

DEPARTMENT OF

**INTELLECTUAL &  
DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

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# LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER

On November 19, 2015, the final six people living at Clover Bottom Developmental Center moved into their new homes into the community. One of those men was in awe when he stepped into his beautiful new room and realized the clothes in the closet belonged to him. Not only was it a new beginning for him and the others who moved, it was the end of another chapter of institutional care in large, congregate settings in this state.

DIDD strives every day to ensure the approximately 8,000 people in its service delivery system are exercising their rights, engaging with the broader community and experiencing optimal health. As the first and only service-delivery system in the nation to receive Person-Centered Excellence Network Accreditation from the Council on Quality and Leadership, other states are looking to us as examples of how to provide services and supports in a way that will allow people to live the lives they envision for themselves.

This past year, DIDD has continued to participate in efforts that will make a meaningful difference to the people it supports, and also to all Tennesseans with disabilities. The department has trained hundreds of law enforcement officers across the state, developed training for health professionals and worked to improve community-based employment options for people with disabilities. This report details these initiatives and other work towards our ultimate goal of becoming the most person-centered and cost-effective service delivery system in the nation.

Twenty years ago, services provided to people with disabilities were under constant and warranted scrutiny from the United States Department of Justice and advocacy groups. Now, our work is garnering attention for the right reasons. There is more to come. When Greene Valley Developmental Center closes, we will join 14 other states with no large, congregate institutions. We should all be very proud of what Tennessee has accomplished.



Debra K. Payne  
Commissioner,  
Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities



# INTRODUCTION

The Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (DIDD) is the state department charged with operation and oversight of services and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Created as a standalone department in 2011, the department's primary role is to operate the state's three 1915(c) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waivers for more than 8000 people with intellectual disabilities. In addition, the state operates 37 4-bed intermediate care facilities for people with intellectual disabilities (ICF/IID), The Harold Jordan Center and Greene Valley Developmental Center, which is moving toward closure. Services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are also available through the state-funded Family Support Program.

Some of the key roles it plays in operating the state's 1915(c) waivers include:

- Intake and Case Management
- Quality Management
- Protection from Harm
- Service Authorization
- Provider Development and Training
- Outreach
- Complaint Resolution
- Person-Centered Practices
- Provider Supports

The department currently contracts with approximately 405 providers, who offer an array of services in the community including but not limited to:

- Residential Services
- Employment and Day Services
- Personal Assistance
- Independent Case Management
- Respite
- Behavioral Services

DIDD believes in providing services in a cost-effective and person-centered manner that allows people to live the lives they envision for themselves. This annual report provides an overview of DIDD activities and accomplishments over the past fiscal year.

## **OUR VISION:**

Support all Tennesseans with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live fulfilling and rewarding lives.

## **OUR MISSION:**

To become the nation's most person-centered and cost effective state support system for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

# AT A GLANCE

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| ICF/IID BUDGET                            | \$97,378,100         |
| SEATING & POSITIONING BUDGET              | \$2,980,400          |
| FAMILY SUPPORT & OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES | \$17,542,900         |
| ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET                     | \$66,298,400         |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL (NON WAIVER DIDD BUDGET)</b> | <b>\$184,199,800</b> |

**WAIVER BUDGET** \$685,658,000

**TOTAL** \$869,857,800

**OUR MOST POPULAR** FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

- #1 RESPITE
- #2 HEALTH RELATED
- #3 PERSONAL ASSISTANCE
- #4 TRANSPORTATION
- #5 HOME MODIFICATIONS

**PEOPLE SUPPORTED (WAIVER)**

|              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| STATEWIDE    | 4,962        |
| CAC          | 1,795        |
| SD           | 1,198        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>7,955</b> |

