

# **MAINTAINING THE MISSION**

# **2020**

**Department on Disability Services  
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**



**LIFE. YOUR WAY.**  
**Department on  
Disability Services**

# Our Mission

The mission of the Department on Disability Services (DDS) is to provide innovative high-quality services that enable people with disabilities to lead meaningful and productive lives as vital members of their families, schools, workplaces and communities in every neighborhood in the District of Columbia.

# Core Values

DDS is committed to being:

**Accountable.**

**Collaborative.**

**Inclusive.**

**Innovative.**

**Supportive.**

**Transparent.**

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# Message from the Director

## Maintaining the Mission



Andrew P. Reese.

This annual report to the community reflects our accomplishments in maintaining high-quality supports and services to people with disabilities during an extremely challenging year. 2020 was fraught with racial strife, civil unrest, and a devastating global pandemic. No individual, no business, no government entity escaped the pain and loss brought on by COVID-19. While our staff shifted successfully to a mandatory telework schedule, we could not escape the grave impact of the virus. From the onset of the virus until the end of FY 20, 253 people supported by the Department on Disability Services (DDS) contracted the virus, 28 died.

Valuable lessons and opportunities often emerge from great loss and pain. With remote work policies and procedures already in place at the declaration of the public health emergency, we were able to maintain full agency operations in compliance with the Mayor's Orders, which echoed the guidance outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DC Health. Intake procedures for our Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) quickly shifted to a virtual process allowing residents with disabilities to apply for services on-line. Community Liaisons followed up with applicants and new referrals by telephone to discuss the next steps and, if necessary, arranged for in-person sessions that would adhere to protocols of the public health emergency.

Our collaboration with various District agencies throughout the public health emergency proved invaluable. DC Health and its Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Administration (HEPRA) worked with our provider agencies to make personal protective equipment (PPE) available early in the pandemic. When we began hosting virtual forums for our providers and community stakeholders, representatives from DC Health and the Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF) joined with us to clarify COVID protocols and guidance. On average, 200 people participated in the weekly discussions, giving all agencies valuable insight into the needs and concerns of provider staff, advocates, family members, and the people we support. We plan to host these forums until the public health emergency has subsided.

During a turbulent year, we also witnessed people supported by our agency make significant strides toward independence. More than 500 people supported through RSA gained employment, earning an average wage of \$17.63. Virtual graduations and a youth-led conference kept students with disabilities on track in preparing for life after high school. And we recognized an incredible boost in attendance at our second annual Latinx Conference, hosted on the platform that is now a household name—Zoom.

The pandemic has revealed just how resilient, creative, and flexible we all can be in the face of extreme hardship and uncertainty. Service Providers have done an exceptional job adjusting to procedural and protocol changes necessary to ensure the health and safety of the people we support. Through our Tech First initiative, DDS will continue efforts to expand people's access and ability to use various technology products to prevent isolation and foster a greater sense of independence. Our partnerships with DC Health, DHCF, and other District agencies will guide us through the vaccine rollout and prepare us for the day we can reopen safely.

I am very proud of the work our agency and our provider organizations have done in supporting people with disabilities during an unprecedented time. This report is a glimpse of how we maintained our mission to help people with disabilities lead meaningful and productive lives.

*Andrew P. Reese*

Andrew P. Reese  
Director

# About Our Agency

The Department on Disability Services (DDS) includes the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). We coordinate a diverse network of service providers to assist people with disabilities in leading vibrant, self-directed lives. The agency also houses the Disability Determination Division (DDD), which processes the Social Security Administration's (SSA) disability claims, including SSI and SSDI for District of Columbia residents. DDD examines the cases to render a medical determination of eligibility. SSA makes the final approval or denial of District claims.

From October 1, 2019, through September 30, 2020, DDS provided support services to **8,549 people** with disabilities, of whom:

- **2,480** received support services through DDA; and
- **6,069** received support through RSA.

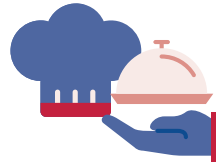
During FY 2020, DDS provided competitive and integrated employment supports that assisted **524 people** with disabilities to enter, retain, regain, or advance in employment. Of these, **429** or **81.87 percent** were employed in high-demand fields such as hospitality, healthcare, and IT. The average wage was **\$17.63**. The remaining 14 percent were hired in various career cluster fields, including business, education, and human service.

RSA provided Pre- Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for approximately 3,500 students. Pre-ETS prepare students with disabilities to transition from high school to a post-secondary career path, including post-secondary education, training, or employment. Pre-ETS includes:

- Job exploration counseling.
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experiences outside of the traditional school setting (including internships) provided in an integrated community environment.
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs.
- Workplace readiness training to develop social and independent living skills.
- Instruction in self-advocacy.

