



2026 DRRC Policy and Advocacy Priorities

I. DEFEND AND STRENGTHEN FEDERAL FUNDING FOR DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH

Protect core funding streams and structure of disability and rehabilitation research programs at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), including for the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding for rehabilitation research particularly through the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR) and Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) disability and health programs, and the Department of Education and Department of Defense funding for disability and rehabilitation programs.

- Build bipartisan support for maintaining and increasing annual funding in fiscal year (FY) 2027.
- Solicit membership for priority programs and draft DRRC appropriations and report language recommendations.
- Develop educational materials for coalition members to directly engage with appropriations committees and leadership.
- Direct advocacy with congressional appropriations leadership to support budget requests.
- Support member appropriations requests of ACL and NIDILRR, e.g., Limb Loss Resource Center, TBI State Partnership Grant Program, TBI/SCI Model Systems, National Paralysis Resource Center, University Centers on Disabilities, CDC, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP).
- Partner with allies in the disability space to amplify advocacy impact.
- Engage directly with agencies to raise the profile of disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research.
- Summarize President's budget proposals and funding decision House/Senate/Conference but due to budget constraints limit appropriations reporting to chart format.

II. NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)

Advocate for sustained funding of the world's leading biomedical research organization and continued focus on advancing scientific research. Advocate for expanded medical rehabilitation and disability research at NIH.

- Engage and educate Congress on the importance of NIH scientific research.
- Advocate for establishing a Disability and Rehabilitation Research Institute in the event of a NIH-wide restructuring and/or a reauthorization.
- Continue advocacy work to implement NIH Strategic Plan for Disability Research, including working with NIH Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives (DPCPSI) Disability Policy staff and monitoring implementation, and requesting resources for implementation.
- Maintain a continued and strong relationship between the DRRC and NCMRR.
- Meet with senior NIH leaders at Institutes and Centers conducting disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research and maintain a close working relationship with key NIH staff including the Office of Director.
- Relationship building with new leadership at NIH including new director at NICHD.
- Advocate for importance of functional outcomes research in disability, rehabilitation, and independent living research.
- Participate in future public comment opportunities to weigh in on the direction of NIH-Wide and Institute-specific strategic planning processes.

III. NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY, INDEPENDENT LIVING, AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH (NIDILRR)

Advocate in support of NIDILRR and its research mission and level of support.

- Advocate for increased funding for NIDILRR's operations in FY 2027 appropriations cycle and NIDILRR remaining in ACL including maintaining or increasing grantees.
- Continue engagement with NIDILRR and ACL leadership to discuss the merits of reorganization in the context of NIH restructuring.
- Work with NIDILRR leadership to implement NIDILRR's Long-Range Plan (2024-2028).

IV. ADVANCING DISABILITY INCLUSION IN THE SCIENTIFIC WORKFORCE AND THE RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

Protect longstanding goals of disability engagement and accessibility at federal research agencies and continue advocating for inclusion of individuals with disabilities, especially researchers with disabilities.

- Engage with DPCPSI Disability Policy staff to improve disability research across NIH including implementation of a NIH-wide Disability Research Strategic Plan.
- Work with the disability community to advance additional recommendations on disability inclusion from NIH Advisory Committee to the Director, Working Group on Diversity, Subgroup on Individuals with Disabilities (ACD Disability Subgroup).
 - Continue to advocate for the establishment of a Disability Research Office if NIH restructuring does not move forward with establish an Institute.
 - Engage with Congressional leaders and other agency officials to build awareness of and support for additional ACD Disability Subgroup recommendations.

- Continue to monitor the proposed change in the NIH Mission Statement.
- Prioritize a meeting with new director of NIH to discuss the importance of disability and rehabilitation research and the additional recommendations from the ACD Disability Subgroup.

V. COORDINATED AND TRANSPARENT DISABILITY DATA ACROSS FEDERAL AGENCIES

Promote the enhancement of disability and rehabilitation data collection and management across the federal government to improve disability and rehabilitation research and programs.

- Monitor Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) and engage directly with the agency as needed.
- Monitor U.S. Census developments, particularly related to American Community Survey (ACS) questions on disability, and engage directly with the agency as needed.
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
 - Engage with director of AHRQ to discuss disability inclusion in the annual National Healthcare Quality and Disparities Report.
- Develop advocacy strategy for preservation of disability and rehabilitation research funding that includes economic benefits, veterans, and strategic partnerships with aligned organizations.

VI. INTERAGENCY COMMITTEE ON DISABILITY RESEARCH (ICDR)

Advocate for an expanded recognition of the role of ICDR and enhanced collaboration and coordination on disability research across federal agencies.

- Continue to advocate with ACL and the leadership of the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) to promote the implementation of the government-wide strategic plan on disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research and encourage commitment to the ICDR's mission.
- Advocate for dedicated funding for ICDR to carry out its mission in FY 2027.

VII. THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC HEALTH INVESTMENT AND PLANNING FOR FUTURE PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Support public health policy that improves health for all individuals, particularly people with disabilities. Continue to advocate for enhanced disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research relating to communicable diseases.

- Support public health research and policies that enhances the health and wellbeing of individuals with disabilities.
- Ensure that federal data collection efforts include disability status as a mandated category in all collections of demographic data.