$133,170 to \\$536,680 per mile](#). During a resurfacing project, the average cost to add bike lanes is approximately \$20,000 per mile” according to STREETS BLOG USA. If even some of these funds were used for services for people with disabilities, instead of bike lanes, think of the difference that could make for people with disabilities.

The State has installed poorly designed bicycle lanes on Old Georgetown Road, among other roads, and we recommend they be taken out. The County could and should do more to prioritize safety for people with disabilities as the Americans with Disabilities [\(ADA\) which is a federal civil rights law, prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities](#). The ADA mandates accessibility in employment, public services, and transportation for people with disabilities. People with disabilities are covered as a protected class, whereas cyclists are not a protected group. With the plague of bikeways clogging up County roads, we are sending the wrong message to our community because people with disabilities don't feel safe navigating the sidewalks and streets because of designated bike lanes. The Commission has been voicing our concerns over the hazards designated bike lanes pose for people with disabilities for years now, but for reasons beyond our comprehension, the County refuses to heed our concerns or take any tangible steps to minimize the impact designated bikeways have on our vulnerable residents including people with disabilities and prohibits us from navigating the community in a manner comparable to our non-disabled peers, which could be considered a violation of the ADA.

The Commission supports full funding of the Developmental Disability Supplement. The County Executive's current budget includes a 3% increase for the supplement, and the request from InterACC/DD was an 6.6% increase which the Commission supports. If approved, the FY26 DD-Supplement of 6.6% would increase to \$23,125,845 to be distributed to between 41 provider agencies. The full request includes an increase for the cost-of-living that is projected, and is critical for program expansion, transitioning youth and waiting list placements which are anticipated to grow. Providers tell us that it is difficult to recruit and retain Direct Support Professional (DSP) staff and we recommend that this supplement be used for increased wages for these workers. The minimum wage in Montgomery County is the highest in the state, due to the County having a higher minimum wage and talent is often sought for by other employers in the area offering wages higher than nonprofits can support.

We recommend preserving the Public Library funding. Cuts to library staffing, hours, or resources would negatively affect many people with disabilities, who use the computers, check out different book formats, and go to meetings and socialize at their community libraries. The Commission supports the County Executive's allocation of \$800,000 to reduce long-standing waitlists and increase capacity in programs serving vulnerable populations. The CE Recommended budget increases capacity for the following programs, each of which have over 150 waitlisted individuals: Adult Protective Services case management (\$197,000); Home Care Services (\$161,000); and Coordination of Community Services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (\$63,000). Some Commissioners have recommended great outreach for the My Turn Program. The Medicaid Community First Choice Nurse Monitoring program budget increases by \$180,000 and is fully offset by revenue. Almost \$200,000 is allocated to continue services that were previously made possible with federal funds, including Senior Lunch site at the Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center (\$148,000) and prenatal engagement initiatives for vulnerable populations (\$50,000). Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. Your consideration of this testimony is greatly appreciated.

## MONTGOMERY PARKS ADDS ACCESSIBLE BOAT LAUNCH AT BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK IN CLARKSBURG

[Black Hills Regional Park](#) in Clarksburg now features a new ADA-compliant dock and launch system, making it easier for people with limited mobility to launch both canoes and adaptive kayaks on and off the 505-acre Little Seneca Lake. A grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation enabled Montgomery Parks to install the new launch.

*Photo courtesy of Montgomery Parks*



## MONTGOMERY PARKS ADAPTIVE PADDLING AT SENECA LANDING SPECIAL PARK (RILEYS LOCK) & BLACK HILL REGIONAL PARK



*Photo courtesy of Montgomery Parks*

Through a partnership with Team River Runner, Montgomery Parks offers adaptive kayaking equipment such as transfer benches, hand and wrist supports, stabilizing outriggers, and supportive seating systems. Program Access' trained staff and volunteers ensure a safe and enjoyable experience on calm, flat water.

Each registered participant may bring one guest to share in the adventure. Participants are contacted prior to the program to discuss any necessary modifications to ensure success on the water. Essential gear, including PFDs and paddles, is always provided.

Programming will resume in Spring 2026.

## MONTGOMERY PARKS EXPANDS MEANINGFUL DAY PROGRAMS



Over the past year, Montgomery Parks has expanded its Meaningful Day program series. These free programs give adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities the opportunity to enjoy outdoor daytime programming throughout Montgomery County.

Meaningful Day programs include:

- Therapeutic Recreation Bocce – A collaborative program with the Special Olympics
- Campfire Chats – A social program based in nature and
- Trail Trekkers – An inclusive walking club

In Winter of 2026, the program will expand to include a Boccia, an indoor, seated version of bocce.

Meaningful Day programs are developed and implemented by the **Program Access Office**. For more information or to register, visit [MontgomeryParks.org](https://MontgomeryParks.org)

*Photo courtesy of Montgomery Parks*



## MONTGOMERY PARKS ROLLS OUT NEW GRIT FREEDOM CHAIR



Montgomery Parks has invested in a new GRIT Freedom Chair for public use. The GRIT Freedom Chair is a cross between a manual wheelchair and a mountain bike designed for use on natural surface and paved trails.