Of the 3,500 youth and young adults who received Pre-ETS in 2020, 88 percent (3,088) were high school students, ages 14-22. Students received services from District of Columbia Public Schools (2,487), Public Charter Schools (411), and other District of Columbia providers (190).

## People Employed in High Demand Fields



**34%**  
Hospitality/  
Culinary



**17%**  
Business/IT



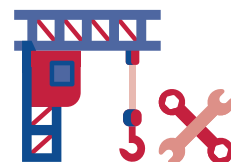
**14%**  
Customer Service/  
Retail



**6%**  
Transportation



**5%**  
Healthcare



**3%**  
Construction/  
Infrastructure



**3%**  
Security/  
Law Enforcement

## The Right Talent, Right Now

DDS celebrated National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) by honoring more than 30 local businesses that partnered with the agency to improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) hosted the annual Employer Recognition event on October 23, 2019. The keynote speaker was Dr. Scott Robertson, Policy Advisor with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Employment and Disability Policy (ODEP). Robertson is the first person with autism employed by ODEP in 30 years. He spearheads activities to increase employment opportunities for autistic people and support neurodiversity in the workplace.

Since 2015, PAHO has collaborated with the Ivymount School to create work-based learning experiences for youth with developmental disabilities. Dr. Maristela Monteiro, Senior Advisor on Alcohol and Substance Abuse for PAHO, spearheads this initiative. The mother of a child with a disability, Monteiro manages efforts to give young people opportunities in culturally diverse work settings. During the event, employers and interns shared lessons learned from their experiences. PAHO encountered a few unintended attitudinal barriers regarding interns' ability to function within the organization. Some employees were concerned about noise levels, what might happen during a fire drill or an emergency and questioned whether separate restrooms and break areas were needed. Monteiro stressed that the interns were actual PAHO employees, and as such, they would enjoy the same professional standards as all PAHO employees. It also meant interns were integrated into workplace activities, including birthday parties, special events, and having lunch with coworkers.



*In the photo, l-r: Sylvia Bailey Charles, DDS Business Relations Specialist; Dr. Maristela Monteiro, PAHO; Steve Blank, SEEC; Kathryn Knight, Ivymount Employment Coordinator; Darryl Evans, RSA Deputy Director; Kavon Quattlebaum, Intern; Karen Gladbach, PAHO; Nancy Eaby, SEEC; Trinity Gray, Intern; George Davis, Intern; Israel Resti, Assistant Director, Ivymount; Neal Gertner, Ivymount Job Coach.*



*DDS/RSA celebrated local employers and employees with disabilities at the October 23 NDEAM Recognition Event at the Pan American Health Organization. In the middle, ODEP Policy Advisor and keynote speaker Dr. Scott Robertson*

## Reese Featured on The Daily Drum

DDS Director Andrew Reese was a guest on the October 29 Insight segment of Howard University Radio's Daily Drum broadcast (WHUR, 96.3 FM). Reporter Harold Fisher explored perceptions regarding people with disabilities in the workplace

and examined the progress made since the 30th the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Jeffery Swilley, Executive Vice President of Employ Prince George's, and Robyn Akinwale, WHUR Digital Coordinator, were also part of the segment.



## Self-Advocates Use Holiday to Raise Awareness

The evening of October 30, 2019, was cold and rainy, perfect conditions to demonstrate what riding in a transit van is like for people with disabilities. Players Unlimited is a theatrical team made up of people supported by DDS that debuted its original comedy *The Magic Ghost Van* on the eve of Halloween. The cast included characters such as Customer Service Witch, Possessed Traffic Light, Tailgater, and Magic Ghost Van Driver, and Van Attendant. Directed by DDS Project Manager Emily Ornstein, the play had four acts with powerful messages about what people with disabilities endure to get around town.

### ACT 1: The Waiting

People with disabilities often wait an exceptionally long time for accessible transportation.

### ACT 2: The Nightmare

People with disabilities often feel they have little say regarding the experience.

### ACT 3: The Traffic.

Okay, no one enjoys D.C. traffic, but how can we make it better for people in the van?

### ACT 4: The Commitments.

What can be done to solve the problems?



*The cast of Players Unlimited debuted their original comedy production Magic Ghost Van just in time for Halloween. It was a frightening tale about a nightmarish ride in an accessible transit van.*



*The photo below captures a scene from the October 30 production of Magic Ghost Van. Riders with disabilities have been on the van so long, they've fallen asleep. Wherever will they be when they awaken? Only the Magic Ghost Van Driver knows.*

## Direct Support Professional (DSP) Named Local Hero

National Children's Center (NCC) Direct Support Professional (DSP) Steve Holley was recognized by NBC 4 Washington as a Harris' Hero on November 15, 2019. The segment hosted by News Anchor Leon Harris acknowledges people in the Washington metropolitan area for doing amazing things for their communities. Holley, who has been deaf since he was three, has been a DSP for more than 30 years. A family member who was deaf and also had an intellectual disability inspired him to enter the field of disability services. After graduating from Gallaudet University, Holley put his sign language skills and knowledge to work at NCC. He wants people to know that deafness will not restrict or limit him from pursuing his dreams.



