REPORT
on the
Status of People with Disabilities in Howard County

— 2019 —

Howard County
Commission on Disabilities
Department of Community Resources and Services

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Report on the Status of People with Disabilities in Howard County, Maryland

A study by the Howard County Commission on Disabilities

March 2019

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A WORD FROM THE HOWARD COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Howard County is often rated as one of the top places to live and is celebrated for the value we place on diversity. We continuously strive to be accessible and inclusive for all.

Before I was elected as your County Executive, I served for over twelve years on the Howard County Council. In 2018, while on the Council, I introduced a resolution requesting a report from the Commission on Disability Issues regarding Howard County's ability to provide services to our residents with disabilities. I also wanted to understand the ways we can help alleviate the pressures the families and loved ones of people with disabilities sometimes face. This approach gives us all a holistic picture of where we are, and what needs to be improved so we can get to where we want to be.

Today, I am excited to see that project come to fruition.

This report provides us with best practices for disabilities services, and recommendations on how Howard County government can be more responsive. Our goal must be to support and facilitate full inclusion for all residents, in all aspects of community life. The report explains that "people with disabilities in Howard County, like those in other counties and nationally, tend to have lower incomes, are more likely to live in poverty, and as a result, are some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society." It is our collective responsibility to understand and address the inequities that create barriers for people with disabilities and their support network.

The Commission makes a range of recommendations covering education, employment, housing, peer relationships, and transportation. Their report can serve as our roadmap to improve the quality of life for our neighbors, friends, and family members with disabilities in Howard County. I want to thank each member of the Commission on Disabilities, and everyone involved in making this important report a reality. This represents a major step in our journey to make Howard County the best it can be, for all of us.

Dr. Calvin Ball, County Executive

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

We thank the Commission on Disabilities for dedicating scores of hours over the last year to produce this study and report. Members of the Commission are all unpaid volunteers who serve 5-year terms. Many of them have full-time jobs and personal commitments. Notwithstanding their busy lives and full schedules, they remained committed through every phase of this study and report; assisted with development of a project plan; helped with the design and structure of public surveys; met with stakeholders; conducted research; co-sponsored a transportation forum; convened a public hearing and reviewed and edited drafts of this document. Through this process, the Commission demonstrated true dedication and service to our County.

I would also like to acknowledge the hard work — oftentimes until late evenings and over weekends — that staff from the Department put into making this report a reality.

I thank my colleagues from the school system and other departments who met with staff and Commission members, co-sponsored the Transportation Forum and provided information that was critical to this report. I would also like to say a special thank you to Susan Potts from the Department of Recreation and Parks for serving as public meeting facilitator for the duration of this project. Thank you to all non-profit stakeholders, other community organizations and members of the public for your contributions to this report.

There are currently no comprehensive studies that focus on education, employment, housing, transportation and peer relations with regard to people with disabilities in Howard County. As a member of the County Council, County Executive Calvin Ball saw a need for a better understanding of systems gaps for people with disabilities, and to that end, co-sponsored legislation requiring this study.

Dr. Ball's leadership and vision made this report possible. It is our hope that the findings and recommendations in this study, though at times daunting, will help residents of Howard County and those of us who serve the public and formulate policies and laws, to have a deeper understanding of the needs of people with disabilities in Howard County and move us to action.

Jacqueline R. Scott, Director
Department of Community Resources and Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Topic: Report on the Status of People with Disabilities in Howard County, Maryland.

Prepared by: Staff from the Department of Community Resources and Services on behalf of the Howard County Commission on Disabilities.

Overview: On March 5, 2018, the Howard County Council passed a Resolution, CR -23-2018, requiring that the Howard County Commission on Disabilities study Howard County's ability to provide services to the County's residents with disabilities in the areas of Education, Peer Relationships, Employment, Transportation and Housing. The Resolution also directed the Commission to submit a report and recommend actions that should be taken by the County as it continuously strives to become a model community for residents with disabilities, and generally relating to the continuous improvement of disability issues in Howard County. The resulting study focused primarily on educational services for persons with Individualized Education Programs from Kindergarten to the year they exit high school; paid employment for persons with disabilities between the ages of 21 and 65; accessible, affordable housing for low-income persons with disabilities; peer relationships as it pertains to persons with disabilities between the ages of 6 and 26; and with regard to transportation, fixed route, paratransit and taxi/ride share services and pedestrian facilities in the public-right-of-way.

Goals of the study: The goals of the study were to identify current unmet needs of persons with disabilities in Howard County; identify best practices and propose recommendations to address those needs.

Gaps and Needs Identified in Study: In all five areas studied, notable gaps were identified in awareness about available resources and the ability to navigate systems and services. The study reveals gaps in achievement between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers and an even greater divide between African American and Hispanic students with disabilities and Asian and White students. Based on numerous concerns raised by study participants, there is a significant need for additional resources to meet the social-emotional, academic and transition needs of students with disabilities. Bullying in the school setting remains a concern for children with disabilities and their parents. The study highlights the need for training, employment initiatives and policies that are designed to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities. In the area of housing, the study finds that a high number of County residents are cost-burdened and that persons with extremely low incomes, including people with disabilities whose income is derived solely from disability benefits, will be unlikely to afford housing in the County without housing assistance. The study finds gaps in peer

relationships, which for people with disabilities present in early childhood and are often exacerbated after high school. The study brings to the fore, the need for innovative and integrated, culturally sound programs, that are capable of meeting the needs of people with more significant disabilities. It also highlights the Countywide need in diversity, equity and inclusion trainings, discourses and initiatives, to focus on, and include, disability with other topics, such as race, LBGTQ and cultural biases that are usually covered. In the area of transportation, the study identifies gaps in the availability of accessible transportation in parts of the County, a need for expanded service hours, the need for increased public transportation through creative alternatives and a need for systematic improvements to bus stops and pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way.

Summary of Recommendations: The Commission made certain recommendations a priority by looking at greatest need and immediacy of achievement. Those recommendations include revising current grant award practices to provide for funding of innovative and integrated, culturally sound programs and services that are likely to have the greatest impact, based on County-assessed needs. The report recommends a new anti-bullying campaign to address ongoing bullying concerns. The report also recommends fidelity to the school system's equity, diversity and call-to-action plans and continuation of implementation of its Special Education Strategic Plan. The report calls for promoting American Sign Language student immersion experience by hiring more Deaf teachers. To the extent that the County has expended resources on overlapping studies, where relevant, this report incorporates findings from those reports and calls for implementation of relevant recommendations from them. This report incorporates findings and recommendations from studies such as the Special Education Opportunities Review, the Transit Development Plan and the Non-Profit Organizations Transit Funding Study. The report recommends using creative, innovative ideas and practices to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities and also to address the lack of affordable, accessible housing in the County. Other recommendations that are designated immediately achievable include developing mechanisms for providing information about disability resources; ensuring access to websites and other electronic information; facilitating disability awareness and cultural proficiency training and reviewing and revising existing legislation and policy to foster a more inclusive workforce.

Conclusion: This report identifies the numerous gaps in services for people with disabilities in Howard County. Addressing those needs requires strategically allocating finite resources by identifying statutory mandates, examining competing interests, setting priorities, defining expected outcomes and deciding what mechanism and process for delivery of services would be most impactful and beneficial to people with the greatest need.

INTRODUCTION

THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES AND BACKGROUND ON COUNCIL RESOLUTION 23-2018

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities was established by statute in 1988 to increase public awareness of matters impacting individuals with disabilities; advise the County Executive and County Council on County Government programs, policies and budget; and promote compliance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 by providing guidance and recommendations to County Government.

The members of the Commission are unpaid volunteers.

Commission Members

Elliott Finkelstein, Chairperson
Doug Lea, Vice Chairperson
Riffat Ashai, M.D.
Heidi Burghardt
Cynthia Coburn
Nicole Czarnecki
Arthur Gold
Martin Jones, Ph. D.
Ande Kolp
Leslie Kornreich
Diane Mikulis
Randy Murbach
Marian Vessels
Karen Wood

Former members:

Bridget McCarthy
Chelsea Stanton

County Resolution 23-2018 required the Commission on Disabilities to research, review and prepare a report with recommendations "on how the County can facilitate full inclusion of all residents in all aspects of community life" and best practices in the area of disabilities services, specifically in the areas of Education, Employment, Housing, Peer Relationships and Transportation. Furthermore, the scope of the study and report was to "be confined to the capabilities and resources of the Commission on Disability Issues, as to not put an undue burden on resources."

Staff of the Department of Community Resources and Services prepared this report on behalf of the Commission on Disabilities. This report represents a response to CR 23-2018.

Acknowledgments

The Commission is grateful to the departments, public school system, boards, commissions, nonprofit organizations, and members of the public who contributed to this report. The Commission thanks Jacqueline R. Scott, Director of the Department of Community Resources and Services (DCRS) for providing the staff and other resources for this study. The Commission extends its full gratitude to DCRS staff whose labor brought this report to fruition.