The chair is available free of charge by advance reservation at Brookside Nature Center, which connects to a series of paths at the nature center, Brookside Gardens, and Wheaton Regional Park. The chair can be borrowed for up to two hours at a time.

For more information and to learn more about the adaptive equipment available for free, please visit [MoCoParks.org/AdaptiveEquipment](https://MoCoParks.org/AdaptiveEquipment)

*Photo from Montgomery Parks*

## OUTDOORS FOR ALL: ADAPTIVE MOUNTAIN BIKING PROGRAMS OFFERED BY MONTGOMERY PARKS



Montgomery Parks offers a variety of Adaptive Mountain Biking opportunities throughout the year. Programming options include individual lessons by certified instructors, clinics, inclusive group ride opportunities with Montgomery Parks' Roots-to-Rocks program and dedicated adaptive mountain biking group rides coming soon! Our two e-assist adaptive mountain bikes: a Lasher recumbent all-terrain handcycle and a TerraTrike all-terrain foot pedal bike are available for use at lessons and group rides. Through our partnership with Catalyst Sports we have a variety of bikes available during our adaptive mountain biking clinics.

The Adaptive Mountain Biking Program is organized with Montgomery Parks Program Access and Natural Surface Trails teams and Catalyst Sports.

From [Source of the Spring online publication](#)

# WHO HAS A DISABILITY IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD? AN OVERVIEW

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2024 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, there are approximately **99,331 persons living in Montgomery County, Maryland with a disability**. These figures excluded individuals who reside in nursing homes or other institutions. **Please note:** Some individuals may have identified as having multiple disabilities and age population totals will not equal disability type totals. For cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, and self-care difficulty, the 'Population under 18 years' includes persons aged 5 to 17. Children under 5 are not included in these measures.

## 2024 Disability Characteristics – Montgomery County, Maryland

### Self-Reported Total Population with a Disability: 99,331

Total Population by Disability Type	
Individuals with a hearing difficulty	25,128
Individuals with a vision difficulty	16,233
Individuals with a cognitive difficulty	36,808
Individuals with an ambulatory difficulty	41,502
Individuals with a self-care difficulty	16,947
Individuals with an independent living difficulty	34,265

Disability Type – Population Under 18 Years	
Individuals with a hearing difficulty	712
Individuals with a vision difficulty	1,550
Individuals with a cognitive difficult	4,105
Individuals with an ambulatory difficulty	652
Individuals with a self-care difficulty	970

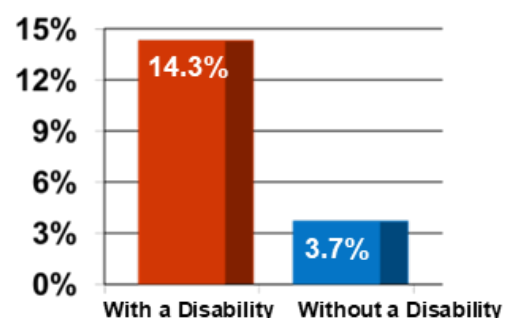
Disability Type – Population 18 to 34 Years	
Individuals with a hearing difficulty	1,743
Individuals with a vision difficulty	2,632
Individuals with a cognitive difficult	9,730
Individuals with an ambulatory difficulty	1,759
Individuals with a self-care difficulty	1,420
Individuals with an independent living difficulty	5,539

Disability Type – Population 35 to 64 Years	
Individuals with a hearing difficulty	4,990
Individuals with a vision difficulty	5,162
Individuals with a cognitive difficult	11,444
Individuals with an ambulatory difficulty	11,546
Individuals with a self-care difficulty	3,669
Individuals with an independent living difficulty	7,455

Disability Type – Population 65 to 74 Years	
Individuals with a hearing difficulty	5,129
Individuals with a vision difficulty	2,700
Individuals with a cognitive difficult	2,760
Individuals with an ambulatory difficulty	8,838
Individuals with a self-care difficulty	2,780
Individuals with an independent living difficulty	5,410

Disability Type – Population 75 Years and Older	
Individuals with a hearing difficulty	12,554
Individuals with a vision difficulty	4,189
Individuals with a cognitive difficult	8,769
Individuals with an ambulatory difficulty	18,707
Individuals with a self-care difficulty	8,108
Individuals with an independent living difficulty	15,861

### Unemployment Rate - Montgomery County, MD 18 Years to 64 Years - Labor Force Participation Non-Institutionalized Civilian Population



# DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- [Developmental Disabilities - Montgomery County Disability Network Directory](#)
- [Autism Resources - Montgomery County Disability Network Directory](#)

## Montgomery County Public Schools Programs for Children with Developmental Disabilities/Delays

- [Infants & Toddlers](#)
- [Child Find](#)
- [Autism Waiver](#)
- [School to Work Transition Services Unit](#)
- [Connecting School and Adult Life Brochure \(PDF\)](#)

## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

301-362-1500 (Voice) • 301-362-5131 (TTY) • 1-888-207-2479 (Toll Free)

To determine eligibility for DDA funded services, individuals must apply to Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration for these programs that are then administered by local [Coordination of Community Services Agencies](#).