*As a DSP with NCC, Steve Holley (l) is dedicated to helping people he supports realize their dreams. He helped Danny (r) achieve his goal of becoming a professional clown.*

## Self-Advocates Inducted into Hall of Fame and Added to the Board

On November 23, 2019, **Lindsey Wilkes** was inducted into the **D.C. Special Olympics Hall of Fame**. The ceremony took place at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, and NBC 4 Sports Reporter Chris Miles presented the award. Lindsey began competing in Special Olympics when he was eight years old, and he continues to participate in several sports.

**Bernard Crawford** was sworn-in as a board member for the **D.C. Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC)**. Mayor Bowser officiated the November 18 ceremony for hundreds of new appointees and reappointed members to District boards, commissions, and task forces. The DDC is a community-based advisory committee comprised of 15 members dedicated to identifying and addressing the most pressing needs of people with developmental disabilities. The Council seeks to foster greater independence, inclusion, and empowerment of people with disabilities.

During FY 2020, DDS celebrated the appointments of the following DDS staff and advocates to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and State Independent Living Council (SILC):



**1 and 2.** Lindsey Wilkes accepts the award and poses with NBC 4 Reporter Chris Miles.  
**3.** Lindsey proudly displays his Special Olympics DC Hall of Fame award.  
**4.** Bernard Crawford at the swearing-in ceremony for new appointees and reappointed members to District boards and commissions. He holds a sign that reads: #ImOnBoard.

### ★ SRC Members ★

|                         |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Darryl Evans            | Abraham Hiatt |
| Yolandra Plummer-Diallo | Susan Townes  |
| Marjorie Gilliard       | Berta Mata    |
| Melissa Stephans        | Ricky Wright  |
|                         | Antonio Myers |

### ★ SILC Members ★

|                    |                    |                   |                 |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Georges Aguehounde | Ivy Bullock        | Darryl Evans      | Deborah Kale    |
| Hazel Mosby        | Yvonne Plummer     | Helen Shamwell    | Yvonne Smith    |
| Heyab Berhan       | Darnise Henry Bush | Shileta Gorham    | Caren Kirkland  |
| Berta Myers        | Linda Robinson     | Elver Ariza Silva | Ronald Thomas   |
| Angel Bryant       | Pamela Carreker    | Deborah Hawkins   | Thomas Mangrum  |
| Jerome Parsons     | Tiffany Sanders    | Richard Simms     | Marsha Thompson |



## Making Sure People Are Heard

In January 2020, DDS launched a formal complaint system to allow people receiving supports or services to address their concerns about:

- The denial, delay, reduction, or termination of DDA supports or services, including Medicaid waiver services;
- The application of DDA policies, procedures, or practices to the person, or
- The application of DDA providers' policies, procedures, or practices to the person.

Several training sessions on the complaint system were provided to DDS staff, providers, self-advocates, families or support systems, and community members. To further assist people with disabilities in understanding and accessing the grievance process, DDS created a Peer Support Pilot Program.

Leonard Stevens was chosen by DDS and Project ACTION! to become the first peer supporter for the DDA Formal Complaint System. He created a host of materials for the pilot program, including a Charting the Life Course trajectory about the formal complaint system, promotional materials to recruit more peer supporters, and trained people with intellectual or developmental disabilities to become future peer supporters.

Stevens and our complaint system coordinator also attended Project ACTION! meetings to inform participants about the complaint system and recruit peer supporters. Since the launch of the formal complaint system, two cases have been filed. Assistance from the peer supporter was not requested.



*Leonard Stevens, Peer Supporter for the DDA Formal Complaint System*

## Raising Awareness About Supported Decision-Making Agreement (SDMA)

The law on Supported Decision Making went into effect in 2018. It allows a person with a disability to use a new form to make statutory Supported Decision-Making Agreements (SDMA). Supported Decision-Making (SDM) is one way that a person with a disability can make their own decisions with the help she or he needs and wants. A person chooses friends, family members, and other people they trust to be their supporters for life decisions. Notably, supporters do not make decisions for the person with a disability.