Staff

Michelle Henry, ADA Coordinator, DCRS and Executive Secretary to the Commission
Erica Lewis, ADA Specialist, DCRS and Staff Liaison to the Commission
Charles Smith, Ph.D., Planner, DCRS
Terry Zeigler, Administrative Aide, DCRS and Recording Secretary to the Commission

The Commission also extends its gratitude to Susan Potts, Therapeutic Recreation Manager, Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks, for facilitating the stakeholder meetings and public hearing.

CHAPTER 1.

SCOPE OF REPORT

This report uses the Americans with Disabilities Act's (ADA)[1] definition of a person with a disability. Under the ADA, a person with a disability is defined as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. Under the ADA, major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and working. The ADA provides that a major life activity also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine and reproductive functions.[2]

Due to the limited[3] resources available to the Commission,[4] the Commission restricted the scope of its investigation for each area, to:

- Education: students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) from kindergarten through the final year of high school
- Employment: paid employment for individuals ages 16-65
- Housing: accessible housing affordable to individuals ages 21 – 62 with income levels between 5% and 15% of Howard County area median income

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[1] Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq. Implementing Regulations: 29 CFR Parts 1630, 1602 (Title I, EEOC); 28 CFR Part 35 (Title II, Department of Justice); 49 CFR Parts 27, 37, 38 (Title II, III, Department of Transportation).

[2] 42 U.S.C. § 12102.

[3] The legislation directing this study and report was not funded and provided that its scope be confined to the capabilities and resources of the Commission on Disabilities [formerly, the Commission on Disability Issues], so as to not put an undue burden on resources.

[4] The term "Commission" in this report refers to the Commission on Disabilities.

- Peer Relationships: Individuals ages 6 to 26
- Transportation: fixed route, paratransit and taxi/ride sharing services.

Reports related to the population of individuals with disabilities were conducted in Howard County in both 1992[5] and 1996[6]. The 1996 report had the following recommendations to improve the well-being of individuals with disabilities in the County:

- Advocate for State legislation for a Disability Tax Credit to promote the hiring of qualified individuals with disabilities
- Increase County funding for Transportation to increase access to employment opportunities as well as other life activities
- Mandate developers to provide subsidized housing in new construction.[7]

METHODS USED FOR THIS STUDY

Materials Used

Information and data for this study were obtained from a review of practices in neighboring jurisdictions and a review of the empirical literature. Data was also obtained from public surveys that were designed to elicit input from five distinct groups: people with disabilities and their unpaid caregivers, educational and non-educational professionals that provide services to people with disabilities and one for the general public. The surveys were designed to take no more than 15-20 minutes for completion and were disseminated electronically. Some county commissions and boards were given the opportunity to submit information using a form that was designed to elicit input from their members. Information was also obtained from meeting notes that were collected at stakeholder meetings and a public forum meeting. The Commission obtained public input in the form of oral testimony at a public hearing on the draft report, which was held on February 13, 2019 at the Bain 50+ Center, 5470

[5] Clay, K., M.S. (January 1992). *Projected Service Needs of Individuals with Severe/Profound Handicaps in Howard County*. The study, commissioned by the ARC, concluded that few resources were readily available to accommodate the studied population. It also found that most individuals in the studied population would have to be transported to services outside the County and noted the difficulty in procuring and maintaining transportation outside the County.

[6] Commission on Disability Issues, Kladky and Associates Inc. (February 1997). *1996 Howard County Disability Survey*.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 2.

Ruth Keeton Way, Columbia, MD 21044. The Commission also received written feedback on the draft of this report.

Procedures

Planning and implementation meetings were held to define the scope of each focus area in the study and to develop surveys. Links to the electronic surveys were distributed through the Department of Community Resources and Services' mass marketing email platform, news releases, printed fliers, social media, and with the assistance of community partner agencies. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and that they could complete and submit as many surveys as were applicable to them. Commission and Board member input forms were distributed by email to board and commission members or personally, through County employees who serve as staff. Public stakeholder meetings were facilitated by a trained facilitator. To promote candor, survey and meeting participants were told that information collected was anonymous. Identifying information, such as names, telephone number, IP address, email, etc., from the surveys and stakeholder meetings and input, were not used to analyze collected data**.** Information collected at the public forum and stakeholder meeting was captured on note pads. The public hearing was audio recorded.

Participants

The public surveys had a total of 283 respondents. The transportation forum was attended by 30 people. The public hearing was attended by 29 people, eight of whom provided oral testimony. Four persons or entities[8] provided written feedback on the draft report. The Commission met with, or otherwise elicited input from, representatives of the following stakeholder organizations:

- Department of Community Resources and Services
  - Office on Aging and Independence Caregiver Program
  - Office on Aging and Independence Maryland Access Point Aging & Disability Resource Center
  - Office of Children and Families
  - Office of Community Partnerships
  - Office of the Local Children's Board
- Department of Housing and Community Development

[8] This number does not include those persons who testified at the public hearing and who submitted written statements of or in support of, their testimony.

- Department of Inspections, Licenses, and Permits
- Department of Recreation and Parks
- Howard Community College
- Howard County Housing Commission
- Howard County Public School System Department of Special Education
- Office of Workforce Development
- Office of Transportation
- Organizations that serve people with disabilities and their families
    - Accessible Resources for Independence Center for Independent Living
    - Athelas Institute
    - Center for Mobility Equity
    - Howard County Association of the Deaf
    - Howard County Autism Society
    - Maryland Association of the Deaf
    - Maryland School for the Deaf
    - National Federation of the Blind Maryland Chapter
    - The Arc of Howard County
    - The Linwood Center
- Howard County Boards and Commissions
    - Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency
    - Commission on Aging
    - Commission for Transitioning Students with Disabilities
    - Continuum of Care Board

Information for this report was also derived from the collective and individual experiences of Commission members, who were expressly authorized by CR 23-2018 to call upon those resources to inform the report.

CHAPTER 2.

RELEVANT DISABILITY LAWS IN THE UNITED STATES

Government policy regarding individuals with disabilities have evolved over time to acknowledge and strengthen the rights of people with disabilities. Government policy has shifted from paternalism and exclusion, to including people with disabilities into community living and promoting self-determination. The policy shifts are reflected in the law.

After World War II, federally funded state facilities and institutions came into existence.

In 1971, the Federal government passed the Intermediate Care Facility for Persons with Mental Retardation (ICF/MR) Act, now the Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID) Act. The ICF/IID benefit is an optional Medicaid benefit. The Social Security Act created this benefit to fund institutions (four or more beds) for individuals with intellectual disabilities and specifies that these institutions must provide active treatment. The program includes Medicaid funding for private non-institutional care and Home and Community Based Services. Currently, all 50 States have at least one ICF/IID facility. The program serves over 100,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities and other related conditions. Many of the individuals served are non-ambulatory, have seizure disorders, behavior problems, mental illness, visual or hearing impairments, or a combination of these conditions. All must qualify for Medicaid assistance financially. Since the implementation of the current regulations in 1988, there has been a major shift in thinking in the field of developmental disabilities. Emphasis is now on people living in their own homes, controlling their own lives and being an integral part of their home community.[9]

In 1973 the Rehabilitation Act was passed, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in federal agencies, federal employment, and by entities receiving federal funds.[10]

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[9] https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/CertificationandComplianc/index.html.

[10] Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 794. Section 504 has over 20 Implementing Regulations for federally assisted programs, including: 34 CFR Part 104 (Department of

In 1975 the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or "IDEA") was passed, requiring public schools to provide children with disabilities a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their individual needs.[11]

The Fair Housing Act, as amended in 1988, prohibits housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, and national origin. Its coverage includes private housing, housing that receives Federal financial assistance, and State and local government housing. It is unlawful to discriminate in any aspect of selling or renting housing or to deny a dwelling to a buyer or renter because of the disability of that individual, an individual associated with the buyer or renter, or an individual who intends to live in the residence. Other covered activities include, for example, financing, zoning practices, new construction design, and advertising. The Fair Housing Act also includes provisions for reasonable modifications and reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities.[12]

In 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed.[13] The ADA prohibits discrimination based on disability in employment, state and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. In 2008 the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act expanded the definition of disability thus making it easier for individuals seeking protections under the ADA.

In *Olmstead v. L.C.,* (98-536) 527 U.S. 581 (1999), 138 F.3d 893, affirmed in part, vacated in part, and remanded, the Supreme Court ruled that under the ADA, individuals with mental

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Education); 45 CFR Part 84 (Department of Health and Human Services); 28 CFR §§ 42.501 et seq.; 28 CFR Part 36 (Title III, Department of Justice); 47 CFR §§ 64.601 et seq. (Title IV, FCC).

[11] Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq. Implementing Regulation: 34 CFR Part 300.

[12] Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988, 42 U.S.C. §§ 3601 et seq. Implementing Regulation: 24 CFR Parts 100 et seq.

[13] Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq. Implementing Regulations: 29 CFR Parts 1630, 1602 (Title I, EEOC); 28 CFR Part 35 (Title II, Department of Justice); 49 CFR Parts 27, 37, 38 (Title II, III, Department of Transportation).

disabilities have the right to live in the community rather than in institutions if, in the opinion of the Court, "the State's treatment professionals have determined that community placement is appropriate, the transfer from institutional care to a less restrictive setting is not opposed by the affected individual, and the placement can be reasonably accommodated, taking into account the resources available to the State and the needs of others with mental disabilities." *Olmstead* and current policies and regulations reflect the philosophy that a primary right of adults with disabilities is to live self-directed lives in integrated community settings, with a primary desire for independence and autonomy.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was passed in 2014. WIOA contains provisions designed to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This includes a requirement that state vocational rehabilitation agencies use 15% of their federal funding to provide employment-related services to transition-age youth who have documented disabilities.[14]

[14] United States Department of Labor, WIOA Overview webpage, https://www.doleta.gov/wioa/Overview.cfm

CHAPTER 3.

PREVALENCE AND NATURE OF DISABILITIES IN HOWARD COUNTY

For purposes of discussing the prevalence of disabilities in Howard County, this report acknowledges that there are a variety of definitions of the term "disability." These include definitions under the ADA.[15] The United States Census defines disability as a long-lasting sensory, physical, mental or emotional condition or conditions that impair ability to perform life activities even after correction (defined in six areas of functioning).[16] For purposes of administering Social Security Administration's disability benefits, with respect to persons 18 and older, the Social Security Administration defines disability as a medical condition severe enough to prevent an individual from performing substantial gainful activity, and which has lasted or is expected to last for at least one year or result in death. A child under 18 will be considered disabled if he or she has a medically determinable physical or mental impairment or combination of impairments that causes marked and severe functional limitations, and that can be expected to cause death or that has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.[17]

The Census definition of disability is used for purposes of data collection and presentation of data in this report. The Federal government collects and reports on self-reported disabilities using six categories: vision, hearing, cognition, self-care, independent living [18] and

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[15] Supra, p. 12.

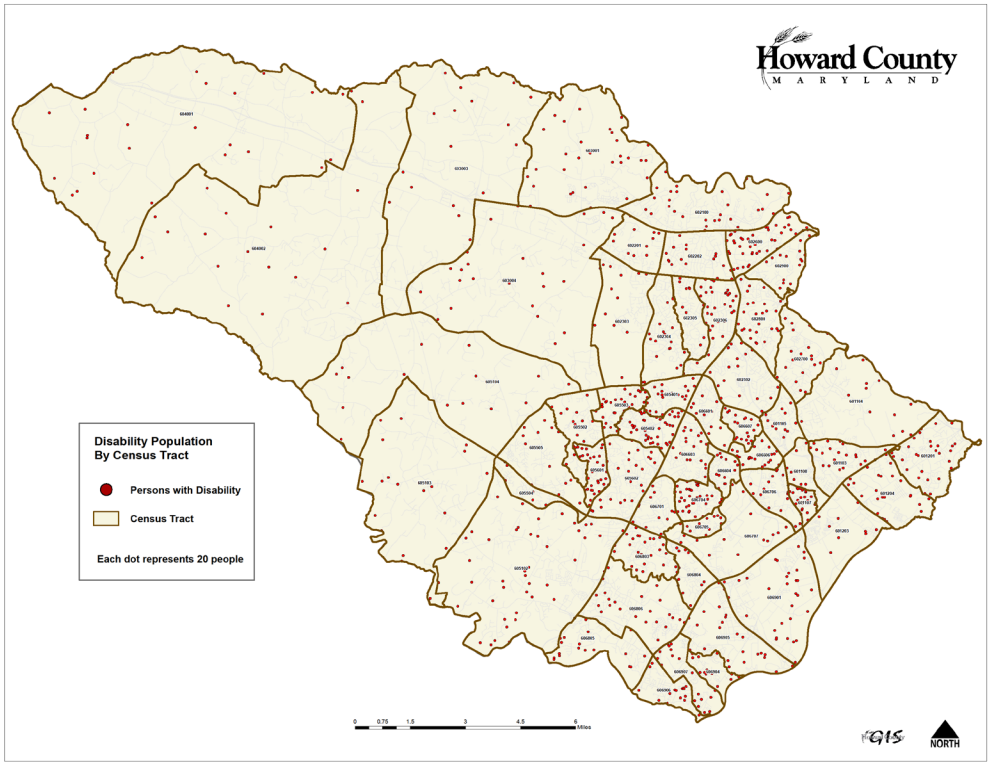
[16] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/note/US/DIS010217.

[17] https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/general-info.htm.

[18] Under the ACS, a person is classified as having an Independent Living disability if due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition, that person has difficulty doing errands alone such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping. https://www.census.gov/topics/health/disability/guidance/data-collection-acs.html

ambulation. [19]

Based upon the American Community Survey (ACS), the most recently available data (i.e., 2015 5-Year Estimate) indicates that there are 21,801 (7.2%) individuals with at least one disability in Howard County.



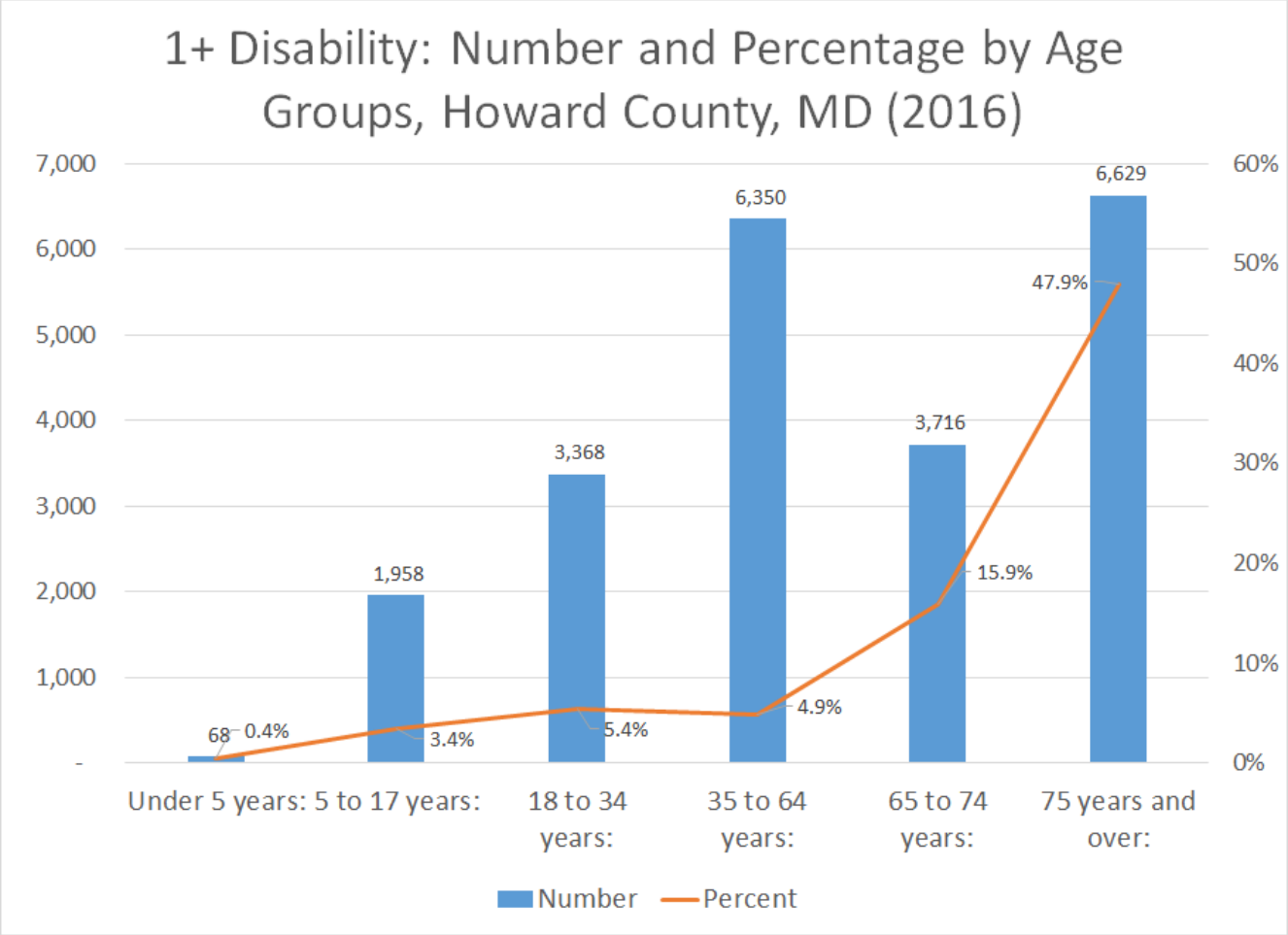
Broken out by number and percentage of County residents with disabilities the ACS data (see Table below) shows that the most common forms of disability across all ages for people living in the community are "ambulation" and "independent living."