**1,994**  
AUTHORIZED POSITIONS

**15**  
HAROLD JORDAN CENTER  
DAILY CENSUS

**4,506**  
FAMILY SUPPORT RECIPIENTS

**\$1,397**  
AVERAGE FAMILY SUPPORT GRANT  
PER PERSON

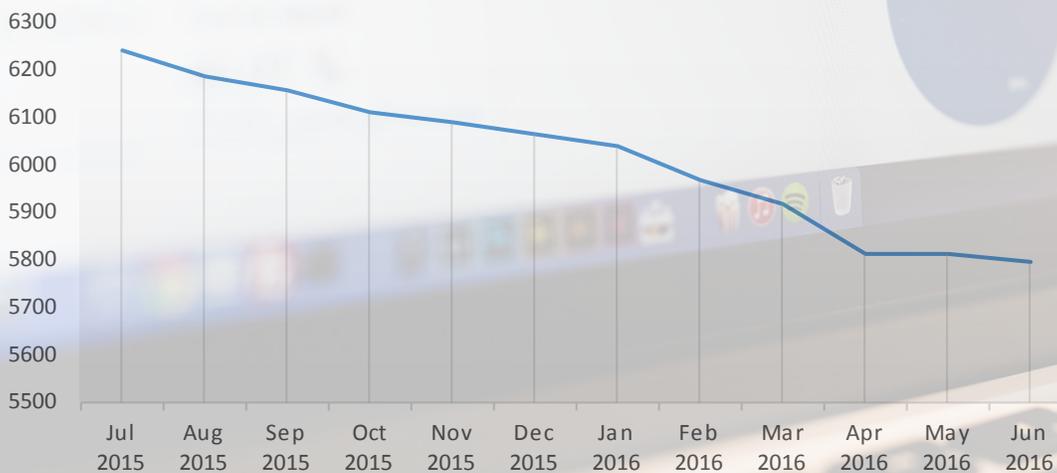
**STATE RUN**

**12 HOMES** IN WEST

**9 HOMES** IN MIDDLE

**16 HOMES** IN EAST

Waiting List Numbers



# CLOVER BOTTOM LAWSUIT



## BACKGROUND

On January 29, 2015, U.S. District Judge Kevin Sharp issued an order approving an Exit Plan that will ultimately lead to the end of the People First vs. Clover Bottom et al. lawsuit, originally filed in 1995. The lawsuit stemmed from conditions at Clover Bottom Developmental Center, Greene Valley Developmental Center and Nat T. Winston Developmental Center. The order called for a two-phase dismissal of the lawsuit based on the state completing nine obligations set forth in the Exit Plan.

During FY 2015-2016, DIDD, along with its partners at TennCare, worked tirelessly to complete the obligations in the Exit Plan.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

As a part of the Exit Plan, the department developed training for law enforcement officers to assist them when they come into contact with people with disabilities. Originally unveiled in May 2015 and POST-certified soon after, DIDD chose to continue its training of law enforcement officers around the state even after the obligation in the Exit Plan had been met. This included training sessions with Tennessee Bureau of Investigation agents, more than 50 law enforcement agencies at the Tennessee Law Enforcement Training Officers Association (TLETOA) Fall Conference, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) first responders, the Knoxville Airport Authority, White County Sheriff's Office, Williamson County Sheriff's Office, Clarksville Police, Greeneville Police among others.

DIDD's law enforcement training has received national attention, not only from the media, but from other states interested in developing their own training. The department has also been able to form or strengthen relationships with departments across the state, as well as equip officers with the knowledge and tools to assist in any future interactions they may have with people with disabilities.



## GREENE VALLEY DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER TRANSITION

DIDD continued its progress on transitioning people at Greene Valley Developmental Center into the community. The census at the end of the fiscal year was 60, down from 96 people at the announcement of closure in January 2015. In early 2016, the Health Services Development Agency approved the Certificates of Need for 16 new ICF/IID homes that will be privately operated around East Tennessee. Construction of the new homes is underway in Knox, Greene, Roane and Hamilton counties.

GVDC staff continues to carefully prepare and plan for the transition of the people still living at the institution. In addition, DIDD offered Certified Nursing Assistant training to interested employees. The training, conducted by the Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) of Morristown, was completed by employees on their personal time while continuing to work and take care of their families. As of June 30, 2016, 82 employees have graduated from the training.

## CLOVER BOTTOM DEVELOPMENTAL CENTER CLOSURE

During Fiscal Year 2015-2016, the last five state-operated Middle Tennessee Homes were completed. On November 19, 2015, the final six people who lived at Clover Bottom Developmental Center were transitioned into the community, closing the state's oldest institution for people with intellectual disabilities. Earlier in the month, DIDD held a closing ceremony to celebrate the transition to community life and reflect on the 92-year history of Clover Bottom Developmental Center.



## HEALTH SERVICES TRAINING

People who have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities can be extremely difficult to diagnose for a number of reasons. Compounding the issue is that many primary care and other practitioners don't receive much, if any, specialized training on the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

To help address the issue, DIDD debuted important new training for families, caregivers and medical professionals to improve the outcomes of medical care for people with disabilities. The training, developed in partnership with TennCare and the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC), takes a close look at challenging behavior and mental health concerns in people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as the over-prescription of powerful, mind-altering medications.