In FY 2020, DDS stepped up efforts to raise awareness about the SDMA. In addition to training staff, the agency used the train the trainer model to assist colleagues in other District agencies in understanding and using the SDMA. Director Reese sent letters

to various stakeholders and partners reintroducing the law and the benefits of SDMA. The letters also clarified that SDM is one alternative to guardianship; it does not take away the legal rights of a person with a disability or give supporters the right to make decisions for the person or to overrule their decisions. DDS and Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities developed an Information and Instructions packet to explain the SDMA and help people understand how to use the SDMA form properly. It can be accessed at <https://dds.dc.gov/node/1353106>.

DDS also presented "Supported Decision-Making: Part One of a Three-Part Discussion Series for People Enrolled in DDA Services with Trusted Supporters." The virtual training helped participants understand how to identify a trusted supporter and explained what Supported Decision-Making might mean for them. Upcoming presentations will include: "Disability Services Reform Amendment Act of 2018" and "Making Decisions." The District is now a member of the National Community of Practice on Supported Decision-Making.

# Rapid Response

On Friday, February 28, 2020, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser signed a Mayor's Order outlining the District's monitoring, preparation, and response to the coronavirus (COVID-19). The Order named D.C. Health and the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency responsible for coordinating the District's emergency response planning for any potential impacts from COVID-19. The priority at that time was prevention. The Executive Office of the Mayor began an information campaign, alerting residents about the virus and steps to prevent the spread. By March 11, Mayor Bowser declared both a state of emergency and a public health emergency. DDS immediately assessed how to ensure that the people we support were not put at risk and could benefit from social distancing strategies. Among the adjustments made:

- The majority of agency staff immediately adapted to a mandatory remote telework schedule.
  - o DDS had established telework policies and procedures in place long before the public health emergency was declared.
  - o Employees were equipped with various technical devices—laptops, Surface pros, and mobile phones to ensure they could access any needed documents securely and conduct remote monitoring and intake activities efficiently without compromising privacy or confidentiality.
  - o Our IT Team provided training on the safe use of Virtual Private Networks (VPN) and encrypted messaging. VPN usage increased dramatically from the first quarter of FY 2020 to the second quarter of the year.

- DDS worked very closely with various District agencies to ensure the effective delivery of supports and services to people with disabilities. The Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF) helped secure adjustments to the cadre of services and flexibility in provision; D.C. Health advised on current mitigation strategies and aided in securing personal protective equipment, testing efforts, and vaccine distribution. The Department on Behavioral Health (DBH) also provided additional resources.
- DDS ensured that service authorization adjustments were made to provide alternatives to services no longer available because of the public health emergency. This effort involved reauthorizing services for about 800 people and securing approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). DDS maintained regular communication with D.C. Health as guidance was issued and reported daily on the impact the public health emergency had on people supported.
- Online applications were processed for new intakes for RSA and DDA, with staff responding rapidly to support people seeking to apply for services.

## Keeping Stakeholders Informed

As details about the public health crisis were rapidly evolving, DDS was deliberate in establishing communication avenues to keep all stakeholders informed about measures the agency was taking to continue to provide services and supports. On March 27, 2020, we began hosting a weekly virtual forum facilitated by DDS Director Andrew Reese. These sessions also gave DDS an opportunity to hear the concerns of stakeholders and providers and exchange of ideas and best practices to better support people with disabilities. More than 200 self-advocates, community partners, providers, and other stakeholders regularly joined the hour-long discussion. Representatives from DHCF and D.C. Health partnered with us to provide thorough responses to participants' questions. During each session, attendees were reminded about all known COVID-19 infection control methods and steps to take care of loved ones, those we support, and the broader community.

In addition to the weekly community forums, DDS leadership also met bi-weekly with Project ACTION!, a regional coalition of self-advocates and self-advocacy groups from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, and the Coalition of Disability Service Providers to discuss the agency's response to the pandemic and receive feedback.

**Staff VPN Usage**  
October 1, 2019 — March 16, 2020

**141**

**Staff VPN Usage**  
March 17, 2020 — September 30, 2020

**314**

## Equipping People to Remain Healthy

The DDS Nurse Educator designed and conducted several trainings about the virus for staff, people supported, and stakeholders. Sessions included:

**COVID-19 101: A Guide for Providers**, was designed to help decrease the anxiety or fear of providing care to someone who might have COVID-19. It included information on how one contracts the virus and how to prevent it.

**COVID-19: Hygiene and PPE Usage When Returning to Work During Phase 3** was training for DDS staff who will be returning to work in the office and are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform assigned tasks. PPE for DDS employees includes reusable masks and gloves. This training module included a review of basic hygiene practices, including proper hand washing and when not to wear gloves and masks.

**COVID-19: A Resource for DSPs Providing Care to People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**, was presented at the DSP Academy. The DDS nurse educator presented this practical training twice to nurses, and the training was recorded and posted to the DDS website.

The agency also hosted trainings on **Coping with COVID** for DDS staff and the provider and community network. National experts on trauma-informed care discussed the importance of self-care.