[19] Under the ACS, a person who has serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs is classified as having an Ambulation disability.
https://www.census.gov/topics/health/disability/about/glossary.html#par_textimage_952582087

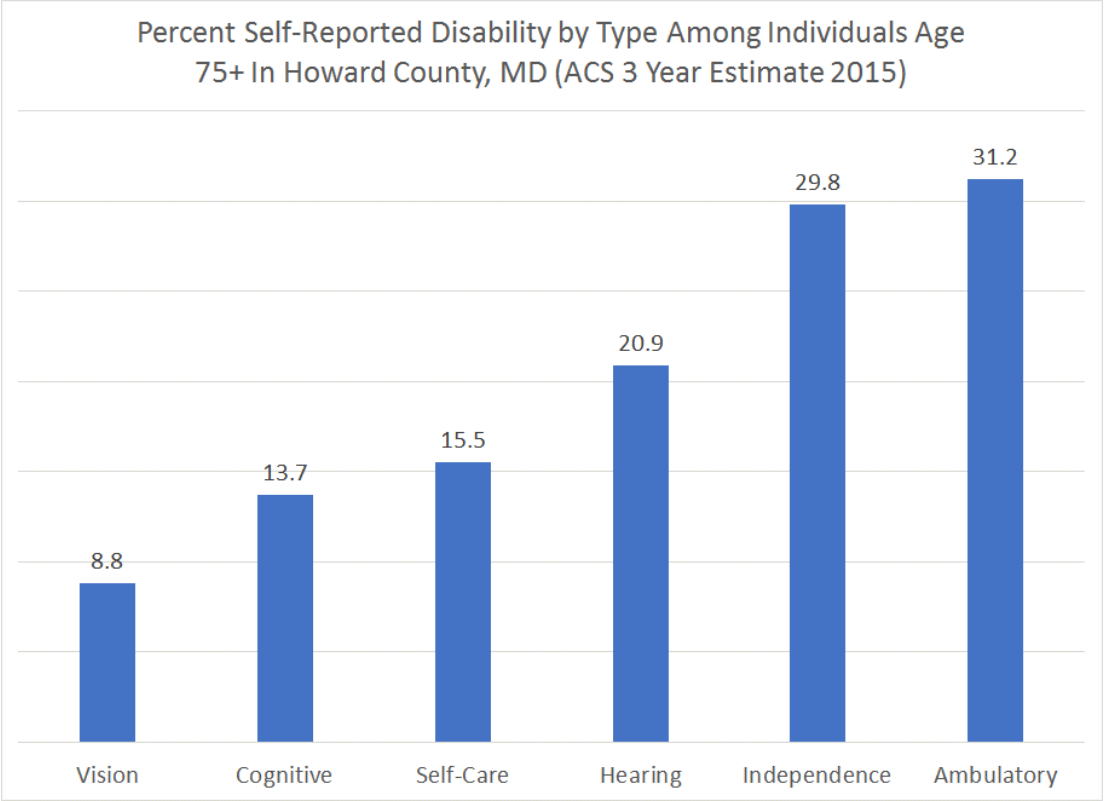
	Total Number	% of County Population
Vision	3,724	1.2%
Hearing	6,122	2.0%
Cognition	8,067	2.8%
Ambulation	10,279	3.6%
Self-Care	5,117	1.8%
Independent Living[20]	8,463	3.7%
Any form of disability	21,801	7.2%

For all forms of disability, the prevalence rate as a percentage of the overall population increases with age, with a marked increase in old age. For example, the rate of overall disability increases three-fold from ages 35-64 (4.9%) to ages 65-74 (15.9%), and then triples again from 65-74 to ages 75 and over (47.9%). When interpreting the graphic below, note that these categories represent different ranges (35-64 encompasses 30 years whereas 65-74 only represents 10 years).

[20] Independent living is based only on those ages 18 and over.



Displayed below is a graphic that shows the prevalence of the different types of disability for those ages 75 and over. “Independence” (29.8%) and “ambulation” (31.2%) are the most frequently self-reported disabilities for community dwelling older adults.



Disproportionality of disability among racial and ethnic groups in Howard County:

- Highest among Asians in old age (30.6% vs. 25.2% among Hispanics)
- Highest among African-Americans in working age adults, 18-64 (6.7% vs. 2.7% among Asians)
- Highest among African-Americans in youth under 18 (6% vs. 1.7% among Asians) (See Table below)

Any Disability, Broken Out by Both Age Groups and Major Race/Ethnicity				
	White, Non-Hispanic	**African-American/Black**	**Asian/Pacific Islander**	**Hispanic/Latino**
Under 18	2.6%	3.6%	1.7%	2.4%
18-64	5.2%	6.7%	2.7%	4.7%
65+	28.3%	28.4%	30.6%	25.2%
All Ages	8.1%	7.8%	4.9%	4.7%

Overall, Howard County has the lowest percentage of people with disabilities when compared to other jurisdictions in the state of Maryland. However, this should not obscure the reality that people with disabilities in Howard County, like those in other Counties and nationally, tend to have lower incomes, are more likely to live in poverty, and as a result, are some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society.

PRIOR AND FUTURE TRENDS/PROJECTIONS FOR DISABILITIES

Autism Spectrum Disorder has increased in prevalence.[21] Physical disabilities have trended downwards for decades (due to better medical interventions, assistive technology, better nutrition, etc.) though projections are that the obesity epidemic may cause it to increase in future decades.[22] Dementia is likely to grow due to the fact that Howard County has previously had a younger than average population and as the population ages more people will enter the age ranges where dementia is more common.

When trying to estimate the number of individuals in the County with an Intellectual/Development Disability (I/DD), the Census data does not accurately capture these numbers. The most reliable estimate is based using the Larson Method[23], which applies population prevalence rates to age group data. The table below displays the calculations, which result in a County estimate of 4,731 individuals with I/DD.

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[21] Baio J., Wiggins L., Christensen D.L., *et al.* (2014). Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder Among Children Aged 8 Years. Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 11 Sites, United States,. MMWR Surveill Summ 2018;67(No. SS-6):1–23. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6706a1.

[22] Lakdawalla, D. and Philipson, T. (December 2009).*The Growth of Obesity and Technological Change.* Economics & Human Biology, volume 7, issue 3, pages 283-293.

[23] The Larson Method is a standard method for estimating disability prevalence rates that are sensitive to differing age prevalence distributions.

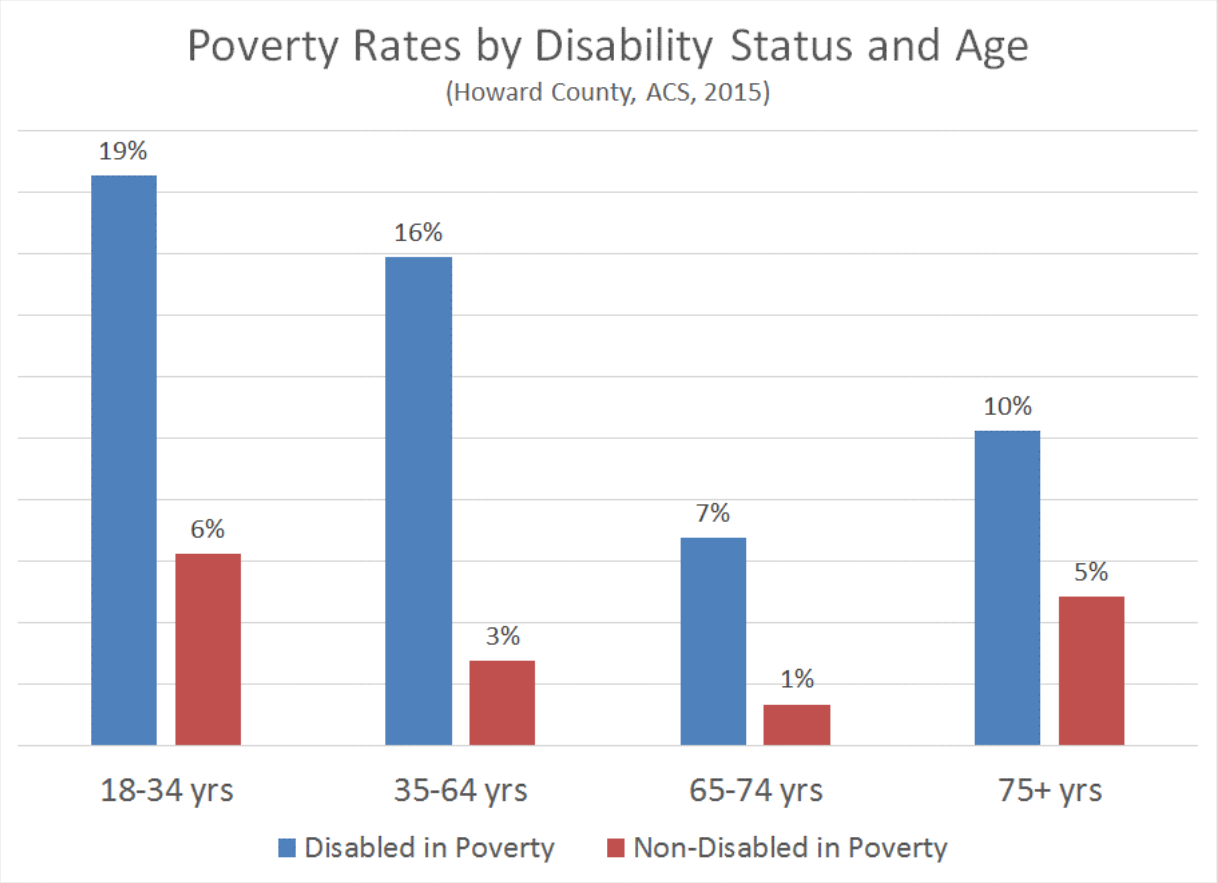
Larson Method of I/DD population extended to Howard County

(non-residential population estimates)

Age groups	0-5	6-17	18-64	65+
% I/DD	3.84%	3.17%	0.9%	0.9%
total population	18,412	57,877	194,489	37,669
# I/DD estimated	707	1,835	1,750	339

Total number of adults with I/DD = 2,189
Total number of children w I/DD = 2,542
Total individuals with I/DD = 4,731

An examination of the ACS data in terms of the relationship between any form of disability and poverty (i.e., persons with income below Federal Poverty Level), yields a very strong relationship. As illustrated in the graphic below, for adults with disabilities, there is a consistently higher rate of poverty across all age groups.