- Behavior Support
- Individual and Family Support
- Coordination of Community Services
- Employment
- Housing
- Low Intensity Support Services
- Nursing
- Self-Directed Services
- Transitioning Youth with Disabilities



## Step-by-Step Guide to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) Process

Potomac Community Resources, in collaboration with DDA, has produced five short videos to help families and developmental disability professionals throughout the State of Maryland learn about the services and supports offered by DDA and how to access them. All videos include ASL simultaneous interpretation. [www.pcr-inc.org/step-by-step-guide-to-the-developmental-disabilities-administration-process](http://www.pcr-inc.org/step-by-step-guide-to-the-developmental-disabilities-administration-process)

# AUTISM WAIVER WAITING LIST

*The Autism Waiver is administered by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) through local schools. Data from Daniel Hammond, Coordinator, Medicaid Home & Community-Based Autism Waiver Program, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) as of October 14, 2025.*

Current enrollment for Montgomery County is approximately 450 students enrolled. After the End the Wait Legislation was passed, MSDE has not added additional students since the large enrollment in 2023 - 2024. In 2024, Montgomery County was up to around 650 enrolled students, but now down to 450. MCPS is hoping to add additional students this spring.

**Registry for Montgomery County:** 1,600 (This does not include enrolled students)

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK PROGRAMS

### Community Support Network - Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Aging and Disability Services — 1401 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20850 — 240-777-1216 (Voice)

Community Support Network (CSN) for people with disabilities provides services that enable individuals to remain in their home or in the least restrictive environment and provides general support, guidance, and assistance to clients with developmental disabilities and their families. This program area coordinates and monitors services and supports (including crisis management, intervention, and school-to-work transition assistance) to people with developmental disabilities eligible to receive services through the State Developmental Disabilities Administration (Coordination of Community Services Program); provides service coordination to eligible young people funded under the Maryland Home and Community Based Services Waiver for Children (ages 0 - 21) with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Autism Waiver Program); and provides financial assistance to State-funded providers who serve adults with developmental disabilities.

- The **My Turn program** provides support and assistance to families with children ages 3 to 18 who have developmental disabilities and are not connected with State of Maryland resources. Services include outreach, assistance with summer camp placements and other programmatic and financial assistance. The My Turn Program follows the Maryland Developmental Disability Administration's definition of a developmental disability. According to the DDA, "an individual is considered to have a developmental disability if she/he has a physical or mental condition other than a sole diagnosis of mental illness and needs to have services which are individually planned and coordinated. The condition has to be likely to continue indefinitely and has to be manifested before the age of 22, with the result of the condition being an inability to live independently.
- CSN also **conducts site visits to group homes** that serve developmentally disabled clients in the County and monitors contracts that provide services to people with various disabilities including visual and hearing impairments.
- CSN **Autism Waiver** staff coordinate with Montgomery County Public Schools staff and monitor services for children (ages 0 - 21) in the program who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Through the Autism Waiver Program, students and families receive respite care, environmental accessibility adaptations, family training, supported adult life planning, and intensive individual support services in the home and community, therapeutic integration service, service coordination and, in some cases, residential habilitation.
- The **Coordination of Community Services (CCS)** program is one of six agencies in the County that provides case management services to eligible school to work transition students and adults people who have developmental disabilities and are eligible for the Maryland DDA Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver services.

## MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ADMINISTRATION WAITING LIST

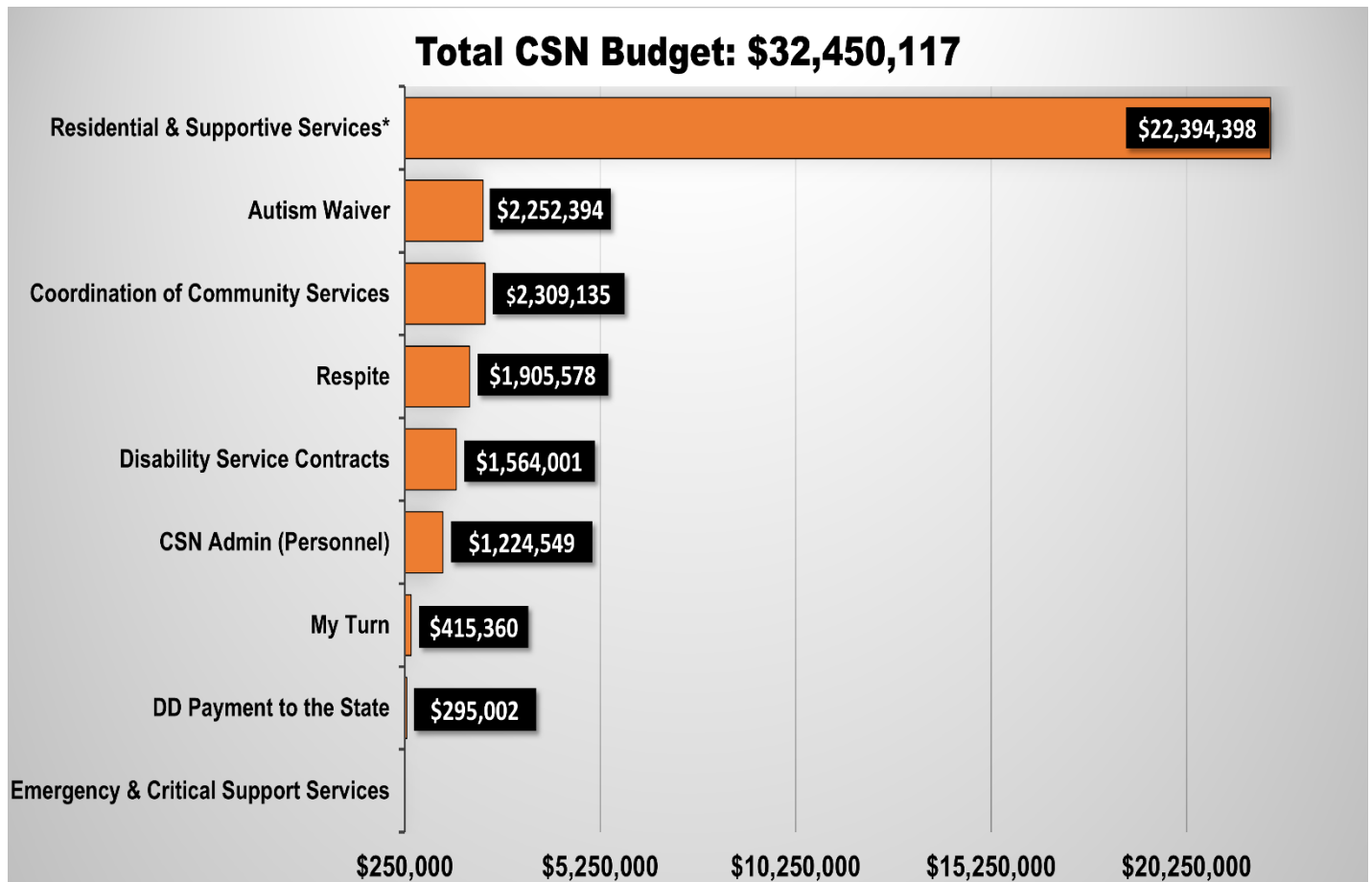
*Data from Onesta Duke, Southern Maryland Regional Director, Developmental Disabilities Administration, Maryland Department of Health as of October 14, 2025 (Note: Developmentally Disabled only; Supports Only excluded)*

418 people are on the waiting list in Montgomery County (fluctuates day by day)

- 1 person is in the Crisis Resolution priority category
- 33 people are categorized as Crisis Prevention, which means the person is or will be in a health or safety crisis within the next year or so
- 384 people are categorized as Current Request, which means there are no immediate health or safety concerns

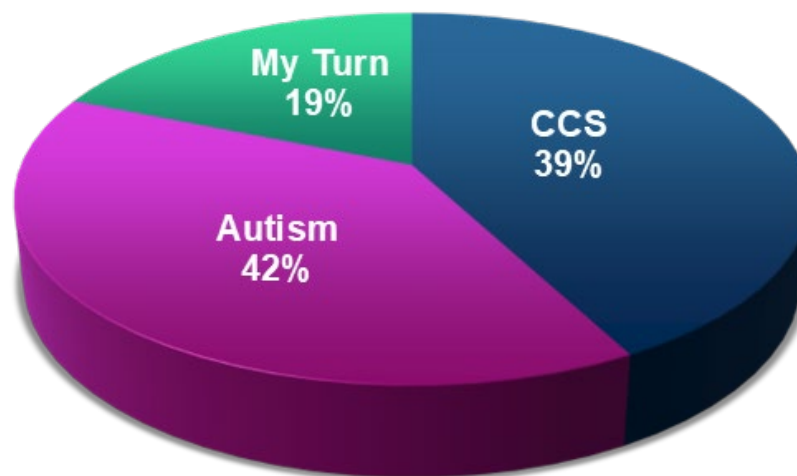


## COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK (CSN) FY26 BUDGET BY PROGRAM



## CSN CLIENT BREAKDOWN BY PROGRAM

**Total CSN Clients: 1,065**  
**Coordination of Community Services (CCS): 415 clients**  
**Autism Waiver: 450 clients**  
**My Turn: 200 clients**



# DESIGN FOR LIFE PROPERTY TAX INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Make your home accessible with a Montgomery County Tax Credit



**DESIGNFORLIFE**  
Every home accessible for everyone.



designforlifemc.org



Design for Life, managed by the Department of Permitting Services, provides partial tax credits to property owners or home builders who install measures that improve accessibility, visit-ability and/or live-ability of residential homes. This legislation was promoted through efforts of the Commission for People with Disabilities and embraced by the County Council and the County Executive. For retrofits to existing single family homes, such accessibility measures can include things like installing entry doors wide enough for wheelchairs, providing a no-step entry into the home, improving bathroom access with grab bars or roll-in showers, wider doorways, etc. This model program was initiated in Montgomery County to improve the ability of all residents to manage more successfully in homes, to improve people's ability to age in place and to make homes more accessible to visitors of all ages.