## Adjusting to a New Normal

In collaboration with stakeholders, D.C. Health and the Mayor's Office, DDS developed a best practices guide for providers re-opening day services. Providers were required to submit plans for reopening. This stakeholder group also developed a **Community Participation Assessment and Questionnaire** or **CPAQ** to assess a person's risk for COVID-19 as they plan to re-engage in community services, and to guide in the development of a plan to mitigate those risks. Service coordinators held interdisciplinary team meetings and followed person-centered processes to assist people in re-engaging in services during the public health emergency.

## Assuring the Rights of People with Disabilities

DDS formed a COVID-19 advisory workgroup to address the challenge of helping people supported remain safe and healthy while respecting their right to choose how they lead their lives during a pandemic. Internal and external stakeholders worked to develop guided conversation materials to educate varied support team members on how best to assist a person with intellectual disabilities in understanding their rights and responsibilities throughout the public health emergency. The materials include an interactive section to identify alternatives to rights-restrictions, and the formal rights restriction processes. Conversation facilitators were volunteers representing the service provider and professional advocate communities. In FY 2020, approximately 170 people took part in the discussions. These discussions are ongoing during FY 2021.

## Identifying Best Practices

As all state and local government agencies are working to identify strategies for measuring the impact of COVID-19 on the health and service outcomes for people they support, DDS is participating in the National Core Indicators (NCI) project which aims to collect and maintain valid and reliable data about the performance of service delivery systems. With surveys that are designed to collect information from people that receive services, their family members and their staff, information becomes available informs the current state health and life domains such as employment supports, community inclusion, choice and decision-making, self-determination, relationships/ natural supports and satisfaction with services and supports. While DDS has been participating with this data collection effort since 2013, a new COVID-19 supplemental survey has been developed and will serve as a valuable resource as DDS continues the work of monitoring health outcomes within the context of the public health emergency.

Additionally, DDS has worked to review a preliminary set of performance measures that would be used to assess the quality of services delivered under our Home and Community Based Services Waiver Program developed by CMS. As these performance measures continue to be developed, DDS remains proactive in identifying those resources that can effectively inform the strengths and opportunities for continued improvement within our service-delivery system.

## Through the Lens of Our Nurses

May 6-12, 2020, was National Nurses Week. DDS proudly recognized its team of highly skilled nurse consultants who combine knowledge and compassion to help people with disabilities lead healthy self-directed lives. Below, a few of our professionals share why they entered the field of nursing and lessons they have learned during COVID-19.



Nursing is simply caring for people. It is helping those who cannot or do not know how to help themselves. Nursing is intense. It is making sure that the plan of care for each person is going to help them live a better life.

The lesson I have learned during this pandemic is that we must let go of attachments and find happiness within. Learn to see the beauty in everything and be grateful.

— Jimmy Norman, MSN, RN, APHN



I became a nurse because of my passion for improving the health status of people of color (specifically Black people in America).

The lesson I have learned during this pandemic is that people of color need our medical advocacy now more than ever before.

— Isoke Baptiste, MSN, NP-C



What I have learned during the pandemic is that working with a strong, flexible, and knowledgeable team makes a great difference. Their dedication is overwhelming and very much appreciated.

— Chioma Nwachukwu, DNP, RN,  
Supervisory Nurse Consultant



# Accomplishments Celebrated Virtually

## Project SEARCH Grads

During FY 2020, 17 youth supported by the RSA Transition Unit completed Project SEARCH, a six-month workplace immersion program designed for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Participants spend six hours each day at a host business, engaging in job training and career exploration. They also receive support with accommodations, adaptations, and on-the-job coaching from teachers and employers. After completing Project SEARCH, graduates are fully prepared to enter the workforce.

Embassy Suites by Hilton and The Smithsonian Institution have been host job sites for Project SEARCH for several years, providing valuable career training and job opportunities for interns. FY 2020 was no exception to this practice; however, one Project SEARCH grad decided to apply his new skills and talents in another field.

In September 2020, Montez Green joined the retail team of W.S. Jenks & Sons, Washington, D.C.'s oldest hardware store. He is the third Project SEARCH graduate hired by the local business. Jenks & Sons General Manager Michael Siegel attributes the retailer's success during COVID-19 to their "great staff, and a huge part of that is the employees we've hired through Project Search."

Siegel admitted that, at first, he was uncertain about hiring people from the program. After one interview with his first hire in 2018, he recognized the untapped talent and potential found in employees with disabilities. He was so impressed with his employees that he started hosting his own job fair to reach out to other local businesses to encourage them to hire Project SEARCH students. Siegel noted that one challenge in finding jobs for people with disabilities is that many employers "simply don't think about it". He's now working with Project SEARCH and DDS to help others realize that there is a pool of loyal, well-trained, hardworking individuals who would make great additions to any team. "If everybody had employees like that, their companies would be better places."