The Social Security Administration administers two federal income benefits programs for individuals with disabilities - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). The payment levels, for SSI benefits, barely provide for the most basic of needs. Recipients who rely solely on these benefits are at the bottom of the economic ladder.

A single individual whose sole income is from SSI receives a maximum of $9,252.00 annually.[24] This amount represents 8% of Howard County's median household income of $115,576.00.[25]

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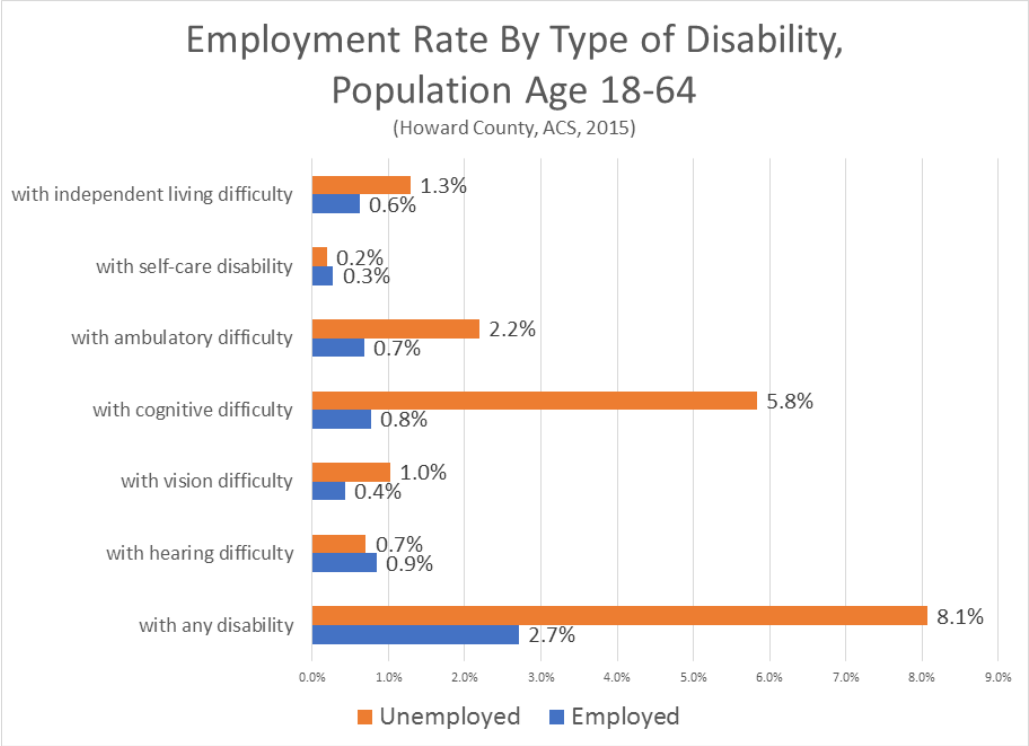
[24] 2019 Social Security Changes. https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/factsheets/colafacts2019.pdf

[25] U.S. Census 2017 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP03, "Selected Economic Characteristics, Howard County, Maryland." https://data.census.gov/cedsci/results/tables?q=Howard%20County,%20Maryland&g=0500000US24027&tab=ACSDP5Y2017.DP03&ps=app*page@1$table*currentPage@1.

A single individual whose sole income is from SSDI receives an estimated average annual payment of $14,808.00.[26] This amount represents 12.8% of Howard County's median household income.

In terms of employment rates and disability types, (see Table below) except for vision and hearing impairment, all other forms of disability are associated with higher rates of unemployment. The most extreme disparity is for those with a cognitive disability, which is associated with a more than seven-fold higher likelihood of being unemployed (5.8% vs. 0.8%). Overall, those with any form of self-reported disability had an unemployment rate of 8.1% vs. 2.7% for those with no disability. Not displayed in the graphic is that people with a disability in the workforce, earn 67% of the median income as those without a disability ($38,072 vs. $56,517).



[26] 2019 Social Security Changes. https://www.ssa.gov/news/press/factsheets/colafacts2019.pdf

CHAPTER 4.

SURVEY DATA

As part of this study, surveys were disseminated. The surveys were designed to elicit information and input from individuals with disabilities, family and unpaid caregivers, educational professionals, non-educational professionals and community members.

Some of the findings from these surveys included:

Survey of Individuals with Disabilities (67 Respondents)

Age:

- 15% were 21 or younger
- 21% were older adults, age 60+

Limited English Proficiency (LEP):

- 21% listed themselves as "functional but not fluent" in English. Given that this trait was not linked to individuals belonging to minority groups, individuals indicating lack of fluency in English may include persons with a speech/language disability.

Race/Ethnicity:

- 90% White/Caucasian
- No respondent identified as Hispanic/Latino[27]

Living situation:

- 82% living with family
- 5% with unrelated others
- 13% living alone

[27] Across all five surveys, no respondent self-identified as Hispanic/Latino.

Living situation in relationship to age:

- Younger people more likely to live with family (100% of those 21 and under)
- As age increases more likely to live by themselves, but this declines as person becomes elderly

Employment:

- Employed: 36%
- Not employed but seeking work: 26%
- Not in workforce 38%

Type(s) of Impairment:

1. Remembering 57%
2. Walking/movement 51%
3. Social 46%[28]
4. Independence 45%
5. Thinking 42%
6. Self-care 28%
7. Learning 37%
8. Hearing 19%[29]
9. Vision 16%

Characteristic of respondents in relation to type(s) of impairments:

- Vision: no distinctive personal characteristics distinguished these individuals
- Hearing: most likely to be elderly and employed
- Movement: most likely to be older, and less likely to be employed
- Learning: more likely to be younger (88% were age 35 or younger), more likely to be living with family, more likely to be seeking work (but not employed)
- Thinking: more likely to be young adults (ages 22-35), less likely to be elderly, more likely to be living alone

[28] "Social" and "independence" disability never occurred in isolation but were always associated with some other form of disability.

[29] 12% had hearing alone (deaf)

- Remembering: more likely to be younger, more likely to be living alone, more likely to be seeking work (but not employed)
- Self-Care: more likely to be young adults (ages 22-35), more likely to not be in workforce
- Independence: more likely to be younger, more likely to be living with family (93%)

Degree to which the person felt a sense of control over decisions regarding:

	Moderately dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total dissatisfied
Employment	19%	30%	49%
Transportation	24%	24%	48%
Socialization	28%	19%	47%
Housing	15%	16%	31%
Education	11%	12%	23%

Areas of activities in which people reported a lack of control as it related to specific types of disabilities:

- Hearing: no specific areas in which a lack of control was reported
- Independence: no specific areas in which a lack of control was reported
- Vision: education, transportation, social activities
- Learning: housing, transportation,
- Thinking: housing, education, employment, social activities,
- Remembering: housing, employment, transportation, social activities
- Self-care: education only

Areas of activities in which people felt a lack of available opportunities to interact with non-disabled peers:

	Moderately dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Totally dissatisfied
Transportation	28%	33%	61%
Employment	31%	30%	61%
Socialization	37%	19%	56%
Housing	26%	19%	45%
Education	20%	15%	35%

Areas of activities in which people reported a sense of lack of "opportunity" as it related to specific types of disabilities:

- Hearing: Impacted no specific areas of activity as it related to opportunity
- Movement: Impacted no specific areas of activity as it related to opportunity
- Vision: education, employment,
- Learning: housing, transportation, socialization,
- Thinking: housing, education, employment, socialization
- Remembering: housing, education, employment, transportation, socialization
- Self-care: employment, socialization
- Independence: housing, education

Percentage of respondents expressing unmet housing needs:

- Accessible features in home 43%
- Rental assistance to help pay rent 41%
- Opportunity to live by myself 40%
- Mortgage assistance to buy home 39%
- Supervised housing 37%
- Utility assistance 37%
- Food/nutrition assistance 21%

Percentage of respondents expressing unmet transportation needs:

- Fixed route buses 53%
- Paratransit services 44%
- Help paying for cost for transportation 40%
- Uber/Lyft availability 34%
- Availability of sidewalks/curbs 32%
- Family members to help 31%
- Driver's license assistance 15%

Percentage of respondents expressing unmet employment needs:

- Assistance finding jobs 48%
- Awareness of rights as job seeker 43%
- Vocational training 40%
- On-job assistance (Job coaching) 38%
- Internships/work-study positions 18%

Percentage of respondents expressing unmet socialization/peer relationship needs:

- Friendship with peers in same age group 50%
- Social / leisure activities 45%
- Social media connections 14%

Percentage of respondents expressing unmet educational needs[30]:

- Help preparing for employment 29%
- Preparation for college 22%
- Help preparing for life after school 20%
- Participation in classroom activities 17%
- IEP or 504 goals/services 16%

Characteristics of individuals expressing specific types of needs:

- Housing needs by specific characteristics of people:
    - Opportunities to live by themselves needs tend to be younger
    - Rental assistance needs tend to be young adults
    - Physical accessibility needs tend to be either young adults or elderly, living in and outside their family home,
    - Supervised housing needs tend to be young adults,
    - Utility assistance needs tend to be those seeking work,
- Transportation needs by specific characteristics of people:
    - Fixed route needs tend to be youth,
    - Paratransit needs tend to be youth or young adults, less likely to be elderly,
    - Sidewalk/curb needs tend not to be youth,
    - Financial assistance needs tend to be youth, adults, those seeking work,
    - Uber/Lyft needs tend to be young adults, less likely to be elderly,
    - Family to help needs tend not to be elderly,
- Employment needs by specific characteristics of people:
    - Internship need~~s~~ tend to be youth, those seeking work,
    - Vocational training needs tend to be youth, young adults, those seeking work,
    - Assistance finding job needs tend to be youth, young adults, those seeking work,

[30] Unmet educational needs were the outlier across types of unmet needs, largely as a result of people age 35+ expressing a much lower level of unmet educational needs.

- Job coaching needs tend to be young adults, those seeking work,
- Awareness of rights needs tend to be youth, young adults, those seeking work.

Survey of Family or Unpaid Caregivers (69 Respondents)

Demographic characteristics of respondents:

- 85% who responded were parent/grandparents
- 75% under age 60 (only 25% over age 60)
- Race[31]
    - 85% White
    - 6% Black
    - 7% Asian
- 87% live with the person with a disability some or all of the time

Employment (71% are a member of the workforce vs. 29% out of workforce)

- 59% employed
- 7% self-employed
- 4% not employed but seeking work
- 9% not employed and not seeking work
- 19% retired

Impact on employment due to caregiving

- Increased hours 5%
- No change in hours 34%
- Decreased hours 61%

Types of disabilities/impairment of the person for whom they provide care:

- Learning 85%
- Social 79%
- Independence 78%
- Thinking 63%
- Remembering 59%

[31] As mentioned previously, no respondent to any of the five surveys self-identified as Hispanic/Latino.

- Self-Care 53%
- Walking 34%
- Seeing 24%
- Hearing 3%

Percentage reporting needs not met in specific areas of activity:

- 58% employment needs
- 53% social/peer relationship needs
- 28% transportation needs
- 22% education needs
- 20% housing need

Characteristics related to unmet peer and social relationship needs:

- Unmet peer/social needs were related to caregiver burden (i.e., higher unmet social needs associated with higher caregiver burden)
- Impairment (or difficulty) with peer/social relationships is related to difficulty with learning/thinking/remembering/mood impairments; which is consistent with prior findings cite source that physical impairment alone has little or no impact (except for transportation) on an individual's capacity to develop and maintain social relationships.

Caregiver burden, as measured by the Zarit Burden Index (ZBI)[32] overall[33]:

- 9% at significantly high burden
- 55% at moderate burden
- 36% at low burden

[32] The ZBI is the most often utilized short form instrument for assessing caregiver burden in the social science literature.

[33] No relationship was found between caregiver burden and the number of hours spent providing care.

Specific areas of burden (sub-scores with the ZBI) that are most prominent (nearly always or quite frequently a problem)

- Not enough time for self 77%
- Not able to meet other responsibilities 74%
- Social life has suffered 63%

Survey of Education Professionals (123 Respondents)

Among those who identified their *primary* assignment as special education:

- 54% had no training in transitional services
- 42% had no training in 504 Plans
- 31% had no training in managing disruptive behaviors
- 19% had no training in procedural safeguards
- 12% had no training in inclusive educational practices
- 12% had no training in least restrictive environments
- 4% had no training in IEPs

Additionally, among those who identified their primary assignment as special education:

- 39% provided some form of life skills instruction
- 19% whose primary assignment was special education also provided vocational preparation

In terms of expressed needs:

- 65% of those in special education stated they had inadequate time for planning and preparation (vs. 48% among non-special education respondents)
- 31% had inadequate materials and equipment (vs. 23% of non-special education respondents)
- 27% stated they had inadequate physical facilities (vs. 13% among non-special education)
- 27% stated they had inadequate training opportunities
- 15.4% stated that they had inadequate opportunities to provide parents with periodic updates on child's progress

An interesting finding was that those whose primary assignment was special education, differed in their views of how students with disabilities were integrated into the school environment compared to other educators. In terms of the perceptions of special education staff:

- 50% responded that students with disabilities have friendships with non-disabled peers (vs. 31% of non-special education professionals)
- 38% say that students with disabilities are bullied (vs. 24% of non-special education professionals)
- 15% responded that students with disabilities are included in group activities (vs. 10% of non-special education professionals)

In terms of the perceptions of unmet needs (i.e., expressing moderate to severe unmet needs) the perceptions by types were:

- Behavioral interventions/supports 67%
- Appropriate placements 53%
- Academic progress 50%
- Handling of bullying 32%
- Transition services 25%

Other Surveys

The surveys of non-educational professionals and community members had inadequate numbers of respondents (8 and 16 respectively) to do any meaningful quantitative analysis, but comments provided by those respondents were used to inform elements of this report.

CHAPTER 5.

EDUCATION

The Commission acknowledges that there are numerous issues of educational significance that impact people with disabilities of varying ages, including children of preschool age. The Commission is also aware of concerns raised during this study, regarding services offered through Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) for eligible children birth through five-years of age who have developmental delays and/or Autism or related disorders.[34] Given the breadth of issues regarding educational services for people with disabilities, and, as mentioned above,[35] the Commission's limited resources, for purposes of this study and report, the Commission narrowed the scope of its focus to educational services for persons with disabilities from Kindergarten to the year they exit high school.

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[34] One survey respondent wrote: "I was unable to complete this survey accurately because birth to 5-year old services were not included on this survey, which is not an accurate picture of the services in Howard County. We have RECC programs, we have children with educational disabilities of developmental delay. The teachers of the RECC programs have to play the role of general education teacher and special education teacher. We have students with IEPs in our classrooms as well as peer models. We must provide the general education curriculum for all students, as well as meet the needs of each individual student with disability. We must provide classroom instruction, as well as carry over the skills that we learn from the OT and SLP on the team. We case manage for all of our students with IEPs, as well as be classroom teacher that provides progress/report cards to families. We essentially do the job for both a general education and special education teacher. We have an all-inclusive program. Families of these students are working hard to meet their child's needs, but this survey will not capture that because the information included in this does not apply to them. We do need assistance in the classroom and in the community for these students. It is frustrating to see that these students will be left out when the families have a lot to offer for suggestions as they work through their own concerns at home and look to the future for their children. Overall this survey is disappointing as a RECC teacher because we are working hard to help families navigate the system as well as make the students successful and prepared for kindergarten. Our thoughts/opinions are not considered important if you look at this, which feels like the opinions of the families we work for don't matter."

[35] Supra, p. 7.

Disabilities/Impairments as a Percentage of the Special Education Population

Looking at services provided in HCPSS in the 2017-2018 school year, 5,592 out of 56,784 students (9.8%) were identified as requiring some form of special education or early intervention service. This was lower than the statewide average of 12.0%. Specific disabilities/impairments as a percentage of the special education population were:

- 23.4% specific learning disability
- 18.7% speech or language disability
- 16.8% autism
- 15.2% developmental delay
- 13.9% other health problem
- 6.0% emotionally disturbed
- 4.6% with intellectual disability
- 4.5% multiple disabilities
- .6% developmental delay – extended Individual Family Service Plans
- .3% visual impairment
- .3% orthopedic impairment
- .2% with hearing disability
- .1% who are deaf
- .1% traumatic brain injury (TBI)[36]

Academic Achievements of HCPSS' Students with Disabilities

HCPSS hired an educational consulting firm, District Management Council,[37] to conduct a review of special education opportunities in HCPSS. Their findings and recommendations are

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[36] Maryland Special Education/Early Intervention Services Census Data and Related Tables (October 1, 2017). Report produced by Maryland State Department of Education.

[37] In its feedback on the draft of this report, HCPSS' Department of Special Education (DSE) cautioned use of District Management Council's report to evaluate current strengths and gaps in HCPSS' special education services. DSE expressed concerns that District Management Council's report was published in 2015 and recommended using more current data. DSE also questioned the use of the methodology used to gather and interpret information in the District Management Council's report with regard to "timing" of the data collection and "inconsistencies" in the analysis process. DSE cited concerns about the overall validity and reliability of the information reported by District Management Council and as reasons for those concerns, said the recommendations offered to HCPSS closely resembled other systems' findings. *Letter to the Commission*. (February 19, 2019). Department of Special Education,

contained in the 2015 document, "Special Education Opportunities Review."[38] According to the document, the review is a comparison of current practices in HCPSS to best practices of similar school systems nationally. District Management Council's review included classroom observations; surveys of parents of special education students; parent focus groups; several hours of meetings with elementary, middle and high school regular education and special education teachers; meetings with school counselors and psychologists, related services providers and administrative staff. For purposes of its disability study and report, the Commission did not duplicate District Management Council's efforts; incorporates by reference relevant portions of District Management Council's findings and recommendations into this report; and have used, where relevant, District Management Council's recommendations as a basis for additional recommendations.

HCPSS routinely ranks among the best school districts in the state, region and country, yet half of the special education professionals surveyed for this study reported moderate to severe unmet need with respect to the academic progress of students with IEPs.[39] District Management Council noted in the Special Education Opportunities Review that during the transition to the College and Career-Ready Standards, there was an overall decrease in student achievement statewide and noted a significant increase in the achievement gap between all

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HCPSS. In its feedback on the draft of this report, the Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) questioned the efficacy of District Management's Council review "because of lack of community involvement, transparency and independence in its execution." *Comments on Draft Report on the Status of People with Disabilities*. (February 20, 2019). Howard County Autism Society. Notwithstanding those concerns, HCAS took the position that District Management Council's recommendations are "common sense improvements that have been suggested by the community in the past and should be advanced." District Management Council's data used in this report can be found on the Maryland Department of Education's website and as such, are independently verifiable of the District Management Council's report. Additionally, the Commission's research did not yield another more recent and comprehensive review of special education in Howard County and therefore, for those reasons and for those expressed by HCAS, the Commission uses in this report, relevant data and recommendations from the District Management Council's report. The Commission has included in this final report, additional updated data that are pertinent to special education in HCPSS.

[38] Howard County Public School System and District Management Council Special Education Opportunities Review. https://www.hcpss.org/f/special/special-education-opportunities-dmc-project-2015-16.pdf. Retrieved 1/7/2019.

[39] Supra, p. 31.

HCPSS students and HCPSS students with disabilities. [40] The District Management Council's report also noted a widening achievement gap in 3rd and 8th Grade Reading between 2011 and 2014, between all students and students with disabilities. A similar trend was also noted in achievement gaps in 8th Grade Reading and Math, between all students and students with disabilities.[41] (See chart below).

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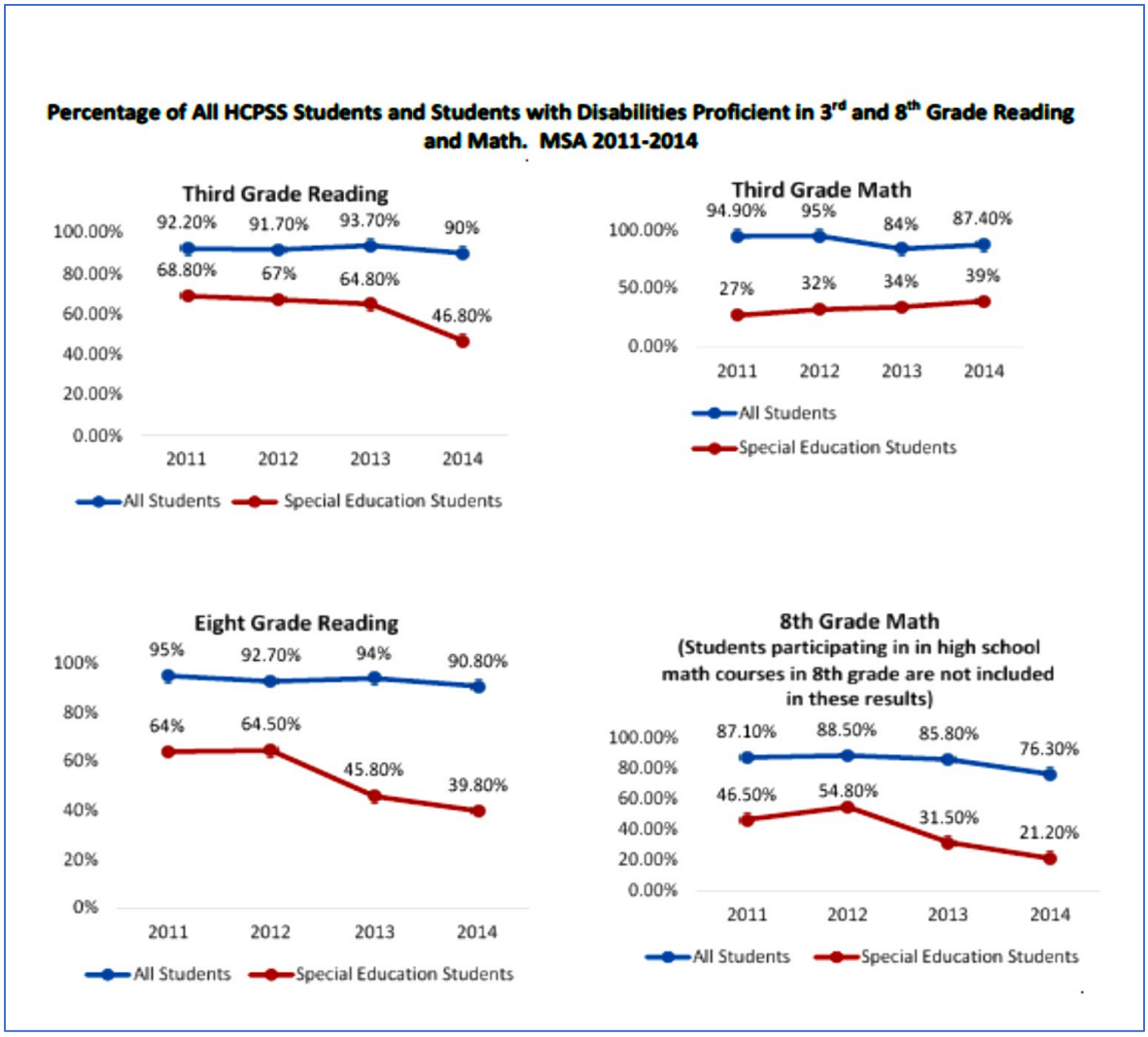
[40] Howard County Public School System and District Management Council Special Education Opportunities Review, p.57. https://www.hcpss.org/f/special/special-education-opportunities-dmc-project-2015-16.pdf. Retrieved 1/7/2019.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 57.



Analyzing 2014 MSA Reading scores, the Special Education Opportunities Review also noted that HCPSS had a "significantly"[42] lower proficiency rate for students with disabilities than similar Maryland districts, with HCPSS only faring better than Charles County (compared to Frederick, Ann Arundel, Montgomery, Harford, Carroll and Charles and when compared to comparative districts with higher rates of students living in poverty).[43] (See chart below.)

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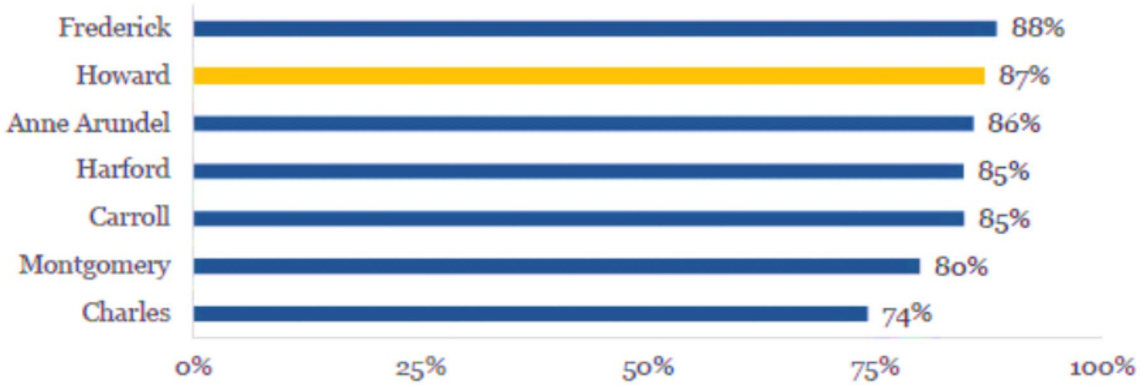
[42] *Ibid*., p. 58.

[43] *Ibid.,* p. 58.

When compared to similar districts in the state, a similar story is true. Overall the district performs at very high levels, but students with disabilities lag behind both their non-disabled peers, but also students with disabilities in other like districts.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 3rd Grade MSA Reading Assessment, All Students 2014

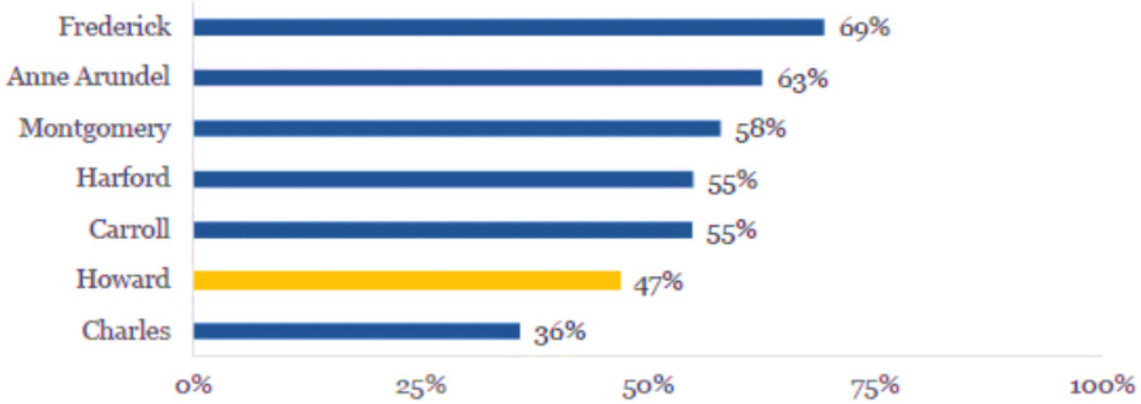
Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data



- Howard County's 3rd graders performed better in reading than many similar districts last year.

