

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

In 1987 President Ronald Reagan proclaimed March as “Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.” Much progress has been made since that time toward the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all areas of community life, including education, employment, and community living. However, there is still work to be done. For example, bullying of students with special needs has become a serious—and growing—national problem. Some reports indicate that nearly 85% of students with special needs experience bullying. And stereotypes about people with disabilities remain, contributing to the continued high unemployment rate among people with disabilities.

National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month is an opportunity to promote respect for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and to educate others on the spectrum of abilities people with I/DD possess. For example, some disabilities are visible (a person who uses a wheelchair or crutches to ambulate), while other disabilities may not be easily recognized or seen by the eye (cognitive challenges that affect the way a person speaks, learns, or interacts with others).

Recent estimates show that about one in six children in the U.S., between the ages of three and 17 (or about 15 percent), have one or more developmental disabilities.

Each March, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD), and their partners work together to create a social media campaign that highlights the many ways in which people with and without disabilities come together to form strong, diverse communities.

The campaign seeks to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life, as well as awareness of the barriers that people with disabilities still sometimes face in connecting to the communities in which they live.

Additionally, the Special Olympics, Best Buddies and other organizations have created the Spread the Word campaign with a focus on the creation of a new reality: inclusion for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The campaign is intended to engage schools, organizations, and communities to promote the inclusion and acceptance of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For more information on the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) or the Spread the Word campaign, follow these links.

<https://www.nacdd.org/ddam1/>

<https://www.spreadtheword.global/>