**1.** Graduation ceremonies for students across the world have veered from the traditional ceremonies because of COVID-19. Creative uses of technology and various apps have allowed celebrations to continue. On May 29, ten participants in the Project SEARCH--Hilton Capital Area were celebrated, virtually. The following participants completed a rigorous training program in the hospitality industry: Barry Stevenson, Crawford James, III, Daneisha Pinkney, Denise Anderson, Jeanell Ward, Jeremiah Griffin, Jose Villatoro, Joseph Woodland, Montez Green, Timothy Witherspoon. **2.** On his first day, Montez Green reported to Jenks & Sons wearing a mask ready to assist coworkers and customers in a safe, friendly manner. **3.** Vincent Williams (kneeling) offers his new colleague tips for stocking shelves.

## MBSYEP Interns Gain Valuable Telework Experience



FY 2020 marked the 41st year of the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP). The pandemic gave some 10,000 youth a glimpse of what teleworking is all about. DDS hosted 12 MBSYEP interns. Onsite interns were engaged in the traditional summer youth experience of working with DDS staff who volunteered to supervise participants. The virtual interns engaged in online professional development through Career Edge. Supervisors of virtual interns are also assisted with resume writing and provided other materials on becoming job ready.

Toya Tanner was assigned to the VR Transition Unit and gained valuable training through Career Edge, a virtual tool that provides interns with more than 200 hours of professional and workforce development modules. A sophomore biology major attending North Carolina A & T University, she was grateful for the opportunity to participate in the MBSYEP as a virtual intern. "As this pandemic continues, I believe many jobs will continue to be virtual. This experience has helped me improve my communication skills. The modules on Career Edge have taught me how my attitude affects my success, how to stay motivated, and why it is important to adapt to change."

## More than 200 Transition Students Attend Virtual Conference

While the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed how teaching and learning took place in 2020, it did not dampen students' enthusiasm to learn how to prepare for and succeed in finding a career. SchoolTalk's Annual Voices of Change Conference took place on Zoom, welcoming 241 participants and vendors. Held September 14–30, 2020, the conference equipped middle and high school students with knowledge and skills to lead self-determined lives through opportunities to LEARN, LEAD, and ACT.

Students engaged with youth leaders, community-based organizations, and local entrepreneurs and artists who shed light on postsecondary pathways to work, education, and independent living. SchoolTalk's transition- and employment-related sessions were tailored to fit online learning schedules. Most events included pre- and post-session activities teachers could use to further engage their students. For a description of citywide events and class based workshops see [SchoolTalk's Voices of Change](#) webpage.

## Phenomenal Virtual Attendance at the Second Annual Latinx Conference

In response to findings of the 2017 Comprehensive Needs Assessment, DDS has been working to expand its outreach and engagement with diverse cultures across the city. We held our first Latinx Conference in 2019, reaching nearly 20 people. In the face of a pandemic, DDS and our partners—the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) and the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (MOLA), and other agencies—hosted the second annual Latinx Conference on a virtual platform, reaching more than 140 people, including people with disabilities, family members, and agency/organizational staff. The Spanish-language event was held on September 30, 2020, and provided attendees free access to information, support, and resources in their native language.

During the conference, Eliana Tardio, an internationally known disability advocate, and parent delivered a motivational keynote address on resilience and finding her voice as a parent and advocate. Attendees also heard from family members on successfully navigating a post-COVID-19 environment while maintaining hope. At the end of the conference, attendees participated in a mindfulness meditation session and viewed informational videos from sponsoring agencies on access to supports and services. Based on the conference evaluation survey feedback, over ninety-five percent (95.2%) of respondents were satisfied/enjoyed attending the conference, and ninety-one percent (91.0%) of respondents found the information and resources presented at the conference to be important and useful.

To bolster the impact of the virtual Latinx conference and engagement with this underserved community, DDS, along with MOLA and DDC, has committed to hosting a series of monthly events to provide resources and support in Spanish to the community. The topics covered to date include Childhood Developmental Milestones and the Importance of Early Intervention, an overview of Vocational Rehabilitation, Supports for Caregivers, and Language Access.



# People Making Positive Strides in a Pandemic

## Keep Evolving: Samira Taylor

It was the hit TV drama Crime Scene Investigations (CSI) that sparked Samira Taylor's interest in forensic science. With the help of her guidance counselor at Theodore Roosevelt High School and the support of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Shontae Waldrip, Taylor discovered Hilbert College in Hamburg, New York. After one visit to the campus, she was hooked. Through the school's Learning Center, Taylor received support with taking exams and tutoring in English. After earning a bachelor's degree, she returned home to D.C. and was selected for the District's Aspiring Professionals Program. The six-month internship gives people with disabilities an opportunity to work in professional jobs at various District Government agencies.