The training has two separate tracks: one for family members and other caregivers and another for medical professionals. Participants watch short videos that include clips depicting simulated medical appointments and commentary from a family physician, a psychologist, a parent and others. Video topics are specific to persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities including communication, physical health issues and alternative treatments that do not use medications.

Medical professionals earn free continuing education credits while families and caregivers learn important lessons to make medical appointments more effective.

The training launched in October 2015, and as of May 2016, more than 560 physicians, advanced practice nurses, psychologists and social workers have completed the online training series. 48.5 Percent of those who received an American Medical Association continuing education credit said they anticipated changing something they currently do in their practice or doing something new as a result of their participation in the training. 91 Percent of those who received the American Psychological Association continuing education credit said the training enhanced their professional expertise.

In addition, 124 people have watched at least one module of the training for individuals, families and other caregivers. Of those who completed an evaluation, all either agreed or strongly agreed that, as a result of this training, they had an increase in knowledge or skills.

## OTHER EXIT PLAN ACTIVITIES

In addition to the obligations above, DIDD, in partnership with TennCare, also completed the following requirements in FY2015-2016:

- ✔ Revised individual support plan templates for persons receiving DIDD services and trained 100 percent of contracted support coordinators
- ✔ Received federal approval to implement a new behavioral health crisis prevention, intervention and stabilization services model for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have serious psychiatric or behavioral health needs
- ✔ Established behavior respite services in East and Middle Tennessee
- ✔ Changed the pharmacy prior authorization processes to encourage the use of more appropriate non-pharmacological interventions
- ✔ Standardized a referral process to a psychopharmacology review team in each region
- ✔ Mailed a letter and educational materials regarding the benefits of participation in SelectCommunity to all class members enrolled in DIDD's HCBS waivers and discussed with any class member at Clover Bottom Developmental Center or Greene Valley Developmental Center



## PARTIAL DISMISSAL

In January 2016, U.S. District Judge Kevin Sharp issued an order partially dismissing the Clover Bottom lawsuit following completion of all but one final section of the Exit Plan. Once Greene Valley Developmental Center is closed, the state will file a motion asking the court to fully dismiss the Clover Bottom lawsuit.

# ACCREDITATION

In January 2015, DIDD became the first state service-delivery system in the nation to receive Person-Centered Excellence Accreditation from the Council on Quality and Leadership. This prestigious and exclusive distinction was the result of tireless work by DIDD's Accreditation Team to scrutinize DIDD's system as a whole. The team looked to ensure services were aligned with CQL's Basic Assurances®, which are indicators that point to a high quality of life for persons supported with intellectual disabilities.



The department has embarked on a four-year plan to maintain accreditation and ensure that the Basic Assurances® are embedded throughout the entire service delivery system. In early 2016, the Accreditation Work Plan was revised to include more detail and ensure all steps taken will lead to DIDD's belief that people receiving services should be supported to live the lives they envision for themselves.

As a part of the Accreditation process, DIDD teams in each region visit provider agencies and spend time with the people supported and staff. While there, they conduct Basic Assurance® Reviews and Personal Outcome Measures interviews to ensure that CQL's indicators are present at the agency. Further, team members also conduct Personal Outcome Measure® workshops to assist agencies in better understanding Personal Outcome Measures® and how to use them to improve the quality of life for people supported.

## FY 2015/16 HIGHLIGHTS

**24** BASIC ASSURANCE®  
REVIEWS CONDUCTED

**23** PERSONAL OUTCOME MEASURE®  
WORKSHOPS COMPLETED

In addition, the DIDD team developed new follow-up processes to Personal Outcome Measure interviews to generate a more profound and positive impact on a person's life.

Another important component of Accreditation is growing DIDD's ranks of Self-Advocate Mentors. These are people receiving services who not only are able to speak up for their own rights, but also assist others in the service-delivery system to speak up for their wants and needs. Last year, DIDD increased the number of self-advocate mentors from six to eighteen. The current self-advocates presented to an overflow crowd at the Tennessee Disability Mega-Conference about the program to assist in recruiting more self-advocates. The Self-Advocate Mentor program is seeking more venues and opportunities to promote self-advocacy, and DIDD has also assisted by developing a training curriculum.