Credits are available for accessibility features added to single family homes and condominiums. Tax credits for improvements that make a home qualify as a visitable or livable home are available for single family homes and townhouses. If you add a feature and it costs at least \$500 up to \$2,500 you get a 50% credit. If you make your home visitable the credit is \$3,000 and if you make it livable the credit is \$10,000, credit max is \$2,000 per year. For more information view the [Design for Life Tax Incentive Table](#).

The process for building permits with Design for Life (DFL) features is as follows:

1. When a building permit with Design for Life (DFL) features has received the final inspection for the project from the Department of Permitting Services (DPS), the homeowner/applicant must complete and submit the DFL tax credit application (see attached).
2. The applicant must submit the required documentation along with tax credit application, which consists of contracts, receipts, and invoices to demonstrate the cost or amount of money spent for the project along with a complete list of features and costs of each feature.
3. The application is then reviewed and DPS signs off on the affidavit.
4. The tax credit application package is then sent to the Finance Office electronically to process the tax credit information.

[Download Design for Life Property Tax Incentive application](#)



## Who Needs An Accessible Home?

### You Do!

1. Live longer in the home you love.
2. Welcome all guests with diverse mobility.
3. Increase the value of your home.
4. Qualify for property tax credits.
5. Make everyone feel welcome.

# MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & CONTINUING EDUCATION

240-567-5188 (V) • Email: [wdce@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:wdce@montgomerycollege.edu)  
[www.montgomerycollege.edu/workforce-development-continuing-education](http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/workforce-development-continuing-education)

### **The Graduate Transition Program (GTP)**

The [Graduate Transition Program](#) at Montgomery College, Rockville Campus, is a custom-tailored learning community program that offers students a unique post-secondary opportunity to further their formal education. The objective of the program is to enable students, while in a supportive college environment, to transition to greater independent living through developmentally appropriate educational, vocational, and life-skill services. This two-year, tuition-based, credit-free certificate program focuses on basic academic skills and enhances students' potential success as productive citizens in the community.

The College schedule consists of two 14-week semesters, for two years. Students receive academic instruction 3 hours per day, Monday through Friday. Small class sizes, experienced faculty and staff, and individual classroom assistants encourage an interactive and dynamic learning environment designed specifically for students with special needs. Classes offered include Reading and Writing, Science, Health, Anatomy, World History and Current Events, Communications and Public Speaking, Art, Computers, and more. During the student's two-year period, Montgomery College works with the DDA providers to offer volunteer position, internships, and paid employment. This program is offered on the Rockville campus of Montgomery College.

### **Connecting Reading and Writing Program**

This program connects [Reading and Writing Skills](#) students need to prepare for college level course work. The program is designed to enhance reading comprehension, writing skills, and build vocabulary. Students learn and practice reading and writing skills by enrolling in both courses.

During 25 sessions, students receive instruction in reading comprehension and vocabulary building. Students learn to identify the main idea, follow a sequence of events, and recognize supporting details. Students improve their writing and speaking skills when they learn to summarize and outline reading materials, take better notes, and build your vocabulary. The program offers students the tools necessary to develop better writing skills. Reading and writing skills are combined in this class in a comprehensive, systematic process. Students learn to write descriptive and narrative paragraphs, use punctuation correctly, and compose demonstration speeches. The program helps prepare students for the college's assessment test, Accuplacer.

This program is offered on the Rockville and Takoma Park campuses of Montgomery College.

### **[Driver's Education with Additional Support](#)**

This course provides the exact same MVA curriculum as SFT-043 Driver Education, but with built-in supports. Montgomery College's Driving School and its instructors are Maryland MVA licensed and certified. Additional support instructors are dually certified in Special Education. This course, in a small classroom environment, prepares rookie drivers to test for a Maryland driver's license. Additional Supports include, but are not limited to:

- Differentiated instruction, supplemental aides and supports including a multi-sensory approach to learning.
- Behind the wheel is one-on-one instruction with a dually certified MVA and MSDE Special Education Educator
- Smaller class size
- Quizzes and tests are read aloud
- Extra time is granted to students for quizzes and tests
- Manipulatives (by cars) are used to better explain situations
- A copy of all PowerPoints and instructor notes are provided to the student.