Taylor interned with the Department of Forensic Science, a perfect position for a person passionate about science and math. Eager to learn as much as possible, she worked with personnel in various units such as biology, fingerprints, and firearms. Her curiosity led to an invitation to observe an autopsy, something that was on her internship bucket list. That experience heightened her resolve to continue employment with DFS. In July 2020, Taylor was hired as a forensic science technician.

Taylor commented that people with disabilities "Tend to put our all into everything we do to succeed and show people that there is more to us than our disability." She asks employers to be willing to take a chance on people with disabilities because "we are the best workers." She encourages young adults with disabilities "to never give up when struggling with something that is very hard. It's OK to fail, but you have to get back up and keep evolving."



*Samira Taylor, Forensic Science Technician*

**Never give up when struggling with something that is very hard. It's OK to fail, but you have to get back up and keep evolving.**

**—Samira Taylor,**  
*Forensic Science Technician*

## Service Coordinator Named 2020 Shero

DDS Service Coordinator Katrina Patterson was named a 2020 Maryland Shero. During its Centennial Summit, The Maryland Commission for Women recognized 100 women for their efforts to keep their communities safe during the pandemic. The celebration took place on August 26, 2020, which was also Women's Equality Day and the 100th Anniversary of the signing of the 19th Amendment, the law that gave women the right to vote. Patterson was selected because of her volunteer activities with senior citizens and dialysis patients.



*DDS Service Coordinator Katrina Patterson, 2020 Maryland Shero*

## Developmental Disability Professionals Day

July 15, 2020, marked the inaugural celebration of Developmental Disability Professionals Day. Established by The National Association of Qualified Intellectual Disability Professionals (NAQ), this initiative sought to recognize professionals who were resilient in times of challenge, uncompromising in providing outstanding supports, and tenacious advocates for positive change. Amid the pandemic, DDS employees adjusted quickly to provide remote supports and continue to work tirelessly to ensure that quality services are maintained. Below, a few Service Coordinators share insights about their role as disability professionals.



"I chose this field because it is such a rewarding profession. I realized my creative problem-solving skills and my organizational abilities could make a difference in human service. Service Coordinators play a vital role in the life of people we serve. We work directly with people with disabilities and their families to help them achieve their hopes and dreams. We celebrate achievements and mourn losses. We do everything from self-discovery to self-assurance. We are part of baby deliveries and offer noble support at the end of life. We are incredible advocates, counselors, teachers, role models, friends, and much more. I am very proud to be part of DDS/Service Planning and Coordination Division (SCPD)."

–**Sherin Moses**  
Supervisory Service Coordinator

"I have been working in the Human Service field for over 25 years. I chose this profession because I believe in the power of helping people who are in need and vulnerable in our society. My belief in the DDS mission statement drives me to do this work, and I have a personal interest in people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. What I appreciate most about SCPD is that we have services that support people to remain in their natural home settings with their families and connect them to resources that can integrate them in their community."

–**Lisa Eley-Brame**  
Supervisory Service Coordinator



"I chose this field because of my fundamental belief that all humans should have a good quality of life. I am passionate about helping people with and without disabilities. This field has a host of challenges and opportunities. But when all is said and done, there is a great amount of positivity, fulfillment, and gratification. To care and provide support for someone who needs it most by encouraging them to achieve their goals, assisting them in becoming independent, and building confidence in their abilities so they can live their best life is quite impactful. I'm proud to be a part of that journey!"

–**Joelda Abilome**  
Service Coordinator



## PROVIDERS

The Department on Disability Services is able to support people with disabilities in living life their way through the work and support of the following service providers. Their efforts and dedication to people with disabilities continues to make significant difference as we navigate through the various phases of the pandemic.