Aligning DIDD's policies and procedures to the CQL Basic Assurances® is critical to fully embedding them in the system. That includes revisions to the DIDD Provider Manual, which guides how DIDD-contracted providers administer services to people in DIDD's waivers. Much of the intensive work on revising policies and procedures surrounds recognizing and supporting rights as well as revising the Human Rights Committees.

The department is already seeing the results of its focus on the person-centered measures associated with its Accreditation plan. DIDD has increased the number of certified CQL trainers for a total of 15 across the state. More provider agencies are choosing to pursue Accreditation: five agencies are already accredited with CQL and four more are preparing to do so. This will increase the focus in those agencies on the Basic Assurances® and ensuring that they are present in their services.

The work done statewide on Accreditation has been instrumental in preparing the provider community to come into compliance with the HCBS Settings rule. In addition, DIDD has fielded calls and emails from other states interested in obtaining Accreditation and wanting advice on how to approach the process.



**THOMAS E. PEREZ,**  
U.S. SECRETARY OF LABOR

## EMPLOYMENT FIRST

The department's work on Employment First and provider transformation has gained national recognition. Tennessee has been called a national leader in working with stakeholders to advance Employment First principles by the United States Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez.

DIDD continues to promote integrated, competitive employment as the first and preferred option for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 2013, that stance was further solidified by Governor Haslam's Executive Order No. 28, which designated Tennessee as an Employment First state and mandated that DIDD convene an Employment First Task Force. That task force continues to meet quarterly, with DIDD as co-chairs.

The state also continues to participate in the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, which makes federal funds available to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Those funds have gone primarily towards training and technical assistance for providers who are looking to transform their current facility-based employment services into competitive, integrated employment in the community.

Among recent accomplishments related to its role in Employment First, DIDD has worked with additional Community Rehabilitation Providers: Pacesetters and St. John's Community Services. The partnership with St. John's has resulted in the closure of St. John's Community Services day center in August of 2015 and its sheltered workshop in July 2016. Pacesetters has implemented job clubs in two of the five counties they serve and has worked on staff decentralization and identification of persons supported who are job ready including placing four individuals in integrated, competitive employment. In addition, DIDD facilitated a training by subject matter experts from the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) on Customized Employment and Discovery. 78 employees from DIDD-contracted providers, 45 Vocational Rehabilitation staff and 8 external stakeholders attended one of the sessions. DIDD also used Employment First funds to assist its providers in sending front-line workshop staff to the Association for People Supporting Employment First conference to become advocates for transition. Those employees were interviewed by DIDD for a video that was widely shared to spread the lessons learned from the conference to all provider agencies and staff.

Aligning resources with other state agencies has also been a key to improving employment outcomes, and a significant step forward took place when DIDD signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Human Services—Vocational Rehabilitation in December 2015. This MOU is designed to coordinate the seamless and cost-effective transition of services between the two departments. The two agencies worked to ensure both agencies had common vendors. While the payer of service may change, the provider of the service does not, therefore eliminating any disruption to the person supported. The execution of the MOU has led to a better alignment of services and resources, eliminating duplication of resources and maximizing funding. It has also assisted in further compliance with federal regulations.

In an effort to further promote the department's efforts to ensure the successes of people with disabilities in various jobs, DIDD has continued to produce its "Way2Work" videos. The videos have garnered tens of thousands of views through DIDD's Facebook page. In addition, several providers have used the videos to make the case to other employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.

Tennessee's efforts and successes on systems change and capacity building were recognized at the June 2016 Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) conference.

*"The U.S. Department of Labor is pleased with the outstanding progress that's been made in the state of Tennessee over the past five years through its participation in the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program.*

*Tennessee continues to be a national leader in working with stakeholders to advance Employment First principles across the state's government, and expanding opportunities for competitive integrated employment for Tennesseans with disabilities.*

*The state has made remarkable progress in aligning policies, practices and funding to increase opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities to obtain real work for real pay in their communities."*





# SUCCESS STORY

## ANTHONY

Anthony is an integral part of the team at Orchard Knob Elementary in Chattanooga. He's worked there for about 5 years, and everyone he meets knows to expect a friendly smile and a big hello. Anthony works in the cafeteria, and he enjoys the busy rush of kids coming through. It starts around eleven a.m. and doesn't let up until two p.m. Anthony's coworkers rely on him to keep the cafeteria running smoothly by making sure there's always enough clean trays for the students to eat their lunches on. He rarely calls in sick and always has a good attitude about work. Anthony loves interacting with the students, teachers, and other workers in the cafeteria. This is Anthony's second job at a school. Anthony spends the \$12 per hour he makes on his hobbies and helping his family with expenses. He's a passionate artist who enjoys coloring intricate pictures and giving them to co-workers or teachers. His pictures decorate the offices around the cafeteria. In the spare minutes when he's not working, Anthony tries to impart wisdom to the students encouraging them to respect their parents and be helpful.