If you have a Disability Support Request you need to call Natalie Martinez, Workforce Development and Continuing Education Counselor at 240-567-4118 (V) or email [Natalie.Martinez@montgomerycollege.edu](mailto:Natalie.Martinez@montgomerycollege.edu) at least four weeks prior to the start of the class to arrange for accommodations and/or assistive technology.

# DISABILITY NETWORK DIRECTORY



An online directory of providers, agencies, businesses and advocacy organizations.

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dnd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dnd)

Find resources and information on the following topics:

- Access & ADA-Related Issues including Curb Cuts & Sidewalks
- Adaptive & Medical Equipment
- Adult Medical Day Centers
- Advocacy
- AIDS/HIV Resources
- Assistive Technology
- Autism Resources
- Behavioral Health, Counseling & Wellness Supports
- Blind/Low Vision Resources including Macular Degeneration
- Brain Injury Resources
- Camps - Day and Summer
- Caregiver Supports
- Case Management
- Centers for Independent Living
- Child Care including Arc Programs
- Children & Youth Services
- Clothing
- Commissions on People with Disabilities (Statewide & Regional)
- Computer Support/Training
- Conflict Resolution
- Consumer Protection
- Counseling
- Deaf Resources including Sign Language Interpreting Services & Cart Reporting
- Deaf-Blind Resources
- Dental Services
- Design for Life Property Tax Incentive
- Developmental Disabilities
- Disability Specific Resources
- Education Resources - Adults
- Education - Children & Youth including Assessment Services
- Emergency Resources
- Employment including Employment Funding, Business Assistance & Job Lines / Websites
- Estate Planning
- Evacuations & Disaster Resources
- Faith-Based Resources
- Financial including Financial Assistance, Financial Counseling & Financial Loans / Grants for Accessibility
- Food including HELP, Food Warehouses, Pantries and Soup Kitchens, Home Delivery & Preparation
- Furniture
- Government - Local Depts of Social Services
- Hard of Hearing Resources
- Health & Wellness
- Health Insurance
- Home Care Services - Funding Resources
- Home Care and Home Health Providers
- Hospice Services
- Hospitals
- Housing including Housing Advisors / Older Adults, Housing Providers, Financial Assistance, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), Legal Issues, Home Modifications & Design Consultation, & Ramp, Lift, Elevator & Automated Door Providers/ Installation
- Independent Living Skills
- Learning Disabilities including Testing & Diagnostic Services
- Legal Services including Disability Law Attorneys, Estate Law Attorneys, & Free, Low Cost & Pro Bono
- Legislation
- Loan Closets
- Long Term Care
- Medicaid Waivers
- Medical Care Services
- Medication Resources
- Parent Advocacy and Supports
- Parking
- Property Tax Credits - County, State & Federal
- Recreation
- Respite Care
- Service Animals
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Substance Abuse
- Support Groups including Sibling Support
- Transitioning Youth
- Transportation
- Veterans
- Volunteer Services



## COMMISSION ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES COMMEMORATES 47<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

The County Commission on Handicapped Individuals was established by the County Council on October 17, 1978. In October of 1977, County Executive James Gleason established a Task Force on Concerns of the Handicapped. Their Task Force report in June, 1978 later led to the County Council taking this action. This month the Commission celebrates 48 years of advising the County on disability issues and concerns. The Commission was located in the Office of Family Resources and at that time Chuck Short was the Director of that Office.

Effective November 9, 1990, the Commission was renamed in Bill 49-90 to the Commission on People with Disabilities and added four more slots for people with disabilities. Over the years, the Commission has benefitted greatly from the strong support of all County Executives and County Council Members to have this County become a leader in the nation on disability issues. We have also benefitted greatly from our many citizens/former Commissioners who have worked for the federal government on disability issues. Former Commission member Larry Roffee went on to be the first Executive Director of the US Access Board, and now David Capozzi who is also a former Commissioner is now the Executive Director there. The Commission has served under County Executives James Gleason, Charles Gilchrist, Sidney Kramer, Neal Potter, Douglas Duncan, Isiah Leggett and Marc Elrich.

### Commission's Key Advocacy/Advisory Highlights:

- **Bill 46-09 - Personnel - Regulations - Persons with Disabilities - Hiring Preference** (effective February 2, 2010 and applies to persons with disabilities, Veterans, and Veterans with disabilities) - **NACO 2014 Achievement Award Winner** - Mark Maxin, Assistant General Counsel for Administration, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and former Commissioner was instrumental in making legal cases on both employment bills for the Commission
- **Bill 32-12 - Personnel - Regulations - Persons with Disabilities - Noncompetitive Appointment** (effective February 5, 2013 - 80% of voters voted to adopt) Noncompetitive hiring preference for people with severe disabilities
- **Bill 5-13 - Property Tax Credit - Accessibility Features** (enacted November 19, 2013 - **Design for Life Property Tax Incentive Program** that provides property tax credits up to \$10,000 for levels of accessibility installed in new construction and existing homes - **NACO 2018 Achievement Award Winner**
- HOC and Adventist Rehabilitation Hospital in the establishment of 6 accessible apartments at **Metro Pointe** for younger adults who were living in nursing homes **Montgomery's Best Honor Awards Recipient 2008**
- **Zoning Text Amendment 06-17** permits by right vs a zoning variance unroofed and open structure in an easement including a ramp and chairlift that allows a person with a physical disability access to a one family dwelling and is exterior to the one family dwelling
- **Resolution 16-931 - Policy Regarding the Use of Brick and Other Pavements in the Public Right-of-Way** for County sidewalks **particularly red brick pavers**
- County purchasing **accessible Ride On busses in 1978** before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- **Pedestrian Winter Safety Act of 2001** - Snow removal legislation
- **Respect the Space** program to assess proper parking signage so it can be enforced by the police department
- Establishment of a Center for Independent Living or **Independence Now**
- Installation of the **elevator at the Marc Train station** in Rockville
- **Scattered site housing** for people with mental illness and other disabilities.

- Department of Transportation on **access issues for people who are blind** in downtown Silver Spring.
- Evaluating and working closely with the **Strathmore** on making the Music Center and Mansion accessible and user-friendly for people with disabilities.
- Assessing ADA compliance in 200+ **polling places** in partnership with the Montgomery County Board of Elections.
- **Assistive Listening Systems** in County buildings. The Commission Sent a request to Strathmore Hall to make neck loops an option for guests. Strathmore responded that they have neck loops and that they will be training staff to ensure that patrons know that is an option. Initiated effort to have HHS install integrated audio loop systems in with public address system into designated meeting rooms. Pushed for a clause to be included in mental health service proposals that makes it clear that those services must be inclusive, i.e., must provide assistive listening devices for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, both for group sessions and one-on-one therapy. County contract now includes provision for CART (Computer Assisted Real-time Captioning) accommodations and other provisions.
- **Advocated for trial VRS/VRI installation** in two locations in the county, possibly in libraries. VRI would allow people who are deaf and hard of hearing people who have not made an appointment to be provided access when they walk in for services. VRS would allow deaf and hard of hearing people to place phone calls using sign language. Montgomery County now has a free emergency notification system for the public which is a tremendous benefit for deaf and hard of hearing people who rely on their wireless devices or email. To sign up go to [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov) and click on "Alert Montgomery".
- **Community Support Services** for people with developmental disabilities reinstated to provide 500 persons with Coordination of Community Services.
- Montgomery County Government on **compliance with the ADA**.
- **US Department of Justice Project Civic Access Settlement Agreement** including Montgomery Parks.
- **Waivers from the Maryland Accessibility Code Accessibility Code** per State law as recognized local disability advisory group.
- Advising County on **pedestrian safety issues** and safety concerns about floating bus stops and bike lanes.
- **Bill 33-15 Transportation Service Improvement Fund**: Established the fund based on placing a 25 cent surcharge on all Transportation Network Companies (Uber, Lyft, etc.) for rides originating in Montgomery County with the fund designated to be used to promote accessible vehicle ride availability in the County In order to establish the fund, permission was sought and obtained from the Maryland State Government.

## MONTGOMERY COUNTY COVID-19 PANDEMIC INFORMATION PORTAL

The COVID-19 Pandemic has put a strain on all residents and especially on vulnerable populations including children and adults with disabilities. The County is committed to minimizing the detrimental effects on COVID-19 and to maintain long-term access to services, community engagement and social engagement. Many aspects of all of our lives have been impacted including the need for readily accessible reliable information and available resources on topics such as general medical care resources, mental wellness and behavioral health care, food security, safe housing, personal safety, freedom to worship without fear, etc. We encourage you to use the Montgomery County COVID-19 Information Portal:

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/get-help/>.

***Stay Positive, Test Negative, Go Outside, Call a Friend, Get Some Exercise, Stay Connected***

**American Council of the Blind COVID-19 Resources**

<https://acb.org/acb-covid19-response>

**Maryland Department of Disabilities COVID-19 Resources**

<http://mdod.maryland.gov/news/Pages/Covid-resources.aspx>

**National Federation of the Blind**

[www.nfb.org/resources/covid-19-resources](http://www.nfb.org/resources/covid-19-resources)

**National Deaf Center COVID-19 Resources**

[https://nationaldeafcenter.org/news\\_tags/coronavirus/](https://nationaldeafcenter.org/news_tags/coronavirus/)

**National Multiple Sclerosis COVID Resources**

[www.nationalmssociety.org/managing-ms/living-with-ms/diet-exercise-and-healthy-behaviors/vaccination/covid](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/managing-ms/living-with-ms/diet-exercise-and-healthy-behaviors/vaccination/covid)

## TEXT-TO-911 NOW AVAILABLE IN MARYLAND

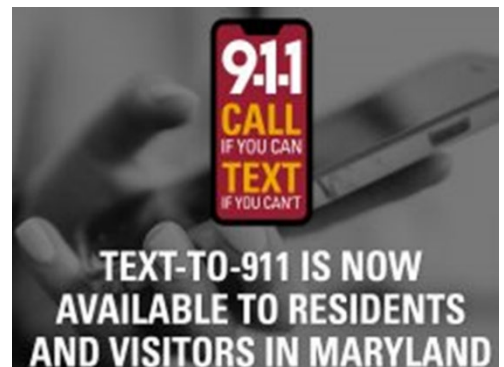
If you're experiencing an emergency and are unable to place a voice call, you can send a text to 911. Follow these steps to request emergency services:

**Enter 911 in the "To" line.**

1. Enter a brief message that includes the location of the emergency and type of service needed – police, fire, or ambulance.
2. Hit send.
3. Respond to questions from the responding 911 specialist and follow the instructions he or she provides.

**Tips for using text-to-911:**

- If text-to-911 is not available in your area, or if it is temporarily unavailable, you should receive a message from your carrier letting you know to place a phone or relay call.
- Pictures and/or videos cannot be received by 911 via text.
- If you include another contact on your text it may not be received by 911.
- English is the preferred language for text, however, some limited translation services may be available.
- Text in short, simple messages; Do not use abbreviations or slang.
- Do not text and drive.



# SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESOURCES

- [File of Life - Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Smoke Alarm Program - Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Fire Safety Checklist for Older Adults - Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Fire Safety for Children with Special Needs - Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Fire Safety for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(Visual Smoke Alarms\) - Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Falls Prevention - Free Home Safety Evaluations - Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- [Autism, Intellectual, Developmental Disabilities \(IDD\) and Alzheimer's Outreach Program - Montgomery County Police Department](#)

## Stay Alert!

You are encouraged to sign up for emergency alerts from **Alert Montgomery**. Montgomery County officials can use this alerting system to contact you before or during a major crisis, emergency, or severe weather alert. Alerts MAY be broadcast via the following delivery methods:

- Email account (work, home, other)
- Cell phone (SMS Text)
- Everbridge Mobile Member App
- Home phone (Voice)
- Cell phone (Voice)
- TTY device
- X (Twitter): Following “@ReadyMontgomery”
- Facebook: Add “Montgomery County MD Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security”

While signing up for Alert Montgomery is free of charge, your wireless carrier may charge you a fee to receive text messages.

<https://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov>

## Make A Plan

Do you have an emergency plan for yourself, family, or friends? If not, now is the perfect time to look for resources and create those emergency plans!

Creating your Family's emergency plan doesn't have to be difficult or expensive. OEMHS has plenty of [resources](#) to help you get started with your plans! *Are You Ready?* Emergency Preparedness Workbooks are a fill-in-the-blank emergency plan that also includes a guide for local sources of information.

This workbook can help you keep all of your emergency information in one place, such as: Insurance information, contact information for doctor's and specialists, veterinarian contact information, as well as contact information for your support network (ie. family and friends). This workbook is available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [French](#), [Simplified Chinese](#), [Amharic](#), [Korean](#), [Russian](#), and [Vietnamese](#).

ARE YOU READY?

## BUILD A KIT

Include enough food, water, and medical supplies for your needs in your emergency kit to last for at least 72 hours.



## Make A Kit

One of the most critical steps you can take to sustain yourself and your family during a disaster is to create an [emergency kit](#) before the disaster strikes. An emergency kit contains items you might need during an emergency to sustain yourself and your family. These items will help you if you are asked to stay home for as many as three days.



# HOW TO CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS



**County Executive Marc Elrich**

The **County Executive** can be reached at:

Executive Office Building  
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850  
240-777-0311 (V)  
240-773-3556 (TTY)  
[County.ExecutiveQ@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:County.ExecutiveQ@montgomerycountymd.gov)



**Montgomery County Council**

The **County Council** can be reached at:

Stella B. Werner Council Office Building  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850  
240-777-7900 (V)  
MD Relay 711 (TTY)  
240-777-7989 (FAX)  
[county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov)

*Standing, left to right: Sidney Katz, Laurie-Anne Sayles, Andrew Friedson, Natali Fani-González, and Gabe Albornoz. Seated, left to right: Will Jawando (Vice-President), Kristin Mink, Marilyn Balcombe, Evan Glass, Dawn Luedtke, and Kate Stewart (President)*

---

**Marc Elrich, County Executive**  
**James C. Bridgers, Jr., Ph.D., MBA, Director**  
**Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services**  
**Patrice L. McGhee, DPA, Chief, Aging and Disability Services**  
**Commission on People with Disabilities**  
**401 Hungerford Drive, 4th Floor**  
**Rockville, Maryland 20850**  
**240-777-1252 (V) • via MD Relay at 711**  
**[MCCPWD@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:MCCPWD@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

Language translation and alternative formats of this report are available upon request.  
For additional information on the Commission,  
please call the telephone numbers or email via the contact information listed above.

***Montgomery County does not discriminate on the basis of disability in employment or in the admission or access to its programs or services.***

2025 Annual Report Prepared By:  
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, *Community Outreach Manager*  
Carly Clem, *Program Specialist II*