- 1axium, LLC
- A.W. Holdings, LLC d/b/a Benchmark Human Services
- ABC Technical Solutions
- Abundant Life Residential Services
- Academy of Hope
- Agape, Inc.
- Aging and Family Services of Mineral County
- Alight Support, Inc.
- Amazing Grace Supports, Inc.
- Amazing Love Health Services
- America Works of Washington DC
- American Health Care Svcs.
- Anchor Mental Health
- Angel Loving Care Group Home
- Anna Health Care Inc.
- Apex Healthcare Services, Inc.
- ARC of DC
- Arc of Tampa Bay, Inc.
- Art and Soul Solutions, Inc.
- Art and Soul Solutions, Inc.
- Art Eables
- ASM Educational Center, Inc.
- Associated Community Services, Inc.
- Audicus Inc.
- Aveda Institute
- Azure, LLC
- Bee-Homes South, Inc.
- Benedictine School
- Bert Smith & Co.
- Bethlehem House, Inc
- Bladensburg Barber School
- Blossom Services, Inc.
- Bread for the City
- Broad Future
- C.G. Dixon & Associates, Inc.
- Capital Care INC.
- Capital Care, Inc.
- Career Technical Institute (CTI)
- Catholic Charities
- CDL Training Center for NOVA
- CDS Tractor Trailer Training
- Center on Deafness
- Club Z!
- Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind
- Columbus Medical Services
- Community Connection
- Community Multi-Services, Inc.
- Community Support Systems, LLC
- Contemporary Family Services, Inc.
- Crystal Springs, Inc.
- DC Cares Center, Inc.
- DC Health Care, Inc.
- DC Residential Services
- DC-IL
- Deaf Reach
- Devereux Foundation
- Digi Docs Inc. Document Mgers
- Divine Connect Care Inc.
- Dupont Computers
- Eckington House Mental Health Services, LLC
- Fescum Incorporated
- Finsby Care, Inc.
- First Metropolitan Community Services, Inc
- Frontline Community Services, Inc.
- Full Circle
- Galaxy HealthCare Solutions Inc.
- Gentle Touch
- Gina Outreach Services, Inc.
- Global Resources
- Global Resources and Support LLC
- Grace & Mercy Health Services
- Grace and Mercy Health Services
- Hands on Educationa Services, Inc
- Harper Career Services, LLC
- HeadStart to Life, Inc.
- Health Resources Service Intake Center
- Hilcrest Children and Family Center
- Hi-Tech Solutions, Inc.
- Hope Found, Inc.
- Humanity In Transition, Inc
- I AM
- IMA Professional Services of DC, PC
- Individual Advocacy Group, Inc.
- Innisfree Village
- Innovative Concepts, Inc.
- Innovative Life Solutions, Inc.
- Integrated Community Services, Inc.
- Interdynamics, inc.
- Joyful Health Care, Inc.
- KBEC Group, Inc.
- Kennedy Institute
- L Arche, Inc.
- Liberty Healthcare Corporation
- Lifeline, Inc.
- Marjul Homes, Inc.
- MBA Non-Profit Solutions
- MBI Health Services, LLC
- MBI Health Services, LLC
- Melmark, Inc.
- Metro Homes, Inc.
- Motir Services, Inc.
- MT&G Enterprise, Inc.
- Multi-Therapeutic Services, Inc.
- My Own Place, Inc.
- National Associate Inc.
- National Children s Center, Inc.
- Obverse, Corp.
- Pathways to Housing DC
- Pendergrast Alston Consulting
- Premier Health Services, Inc.
- Project ReDirect, Inc.
- Project ReDirect, Inc.
- Provider Name
- PSI Services
- PSI Services III, Inc.
- Psychiatric Center Charter
- RCM of Washington, Inc.
- RCM of Washington, Inc.
- RSCR West Virginia, Inc.
- Saint Coletta of Greater Washington Inc
- School Talk DC
- SEEC
- St. John s Community Services
- St. Johns Community Services
- Stratford College
- Superior Caring Hands LLC
- Superior Caring Hands, LLC
- Supreme Healthcare Services, LLC
- Symbral Foundation for Community Services, Inc.
- TCS Associates, LLC
- The MECCA Group, LLC
- The VanMar, Inc.
- Time for Change
- Toni Thomas Associates, inc.
- Total Care Services, Inc
- Total Quality Residential Services, Inc.
- Tree of Life Services, Inc.
- United Planning Organization (UPO)
- Univesity legal Services
- Valentine Community Services, LLC
- Verigreen Inc.
- Verigreen Inc.
- Vested Optimum Community Svcs. Inc.
- VMT Education Center
- Volunteers of America Cheapeake
- Volunteers of America Chesapeake, Inc.
- Ward & Ward Mental Health Services, Inc.
- Westlink Career Institute
- Wholistic Home & Community Based Services, Inc.
- Woods Services, Inc.
- Work Opportunities Unlimited



**LIFE. YOUR WAY.**  
**Department on**  
**Disability Services**

Through the duration of the public health emergency, DDS employees will work remotely to provide essential support services to people with disabilities. District of Columbia residents with disabilities interested in receiving supports from our agency can call **202-442-8400** to schedule an intake appointment.

Learn more about our operating procedures by visiting our website:  
**[www.dds.dc.gov](http://www.dds.dc.gov)**



**Office Hours**

Monday - Friday  
8:30 am - 5 pm



**Nearest Metro**

Federal Center SW



**Parking**

Limited street parking,  
several parking garages nearby

**Department on Disability Services**

One Independence Square  
250 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20024  
202-442-8400 • [www.dds.dc.gov](http://www.dds.dc.gov)

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GOVERNMENT OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR**