

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES NETWORK PRESENTS

DD NETWORK NEWS

A Collaborative Publication from MSCDD, DRMS and IDS

Summer 2020 Issue



MAKE
IT CENSUS 2020
COUNT

Have you been counted? Census data helps direct more than \$800 billion a year in federal funding, including for key programs that support and protect the rights of people with disabilities, such as civil rights, advocacy, education, nutrition, housing, healthcare, and employment. Many of these programs have assisted people with disabilities and their families in Mississippi. We must maximize funding to these programs to serve and support as many people with developmental disabilities—and other disabilities—and their families as possible.

According to the Census Bureau, as of August 6, 2020, “93 million households, nearly 63 percent of all households in the Nation, have responded to the 2020 Census.” If you know someone who has not yet responded, please encourage them to do so today online at 2020census.gov, over the phone [English: 844-330-2020 or Spanish: 844-468-2020], or by mail by returning the questionnaire sent to their home. The Census Bureau has indicated an end of field data collection by September 30, 2020. Please be counted!

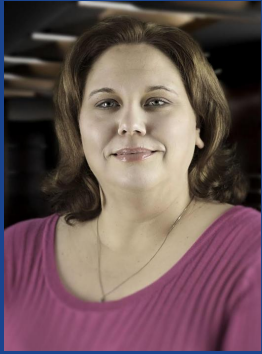


MegaConference
Knowledge•Hope•Choice•Fulfillment

As a result of the cancellation of the **annual disAbility MegaConference** due to COVID-19, a virtual conference was held on June 18. Six sessions were provided at no cost. One session focused on Emergency Preparedness in the Disability Community and provided information about the emergency plans created and the impact of COVID-19.

The sessions can be accessed at www.msmegaconference.org.

INSTITUTE FOR DISABILITY STUDIES



Dr. Rebekah Young
Executive Director

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affected IDS' plans for the spring and summer. After a few tweaks, the majority of the Institute's programs and activities have been adapted for virtual delivery. Since March, staff have used platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Facetime to provide professional development training to childcare providers, conduct virtual home inspections, facilitate recreation, and host a Summer Enrichment Academy, which provided a nine-week summer work learning experience for 19 youth and young adults with disabilities. Despite the need for social distancing during the pandemic, IDS has also worked to meet the need for social interaction of youth and young adults who are members of the STEP UP to Leadership Academy. Through the use of a recently discovered virtual application, DISCORD, IDS staff engaged STEP UP members in socialization mini-groups that provided weekly opportunities for discussing movies, TV shows, video games, fashion, and sports. Live streaming arts and crafts, movie nights, and inclusive gaming opportunities like a live Dungeons and Dragon role-playing game (RPG) and trivia games have also been offered to keep STEP UP members active and engaged. Though the COVID-19 pandemic has presented numerous challenges, it also presented an opportunity for IDS staff to push themselves to learn new things and identify new tools that will facilitate the growth and expansion of community engagement opportunities.

MISSISSIPPI COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Over the past seven months, the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities has been adapting to the "new normal," which we hope is temporary! The MSCDD Council members have continued to carry out MSCDD business via virtual meetings. MSCDD's grantees have done an exceptional job of switching many of their services and activities to online formats or using phone-based consultations. Telehealth has become critical to families needing assistance.

MSCDD has disseminated COVID-19 "plain language" documents on various topics to individuals across the state through agency interactions and social media, particularly Facebook. Some of these resources were provided in Spanish. Other relevant information has been shared, including community resources, testing sites, temporary waiver programs, virtual summer camps, caregiver information, disaster assistance centers through the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, food banks, children's activities, and fact sheets. Several individuals have been assisted or referred to other agencies and provided contact information to meet some urgent needs for food, rental payments, and other items.



Charles Hughes, Jr.
Executive Director

DISABILITY RIGHTS MISSISSIPPI

Like our DD Network partners, DRMS has been navigating the obstacles presented to our protection and advocacy work by the pandemic. While many of DRMS' "normal" practices were suspended due to social distancing measures, the team adapted quickly to continue fulfilling its mission via virtual platforms.



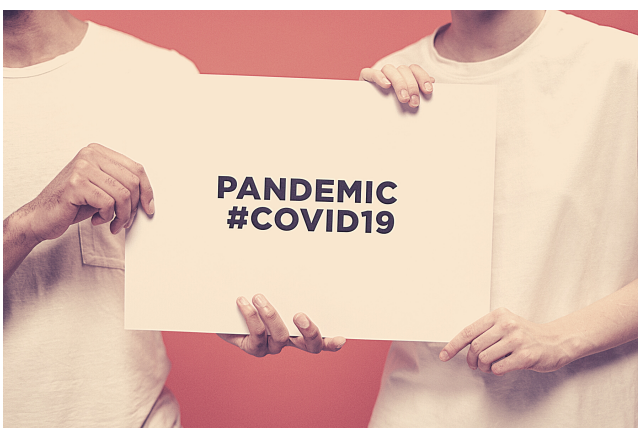
Polly Tribble
Executive Director

DRMS has been actively communicating with facilities housing people with disabilities, such as personal care homes and prisons, to monitor COVID-19 case numbers and, as of August, has resumed site visits to many of these facilities with safety measures in place. DRMS has created an online resource center to assist people with disabilities during this time with matters such as mask mandates and special education. Thanks to a rapid-response grant from the Mississippi Women's Foundation, DRMS provided clients with funds to help them lessen the financial burden imposed by the pandemic. One recipient, Virginia Barham, shared that the grant enabled her to pay for gas to take her son to his doctor's appointments and to purchase his school supplies.

Looking ahead, DRMS will be focused on ensuring people with disabilities are educated on their right to vote in the 2020 Presidential Election. We will be holding several socially-distanced voter registration drives, as well as providing resources to educate voters on their rights, particularly in the wake of COVID-19.

If you have information or news you would like to have included in the next issue, please contact Jane Walton at jwalton@drms.ms.

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“*We're stronger
together.
Now and always.*”