



Serving and Respecting Individuals with Disabilities in the COVID Era

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA is seminal federal law which secures certain civil rights and advances the general welfare of all individuals with disabilities, regardless of standing or age (<https://adata.org/learn-about-ada>). This year has also placed before us an unexpected critical challenge: how do we secure the care of our more vulnerable community members during a pandemic. How we embrace the ADA's principles may, in fact, guide us in how we meet and beat the COVID challenge. This is one journey and challenge we must take on together.

The North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium (NDDAC) is a statewide association of organizations who advocate for public policies that support people with disabilities. The NDDAC membership includes advocates (1) with lived experience as people with disabilities and family members, and (2) organizations who represent people with disabilities. The NDDAC's advocacy efforts are not defined by any specific type of disability, age, and/or cultural elements. The NDDAC strives to ensure that service delivery systems and supports are both person-centered and family-centered. Its approach to addressing community needs is to take on environmental, policy, and social barriers that challenge individuals with disabilities to live full lives, rather than considering changing the individual.

Collaboration and partnerships with organizations, such as the ND Hospital Association and the ND Medical Association, furthers an awareness of the Consortium's work. The NDDAC will be providing ongoing information to you on the impact of the pandemic on people with disabilities and their families. To learn more, please go to NDDAC's website at <https://nddac.org/>. We look forward to providing information that makes accessing North Dakota's healthcare system better for individuals with disabilities and their families, especially during this current public health emergency.

Upcoming topics: *People with Disabilities; Using Person-First Language; Visitation Policies*