You can watch a short video about Anthony at this link:  
<https://youtu.be/U9jFD5UnUpw>



## SERVICES, CLINICS & RESOURCES

### DIVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES

The department believes that ensuring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the best possible health is critical to maintaining a fulfilling and rewarding life. It strives to offer services and trainings that not only achieve that goal for people who are supported by DIDD, but also for all Tennesseans with disabilities.



### SEATING AND POSITIONING CLINIC

For years DIDD has operated three Seating and Positioning Clinics in Arlington, Greeneville and Nashville. These clinics make customized wheelchair seating as well as various other positioning devices that aim to make the person comfortable and improve health outcomes.

In FY2015-2016, the Seating and Positioning Clinics served 718 people in DIDD waivers, state-operated homes, Greene Valley Developmental Center and private intermediate care facilities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They also manufactured or repaired 1,899 pieces of equipment.

In August 2015, Governor Haslam visited the Seating and Positioning Clinic in Nashville as a part of his annual agency visits. He had the opportunity to tour the clinic, meet some of the people who are served there, and learn about how the equipment is manufactured. He recognized the work being done at the Seating and Positioning Clinic in his State of the State address, which led to very positive television news media coverage of the clinic and the outcomes being achieved for hundreds of people with disabilities.



## IDD TOOLKIT

In January 2014, DIDD partnered with the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center and the University of Tennessee-Boling Center to launch the IDD Toolkit. Derived from evidence-based primary care guidelines and an accompanying set of Canadian tools, the IDD Toolkit was developed with a grant from the Special Hope Foundation. It includes tools that help improve physicians' knowledge of health conditions that affect people with disabilities, and to look past a patient's challenging behavior and focus on the underlying causes. The goal is to assist primary care physicians and nurses who oftentimes do not receive specialized training in care for people with intellectual disabilities.

As of May 2016, 67,915 people have visited the site, totaling 160,467 page views. Forms from the Toolkit, including the Psychiatric Symptoms Checklist and the Preventative Care Checklists, have been downloaded more than 226,000 times.



## MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION FOR UNLICENSED PERSONNEL

In November 2015, new rules for medication administration for unlicensed personnel came into effect. These rules and revised curriculum replaces the former version, and offers significant regulatory relief for DIDD-contracted providers. Instead of a large manual, trainers use a PowerPoint and short videos that demonstrate the correct methods for administering medications. In addition, those who must be recertified can access refresher materials online instead of having to take the recertification course. DIDD believes these new rules and training not only provide relief, but provide practical, hands-on training that enhance the expertise of the staff.

## SUCCESS STORY

### JARED

Farming is hard work, but Jared shows it can also be a lot of fun! Jared works at Old School Farm in Nashville as an assistant general farmworker. Jared and his coworkers, some with disabilities and some without, take their produce all the way from seed to sale. They grow a wide variety of vegetables including peppers, squash, zucchini, eggplant, potatoes, beans, and Jared's favorite, tomatoes. Jared enjoys harvesting the tomatoes most. As he walks down the row looking for ripe ones, he can pop one or two in his mouth for a quick snack. Jared's sense of humor really shines in the workplace. He's constantly keeping his coworkers laughing with jokes or impressions. Jared says he enjoys working outdoors, and he especially enjoys selling produce at farmers markets. The Old School Farm sells its produce at different markets around Nashville, and in addition to quality fruits and vegetables, they spread the message of competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities. At the market, Jared and his coworkers interact with customers and put the money skills they learn during the winter into practice. The program at the farm is so successful that organizers are teaching Jared and his peers managerial skills so they can lead other employees and pass down what they've learned.

Watch a video about Jared and the farm at this link:  
<https://youtu.be/yBzUZx1P-Ns>

Learn more about Old School Farm at their website:  
<http://www.oldschoolfarm.org/>



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OTHER INITIATIVES

## HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SETTINGS RULE

Tennessee was the first state in that country to have its Statewide Transition Plan approved, detailing how it will come into compliance with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Home and Community Based Services Settings Rule, which has a direct impact on future Medicaid funding for currently segregated services. This rule requires that all Medicaid-funded residential and day service settings be integrated and support full access to the greater community. In early 2015, every DIDD provider was required to complete a self-assessment of their residential and day sites and submit it to TennCare and DIDD. If any of those sites appeared to be segregated, the agency was required to submit a transition plan in September 2015 that detailed how it would bring those settings into compliance with the rule no later than March 2019. This rule has a direct impact on many facility-based day services around the state, including sheltered workshops. To achieve full compliance with the HCBS settings rule, DIDD, in partnership with TennCare, continues work with its contracted providers through the heightened scrutiny process.

## NATIONAL CORE INDICATORS

DIDD has participated in the National Core Indicators program for the past two years. This program surveys people in DIDD services to track and measure performance of the service delivery system as a whole, using key areas of concern such as employment, rights, service planning, choice, community inclusion, and health and safety<sup>1</sup>. The recently released report for 2014-2015 surveyed 466 people in DIDD services. The results showed that DIDD surpassed the national average in the overwhelming majority of measures. Some areas where DIDD was particularly strong include<sup>2</sup>:

- **Community Inclusion:** More than 90 percent of respondents reported that they have gone out to eat, shopping and for entertainment in the past month
- **Satisfaction:** More than 90 percent liked their home, their job, or other activity during the day
- **Service Coordination:** More than 95 percent had a case manager who helped them get what they need, and arrived on schedule
- **Respect and Rights:** 98 percent of respondent reported that staff treat them with respect

## EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNITY FIRST CHOICES

In preparation for the July 2016 launch of Employment and Community First CHOICES, DIDD worked with TennCare on its program development. This program is administered through TennCare through its contract managed care organizations. DIDD plays key roles in the new program, including Intake, Quality Assurance and Critical Incident Reporting and Management. The department participated in workgroup meetings with both TennCare and the managed care organizations to assist in the development of the new Critical Incident and Reporting Management Process, as well as to advise on the Intake and Enrollment process and Quality Management tool.



<sup>1</sup> From <http://nationalcoreindicators.org>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/upload/state-reports/2014-15\\_ACS\\_Tennessee\\_Report.pdf](http://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/upload/state-reports/2014-15_ACS_Tennessee_Report.pdf)

## DIDD SOCIAL MEDIA AND VIDEO PRODUCTION EXPANSION

This past year, DIDD produced dozens of videos showcasing the department's vision and mission to a larger audience. With a focus on employment, exercising rights and experiencing optimal health outcomes, DIDD's videos have given the public new insight into the everyday lives of people with disabilities. The department's reach was further expanded when it launched its first Facebook page in March 2016. The department has more than 1,000 followers on its page, and certain videos have been viewed thousands of times with hundreds of shares, capturing an audience outside of its traditional stakeholders.

## NEW LICENSURE RULES

Ever since DIDD took over licensure for facilities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in 2013, it has relied on the licensure rules developed by the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The new rules developed by DIDD include modifications to every chapter, and many of the changes align with the department's mission to be the most person-centered service delivery system in the nation. These rules went through the public comment session in March 2016, and are currently set to be effective in October 2016.

# SUCCESS STORY

## VICKI & WALTER

Vicki and Walter have the life that so many people want: they're married, they live in a house of their own and they both have good jobs. What makes them remarkable is they both have an intellectual disability.

Vicki and Walter met through the day program at their disability service provider, Emory Valley. As their relationship grew, they both knew they wanted what all couples want—to someday get married and live on their own. Through the hard work of their team at Emory Valley, support and encouragement from Vicki's parents and lots of meetings, Vicki and Walter achieved their goal. They were married in a church, surrounded by their friends and family. They searched for and moved into a rental home in Oak Ridge, and they've decorated it with personal touches.

Vicki and Walter are valued team members at the fast food restaurants where they work. Walter has a wide variety of duties and just got a raise. Vicki works at the local McDonald's restaurant. She just celebrated 15 years with the company and was handsomely rewarded for her loyalty.

It's important to mention the role that Vicki's parents play. Ever since Vicki was young, she expressed a desire to have the kind of life her sisters have, and her parents gave her those opportunities. They are big believers in the concept of "least restrictive environment", and their choices, combined with the trust earned through Vicki's hard work and efforts by staff at Emory Valley, have set Vicki on a path of independence. Vicki's parents also realize the kind of partner she has in Walter. Together, Vicki and Walter have plans for their future and goals for their lives including home ownership.



Watch the 4-part series on Vicki and Walter:  
<https://goo.gl/DZsWke>

