



Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council:

Observations on Developments at The Federal Level Concerning People with Disabilities

Craig Hall

Executive Director

Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

March 12, 2025



Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

The mission of the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council is to provide opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities and families to enhance independence, productivity and inclusion.

The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council is an independent agency, funded by the federal government, dedicated to empowering people with developmental disabilities and their families to enjoy full productive lives by promoting self-sufficiency, community inclusion and opportunity.



Why are developments at the federal level concerning to people with disabilities?

Through this presentation there is an overarching theme. The reduction of federal spending on non-statutory activities. The reduction of federal bureaucracy. The reduction of federal regulatory activities.



Some key programs that are important to people with disabilities.

- Medicaid (and grants like Money Follows the Person)
- Special education (including personnel preparation and research)
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Housing assistance
- Childcare
- School meals
- Adult protective services
- Veteran's Administration grants



What are the key developments at the federal level concerning people with disabilities?

About **1 in 4 Americans** (28.7%) has some type of disability.

Physical disabilities – Conditions that affect movement, strength, or physical ability.

Sensory disabilities – Challenges with hearing, vision, or other senses.

Psychological disabilities – Mental health conditions that impact daily life.

Intellectual disabilities – Conditions that affect learning, reasoning, or decision-making.



What observers believe are the most important developments in federal spending at the federal level concerning people with disabilities?]

Massachusetts receives approximately \$15 billion in federal funding annually. The inability of Congress to fund the federal government is not necessarily a new development, but the ongoing use of continuing resolutions (CRs) exacerbates the uncertainty of long-term fiscal policy.



Some key state programs funded by federal dollars.

- Protection & Advocacy Agencies
- Developmental Disability Councils
- University Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
- Centers for Independent Living
- Disability Innovation Fund Awards
- Parent Training and Information Centers
- Grants from the Office of Disability Employment Policy
- Special Olympics
- Grants from the Centers for Disease Control
- Resource centers, research and medical education

What observers believe are the most important key developments at the federal level concerning people with disabilities?

- Federal Bureaucracy
- Federal Regulatory Activities
- Rights at Work
- The Federal Workforce
- Educational Opportunities
- Healthcare



Federal Bureaucracy

The US Office of Management and Budget “Plan” for each department shall require that each agency hire no more than one employee for every four employees that depart. There are exceptions.

There is also the Development of Agency Reorganization Plans and Reductions in Force (RIF). However again, all offices that perform functions not mandated by statute or other law shall be prioritized in the RIFs.



Federal Regulatory Activities

Key federal developments for people with disabilities include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and the Rehabilitation Act. There is also the Assistive Technology Act of 2004.



Rights at Work

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates, 7.6 million workers identified as disabled in September 2024. About 9.4% of the federal workforce were disabled in 2022.



The Federal Workforce

There are concerns that a reduction in staff might have a much more significant effect on people applying for Supplemental Security Income, which in 2024 served 7.4 million people who are disabled, blind or over 65.



Educational Opportunities

There are approximately 7.5 million special education students in the United States.

Students with disabilities, like all students, are legally entitled to free public education. This right is guaranteed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, passed in 1975. IDEA is enforced by the federal Education Department.

Students with disabilities rely on the enforcement of specific federal laws and regulations to obtain an equitable education in the least restrictive setting.

Healthcare

Affordable Care Act into law in 2010, The ACA prohibited insurance companies from charging more or denying coverage based on preexisting conditions.

About 15 million disabled people have health insurance through Medicaid. If Medicaid is instead another block grant that might force limits or caps on per capita spending. Another concern observers are arguing about are other changes to Medicaid, such as imposing work requirements for Medicaid beneficiaries that might be grounds to disqualify people from receiving benefits.



Highlighting Medicaid

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/medicaid-resources>

Content:

- Medicaid Forum with the Massachusetts Delegation
- Policy Spotlight: Medicaid Fact Sheet
- Medicaid Matters Virtual Information Session
- Share Your Medicaid Story with the MDDC
- Other Resources
- Contact Information



What observers believe are the most important Executive Orders at the federal level concerning people with disabilities?

As of March 10, 2025, President Donald Trump had signed 82 executive orders, 13 proclamations, and 21 memoranda in his second presidential term, which began on January 20, 2025.



What Executive Orders are we monitoring more closely?

Executive Order 14217 of February 19, 2025 - Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy

Executive Order 14173 of January 21, 2025 - Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity

Executive Order 14151 of January 20, 2025 - Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing



Other Executive Orders

Executive Order 14148 of January 20, 2025 - Initial Rescissions of Harmful Executive Orders and Actions

Executive Order 14212 of February 13, 2025 - Establishing the President's Make America Healthy Again Commission

Presidential Executive Order designating English as the official language of the United States.



Summary on Day 52

The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council will continue to be an objective source of information to educate and inform decision-makers, policy-makers, stakeholders and people with developmental disabilities.