



## Strategic Plan: 2020-2025

This document outlines the broad strategic direction of the [Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition](#) (CCDC) for the above referenced five year period. The organization will do annual work plans. The Executive Director reports to the full board on progress quarterly. The full board will review the plan halfway through to determine if substantial changes are necessary.

### MISSION:

***CCDC ADVOCATES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH ALL TYPES OF DISABILITIES***

### VISION

***The vision of CCDC is that Colorado and the nation will be a place where people with disabilities have equitable access and opportunities. People with disabilities must be involved in all policy that affects our lives.***

*“Nothing about us without us ever.”*

### VALUES

The following are the primary values of the organization. Expected behaviors and organizational ethics are outlined in an organizational ethics policy that all staff, board, and volunteers sign.

- Diversity: We understand that people with disabilities have intersectional identities.
- Equity: Actions must be taken to assure diversity and inclusion
- Honesty: We will always speak the truth even when it is uncomfortable
- Inclusively: We act with intention to make sure everyone is welcome. We value diversity.
- Integrity: We always strive to do the right thing using the best and most accurate information we have.
- Interdependence: A thriving community requires that each person is dependent on and depended upon.
- Justice: Civil rights evolve through creating, developing, implementing, and enforcing laws.
- Lifelong learning: We are a learning organization that takes pride in our community’s accumulated knowledge gleaned over three decades. We use continual evaluation to reassess our strategies and improve our outcomes and impact.
- Partnerships: We work with coalitions but are willing to stand alone when necessary

*The following are issues that we must continue to work on internally as an organization, as well as externally within the disability community and the larger community.*

## **RACIAL EQUITY**

CCDC is a social justice organization. People with disabilities who are members of communities of color often have worse outcomes in areas of health, employment, housing, and inappropriate involvement with the justice system. Working to decrease these disparities requires an internal and external focus on racial equity. Working on racial equity is a process, not an event. Ongoing conversations, activities, and training must continue to occur at the staff, board, and advocate levels. . CCDC will also work to be a good ally with organizations led by communities of color and with organizations led by affected populations working on issues such as housing, justice, and health care who have documented disparate outcomes. CCDC works to be an organization that is “anti-racist” but knows we must continuously address racism within our organization and community.

We must also address other forms of social oppression, including ableism, transphobia, and classism inside CCDC and our community. As a Social Justice organization, we cannot think we are immune to these forms of oppression at a micro and macro level that permeate our society. While we do internal work, we must also work on systems issues and use a racial equity lens when evaluating our policy advocacy.

Specifically CCDC commits to:

- Advertise open positions with venues that are more likely to reach applicants of color.
- Assure that staff will be given time to do this work and it will not be seen as an “add on” but as “the work”
- Provide resources to our Board members and advocates to do racial equity work.
- Assure there is pay equity with payment for skills like second languages.
- Continue to have an internal racial equity committee that has honest and difficult discussions about race and work to make our organizational more welcoming and inclusive.
- Look at policy positions using a racial equity lens.

## **POVERTY**

We recognize that many issues faced by people with disabilities and identified as priorities by our members are a result of poverty. People with disabilities continue to live in poverty at a level that exceeds all other demographic groups. Therefore, we must be part of the solutions for the growing income inequality. Even those that work full time make less than our non-disabled peers. In 2017 the median earnings of someone with a disability were \$43,500 while the median earnings of someone without a disability were \$50,600. We must actively focus on policies that enable us to get out of individual and generational poverty. The poverty rate of non-institutionalized adults with disabilities in Colorado is 22.1% as opposed to 8.3% for people without disabilities. 12.5% of working-age people with disabilities in Colorado receive SSI, which is a standard of living at only 74% of the federal poverty level. CCDC strives to reduce poverty by 5% during the years of this plan to bring the rate to 17%. Many of the goals in this plan will decrease poverty, but we must also continue to work on our internalized expectations of poverty within our community and organization leadership and membership.

# **STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

## **Advocacy**

We provide advocacy on levels. We will use grassroots organizing, petitioning, protesting, litigation, and media to advocate for social justice.

- We provide individual advocacy using trained non-attorney advocates to help people whose due process has been denied but where an attorney is not necessary or available.
- We engage in systemic advocacy using non-attorney advocates to change systems within the executive and legislative branches of government.
- Our lawyers are advocates enforcing the civil rights of people with disabilities through individual representation and class action litigation
- While we will not and should not endorse any candidate we will make sure that such policymakers who are interested have the tools and support to act as our champions. We will track numbers of existing and developing champions and at the halfway point we will assess if we should have harder targets.

## **Civic Engagement**

This is a right and responsibility that rests with every member and should be asserted by all. As a result, CCDC will always encourage our community to:

- Engage in “Get Out The Vote” activities.
- Encourage non- partisan political engagement.
- Support people with disabilities to be involved at all levels of public policy work.
- Help people with disabilities to run for office without endorsing parties or candidates.
- Have the highest statewide voter participation among people with disabilities in the country.
- Promote the employment of disability rights leaders and advocates in all levels of government.
- Intentionally work to increase the voice of people of color with disabilities.

## **Coalition Building**

A goal of this organization is to work with allies, either in longer-term or time-limited situations, whose interests intersect with the disability community. Coalition work develops lasting relationships, broadly promotes, and brings awareness to disability rights across diverse communities. While CCDC is often the leader for disability issues, it is also a willing participant in coalition work led by other organizations.

## **Education**

CCDC has amassed significant expertise on a variety of topics over three decades of work and seeks to share this information. Our members learn through direct training, social media engagement, material development, advocacy training, consultant work, information sharing, coalition building, and civic engagement. We work to increase intentionality and create a process for better documenting, cataloging and sharing our information in useful ways. CCDC

also seeks to use every opportunity with traditional and social media to change the narrative about disability. CCDC is a learning organization using multiple methods to evaluate our work and change based on findings. CCDC also works to be intentional about ensuring that expertise amassed by lived and professional experience of people with disabilities is valued by others.

### **Leadership Development**

Many people who initially come to the CCDC to receive help from our non-attorney advocates are encouraged to become advocates themselves. We empower our advocates and all PWD to develop or discover their leadership potential.

- For qualified PWD who are seeking out leadership roles, we encourage our allies to support them.
- To increase the number to disability advocates, CCDC seeks to maintain graduating at least 40 people a year from our rigorous certified non-attorney advocate program.
- Retain 50% of our advocates annually (we like it when advocates spread their wings).
- CCDC hopes to see at least 5 people with disabilities run for public office during this 5-year plan. As a nonprofit we cannot and will not endorse or oppose candidates. We believe we need people with disabilities on both sides of the aisle holding office at the local, state and federal levels.
- CCDC will continue to hold statewide meetings and seek other development opportunities for leaders.
- CCDC will have an initiative for young leaders during state meeting and be intentional about including young adults and teens in leadership development activities.

### **Systems Design and Implementation**

People who seek individual advocacy report systemic issues that result in discrimination. Our systems advocates bring these issues to policymakers who can then address these problems. Advocates work on cost-effective Colorado government systems that are used by people with disabilities. These systems promote equity so that PWD can be fully engaged and active participants in the community. Examples include:

- Consumer/Participant-directed programs.
- Medicaid Buy-In for Working Adults with Disabilities.
- Home and Community Based Waiver Programs.
- Design and operation of transit systems.
- Programs to assist with benefit acquisition.

CCDC monitors implementation of these programs and provides feedback to those tasked with management of the programs.

## KEY ADVOCACY ISSUES

While CCDC will always respond as needed to issues affecting our community, we anticipate the following will be the key advocacy issues for the term of this plan.

### **Employment**

Increase employment for ALL people with disabilities in Colorado, including non-severe disabilities. For example, people with hearing loss are employed at 58.8%, while people who need assistance with self-care are employed at a rate of 19%. The chart below details our employment goals for 2025:

PWD	2017	Goal by 2025
Full time and full year	29.7%	45.7%
Any employment (age 21-64)	37%	50%

To increase the number of PWD who are employed, CCDC will do the following:

1. The Medicaid Buy-In for Working Adults with Disabilities is one of the best “buy-in” programs in the country, and it has drastically improved quality of life for individuals who are enrolled in it. We will work to maintain and improve this program and plan to do so through the following means:
  1. Education. Many people either do not know about it or are misinformed.
  2. Technical issues with the buy-in program system are common.
    1. **Solution:** we will provide individual advocacy support to individuals who are experiencing problems and will continue to work with HCPF on systemic fixes.
  3. The buy-in program ends at age 65; this age restriction causes significant issues for individuals who are not ready or able to retire while they wait for Social Security Retirement at age 67 and for those not interested in retirement. It also requires people who have escaped poverty to return to poverty regardless of efforts they have made to save and manage money responsibly.
    1. **Solution:** state and federal legislation need to change the law so that people can keep working after age 65 AND retain assets obtained during time in the program.
  4. Currently, individuals can only be unemployed for ten days before they lose their Medicaid benefits. That is not enough time for most individuals to find a new job. There is only an allowance for a ten-day gap between jobs.
    1. **Solution:** change federal law or reinterpretation from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to include anyone seeking a job (after they had already been gainfully employed) and allow them to continue under the Buy-In as long as their unemployment benefits last.
  5. The Buy-In is the only program that does not have an asset test, allowing people with disabilities to escape forced poverty, and hopefully end generational poverty. However, the federal law still requires the state to do “estate recovery”

prohibiting buy-in clients from leaving assets (such as a house, a car, or trust) to heirs.

1. **Solution:** change federal law and state law, which allows people to leave assets accumulated while on the Buy-In program exempt from estate recovery.
2. CCDC will prioritize individual advocacy cases that help people obtain or maintain employment. For example:
  1. Social Security Overpayment appeals.
  2. Medicaid Buy-In related issues.
  3. Referral to benefits planners and assisting with benefits planning when no competent planner is available.
  4. Referral to Client Assistance Program for problems with DVR.
  5. Assistance understanding employment discrimination laws including coaching on how to obtain reasonable accommodations in the workplace.
  6. Social Enterprise Probate Power offers fee for service advice on how to legally protect assets.
3. Work with the state of Colorado and the department of vocational rehabilitation to be a model employer and be more effective at getting PWD jobs.
  1. Ongoing meetings with state leadership to assist the state to set metrics and define what a model employer is.
  2. Encouraging local governments and individual state agencies to engage in model employer behaviors.
  3. Actively support state and local government employees with disabilities to help address isolation issues and assure accommodations are being provided.
4. Increase the number of people with disabilities in higher education or certificate programs that can lead to gainful employment. The graph below illustrates the discrepancy between PWD and non-disabled people.

	People without a disability	People with a disability
<b>Some College or Associate's degree</b>	30%	37.4%
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>	42.6%	20.8%

\*Currently, 20.8% of people with disabilities have a bachelor's degree or higher while 42.6% of people without disabilities have this level of education. Interestingly, 37.4% of people with disabilities have some college or an associates degree as opposed to only 30% of people without disabilities.

Specific actions to increase higher education include:

1. Identify all of the disability support center directors at higher education institutions in Colorado.
2. Develop relationships with these centers and ascertain appropriate interactions with CCDC. Seek partnerships with these organizations and overall student support services.
3. Recruit and train volunteer advocates to provide individual advocacy to people who are experiencing problems with accommodations in higher education institutions.

4. Design some basic educational materials to let people with disabilities know their rights and responsibilities related to higher education (and how this differs from K-12). 5)
5. Continue to work on changing the mindset of people with disabilities about employment. CCDC is aware that many with disabilities, particularly older people and those with more significant disabilities, remain afraid to work due to discriminatory federal and state programs that do not capture the high cost of disability. There is also a lack of support for individuals in integrated workspaces and not enough effective skill-building programs to help people with all types of disabilities succeed in the workplace. Specific actions include:
  1. Continue to profile and promote people with disabilities that are working or moving towards employment.
  2. Conduct a statewide listening tour on employment to get more details about people's fears and beliefs as well as to find and document promising practices

### **Health Care**

Health Care for people with disabilities is broad and includes physical, behavioral/mental health, durable medical equipment as well as a vast array of mostly non-medical day to day services called *Long-Term Services and Supports or LTSS*. These services are funded through Medicaid and are necessary for people with significant disabilities that require assistance from another person to get through their day. CCDC focuses most efforts on the Medicaid system but addresses issues that intersect such as some issues connected with Medicare, VA health care and private insurance. CCDC primarily works with partner organizations on issues outside of Medicaid. Specifically, CCDC seeks to preserve the parts of Medicaid that accomplish the following outlines our vision for healthcare:

1. **Continue to actively defend Medicaid**, “as we know it” as an essential safety net system for many people, particularly people with disabilities and our families. (measurement—no block grants, reductions in eligibility, or reductions in services or changes to due process protections)
2. **Continue to focus on LTSS in the community with the following goals:**
  1. Protect our current level of consumer direction and expand it to other populations, particularly children.
  2. Expand consumer direction to other services, **particularly** those in the intellectual and developmental disability (I/DD) system such as “day habilitation,” “supported community connector,” and “respite.”
  3. Work on systemic simplification, including a better and more transparent assessment tool that does not reduce eligibility and allows for fairer and more flexible benefit allocations. This must include the complete elimination of the Supports Intensity Scale.
  4. Assure that reforms to the system help, rather than hurt, the people that use the system. This may include the implementation of Community First Choice.
  5. Work to assure direct care providers in all systems are paid fairly, have a say in policies that affect them directly, get appropriate training and support (mostly from the people they serve), and are made aware of laws that protect employees. Provide a career path for those workers interested in moving up the caregiving ladder and assuring that personal care is considered a valuable career without having to “advance” elsewhere. . CCDC will also assist care providers of our

members with issues such as payment for work performed and other problems related to their employment at the request of our members.

6. Increase the accessibility and cultural competency of health care providers, particularly primary care providers and behavioral health care providers. Many individuals with disabilities feel that their health needs are not adequately met due to inadequate cultural competency training, inaccessible locations, or inadequate or ineffective communication. Fear of the health care system puts PWD at a higher risk of severe illness or disease because they avoid the doctor. Some PWD have PTSD from interactions with the health care and human services systems.
3. CCDC will continue to be part of discussions at the state and national level on health care policy, including any innovations. This will include primary care, behavioral or mental health care, specialty care, hospital care, ancillary care, waiver proposals, waiver renewals, pilot programs, and responding to federal mandates.
  1. CCDC will engage in activities to assure the client's voice is heard at all levels of healthcare design, delivery, and evaluation.
  2. CCDC will share our opinions with both Executive and Legislative Branches at the state and federal level and will actively seek to assure policies are not hurting our community.
4. The CCDC individual advocacy program will continue to take healthcare cases, prioritizing Medicaid cases, and dual-eligible (Medicaid/Medicare, Medicaid/VA, and Medicaid/Private Insurance) cases that deal with eligibility or access to services. The CCDC systems advocates will lobby for systemic solutions to patterns identified by our advocacy cases.

## **Housing**

Housing was identified as a significant issue in the most recent CCDC listening tour. Housing issues identified by our members are mostly related to the fact that people with disabilities are living in poverty. Other housing issues include:

- Affordability.
- Habitability and availability.
- Public housing policies.
- Discrimination.
- Issues affecting people experiencing homelessness.

Because most housing issues are not necessarily disability issues, CCDC will primarily partner with other organizations that develop housing and work on broad-based affordability, tenant-rights, fair housing, and the rights of people experiencing homelessness. CCDC will partner with other legal organizations to prosecute disability related housing discrimination cases.

**Outcomes include:** additional housing resources for people with disabilities, increase in people able to use reasonable accommodations to obtain, maintain, and fully enjoy housing, and improved quality of housing and housing-related services.

1. Through our individual advocacy program,
  - a. Make sure that people facing eviction are connected with legal services organizations that do eviction defense,
  - b. Connect people with fair housing violations with the Denver Metro Fair Housing Center

- c. Connect people seeking housing with their local Independent Living Center if appropriate or a housing counseling organization.
2. CCDC will provide accurate and precise information on tenant's rights and frequent issues such as the rights and responsibilities of tenants with regard to companion animals or service dogs.
3. Provide individual support to members who are public housing residents with poor quality of life or eligibility issues.
4. Work in coalition to politically support options around affordability.
5. Support advocates to promote increasing the disability preference within local housing authorities.
6. Support organizations led by people experiencing homelessness to address civil rights issues.
7. Advocate for more disability cultural competency within the housing and homelessness services sectors.

### **Justice**

CCDC will advocate for an equitable and accessible justice system. Outcomes will include increased access to civil legal assistance in Colorado and enforcement of ADA violations. CCDC will ensure that individuals with mental or behavioral health issues are not victims of police brutality or incarceration, education opportunities so people with disabilities are aware of their rights.

1. Support access to justice by working nationally to support access to civil legal assistance or a "Civil Gideon."
2. Provide legal assistance to directly enforce disability rights laws such as the Americans With Disabilities Amendments Act ( ADAAA), Fair Housing Amendments Act ( FHAA), Colorado Antidiscrimination Act (CADA), and related laws.
3. Support Colorado Open Records Act (CORA). Colorado Criminal Justice Records Act (CCJRA) and Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests of our members. Measured by timely submission of reasonable legally sufficient requests and ability to provide our members information.
4. Work in coalition to reduce mass incarceration of people with disabilities, particularly people with disabilities who are also people of color by changing policies that lead to mass incarceration at all levels of government.
5. Provide members who are individuals with disabilities information (and if needed direct assistance) on how to obtain reasonable accommodations in court.
6. Actively oppose any effort to weaken any civil rights laws on the state or federal level.
7. Monitor and address due process violations in any setting relevant to our members, particularly concerning matters affecting life, liberty, health, and basic human needs. Outcomes are seen in direct advocacy outcomes and systemic redress of due process problems such as rule changes, agency letters, systemic fixes to address barriers, etc.
8. Develop online information, training and self-help resources with evaluation tools to assess effectiveness. Please see technology section as this is resource dependent.

## **Transportation**

CCDC will continue to promote access to accessible transportation with outcomes of increased public transit, the establishment of on-demand accessible transportation in at least two Colorado communities, improved quality of paratransit, and no reduction of services or additional barriers.

1. Monitor transportation developments statewide and participate on a local level whenever feasible.
2. Continue to enforce civil rights violations by public and private transportation providers.
3. Work to change state law to require some form of on-demand transportation for people that use wheelchairs.
4. Continue to support expanded transit throughout the state.
5. Provide support to people to address quality and compliance problems with paratransit.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PRIORITIES**

### **Increase revenue**

CCDC has moved from reliance on unpaid staff to an organization using paid professional staff, the vast majority of whom have disabilities, and many of whom have other intersectional identities. This has caused a dramatic increase in our budget. Additional infrastructure needs to exist as our community works to escape poverty. CCDC has always had diverse sources of revenue and has increased our foundation support, fundraising, and some earned income as well as started a new successful social enterprise. However, more must be done. This must include additional partnerships, ensuring we are paid for our expertise, and increasing contributions. CCDC may pursue additional social enterprise.

CCDC will need to increase revenue by at least \$250,000 over the strategic plan term. Goals include:

- Increase foundation revenue by \$125,000
- Increase earned income by \$75,000
- Increase individual giving by \$50,000

### **Create teams of subject matter experts (SME):**

In keeping with our values, we strive to pay our leaders that will coordinate our work. Some areas, such as health care will require multiple SMEs. SMEs will mentor others and preside over a pod of emerging and existing leaders. This will blend our paid and unpaid advocates giving all opportunities for increased levels of responsibility with a path to paid work for those interested in pursuing a career in disability rights. CCDC will add at least one paid SME per year during the plan so that there will be 7 SMEs by 2025 (We currently have a grant-funded SME for mental health and transportation).

### **Increase membership**

Increasing membership requires more intentionality around promoting the organization in our day to day activities, revisiting the idea of paid organizational affiliations, and having dedicated funding for outreach. This also includes opportunities for our membership to celebrate successes and reduce isolation. One example will be hosting a celebration of the 30th Anniversary of CCDC and the ADA. CCDC will double our membership over the course of the plan. This means a net gain of 600 people a year.

## **Transition of a silo model to a campaign model –Integrated Advocacy**

CCDC has functioned over the years in a **silo model**. We have created distinct buckets of work, including:

- Legal Programs to enforce the ADA and other laws.
- Individual Advocacy to assist individuals with disability related problems, mostly in the benefit arena.
- Systems Advocacy to assure the disability voice is represented in policymaking, to advance legislative and non-legislative policy goals, and to react to proposals that affect our community. This blends community organizing, policy advocacy, policy analysis, and public education.
- Advocacy training has been a separate program to train advocates, who theoretically move into either systems or individual advocacy. We have not been intentional about doing outreach or education beyond what we are asked to do. We do not have a robust program to promote and monetize our knowledge. We have also never had a formal communications program.

We also have focused on planning by program, not by issue. We have always blended reacting to policy issues proposed by others (which is important) with a proactive agenda identified by our members. We must now take this to the next level and work on a **campaign model** for at least some of our issues.

- A campaign model would involve having a paid coordinator to handle internal and external communications, manage strategy (including coalition partners).
- The coordinator would manage issue-specific grant deliverables.
- It would also require dedicating staff time from all program areas to focus heavily on a specific issue.
- Each program would have specific objectives and areas of responsibility. Moving to this model will require a strategic focus and funding. We would have to have additional evaluation measures on both process and outcomes.

The benefits of this model might include:

- Stronger team focus within the organization and community, as well as the ability to build leadership by having more resources dedicated to a specific issue.
- Internal SWOT analysis repeatedly identifies an organizational and community-wide weakness as being spread too thin, which can diminish effectiveness.

While our ability to be nimble and responsive is strength, the breadth of our issues can be problematic. Moving to a more integrated model will need to be done incrementally and can be done in concert with the above organizational directions.

## **Technology**

CCDC will explore how we can use technology more effectively and intentionally. Technology, used properly, would improve many of our programs including but not limited to development of self-help legal resources, improve our ability to deliver more training to more people, volunteer management, and communication. Implementation of technology projects is a significant investment in terms of human and financial capital. Over the course of this plan, CCDC will explore how to better incorporate technological resources, including ensuring adequate resources for project planning, training and staffing before implementation.

### **Implementation:**

- Staff will develop an annual work plan. This plan will be provided to the Executive Director each year by November 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The Executive Director will submit a plan to the board with the annual budget at the December meeting each year.
- The manager of quality and evaluation will determine a consistent reporting format.
- Managers will report to the Executive Director two weeks before every board meeting and the Executive Director will report to the Board at each meeting. Reports will include process and outcome evaluation data as it is available and adjustments will be made as appropriate based on this data.
- A full review of the progress will be done in July 2022 --halfway through the plan to determine if the plan should be revised or continued.

### **Process**

This plan was approved unanimously by the Board of Directors on September 19, 2019. The CCDC program committee drafted this plan after the organization held a statewide listening tour in 2018. CCDC visited 13 communities to understand the issues our members felt were most important. Several member surveys were also conducted. Features of the existing plan were also considered. The plan was drafted, and input was taken from all staff, key volunteers, and the full board. The plan was then revised and shared with CCDC leaders and key organizational allies and the entire membership. Feedback was incorporated at each stage.

### **The strategic planning committee:**

- Jean Benfield, Board Member
- Jo Booms, Volunteer
- Donna Crislip, Volunteer
- Ashlee Lewis, Board Member
- Patrick Mahncke, Board Member
- Brenda Mosby, Board Secretary
- Shannon Secrest, Director of Quality and Evaluation
- Julie Reiskin, Executive Director
- Damian Rosenberg, Board Member
- Josh Winkler, Board Co-Chair