Students Proficient or Advanced on the 3rd Grade MSA Reading Assessment, Students with Disabilities 2014

Similar District Data vs. Howard County Data

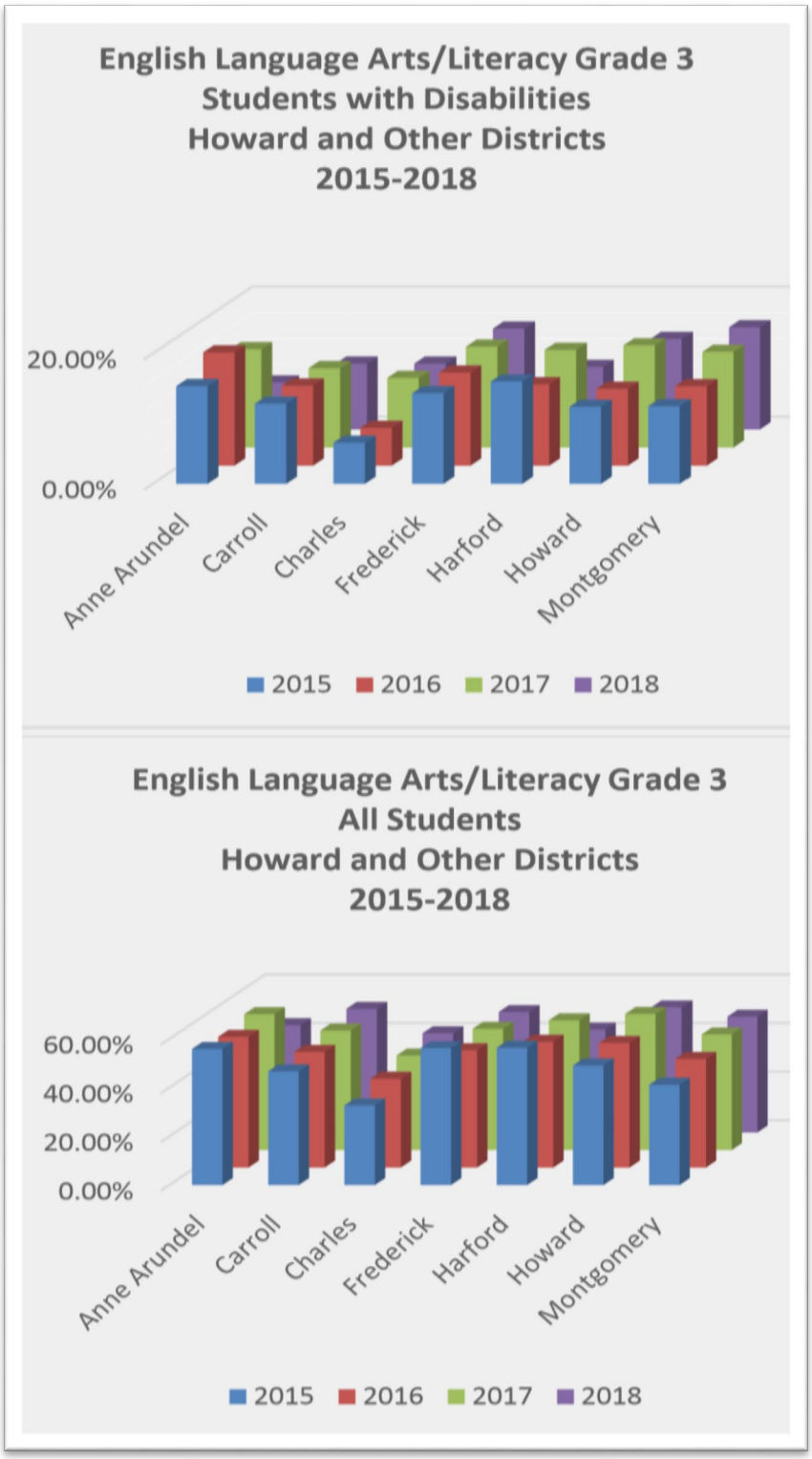


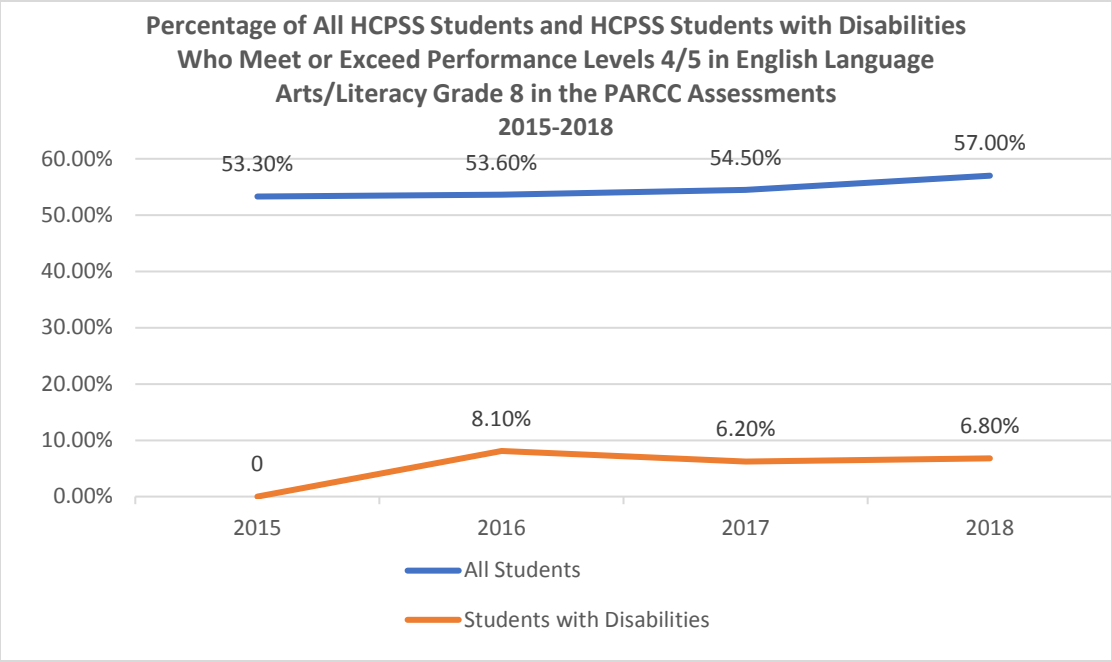
- The district had a significantly lower proficiency rate for students with disabilities than similar districts last year. Additionally, the comparison districts have higher rates of students living in poverty.

Data from Maryland Report Card[44] for 2015 to 2018 shows some growth among HCPSS students with disabilities in English Language Arts/Literacy Grade 3 and when compared with other students with disabilities in other districts. While English Language Arts/Literacy Grade 3 data for 2017 and 2018 shows HCPSS students with disabilities doing better than some students with disabilities in other districts, analysis of the data continues to show a wide achievement gap between all HCPSS students and HCPSS students with disabilities. This analysis also holds true for PARCC assessments of all HCPSS students in Grade 8 and HCPSS Students with Disabilities in Grade 8. (See charts below.)

[44] In 2015 Maryland implemented the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) state assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics. PARCC assessments measure how well students have learned grade-level material in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. Students who meet or exceed expectations are on track for the next grade or course and, ultimately, for college and careers. Level 5 indicates that a student has Exceeded Expectations; Level 4 indicates that a student has Met Expectations; Level 3 indicates that a student has Approached Expectations; Level 2 indicates that a student has Partially Met Expectations and Level 1, that a student Did Not Yet Meet Expectations. http://www.understandthescore.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/UTS-Sample-Full-Score-Rpeort.compressed.pdf

Percentage of HCPSS Students with Disabilities and All HCPSS Students Who Meet or Exceed Performance Levels 4/5 in ELA/Literacy 3 in the PARCC Assessments 2015-2018
HCPSS Compared to Other Districts





Rate of Graduation and Graduation with a High School Diploma

Between 2014 and 2016, HCPSS saw an increase in its 4-year cohort graduation rate from 60.15 % to 68.10%, thereby surpassing the state average for 2016 by 2.76%.[45] Notwithstanding this progress, most of the districts used for comparison in this report, are still outperforming HCPSS in this area. The charts below show how HCPSS compares to other districts with regard to 2016-2017 data showing the percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma, [46] and the adjusted cohort graduation rate[47] for 2017-2018.[48]

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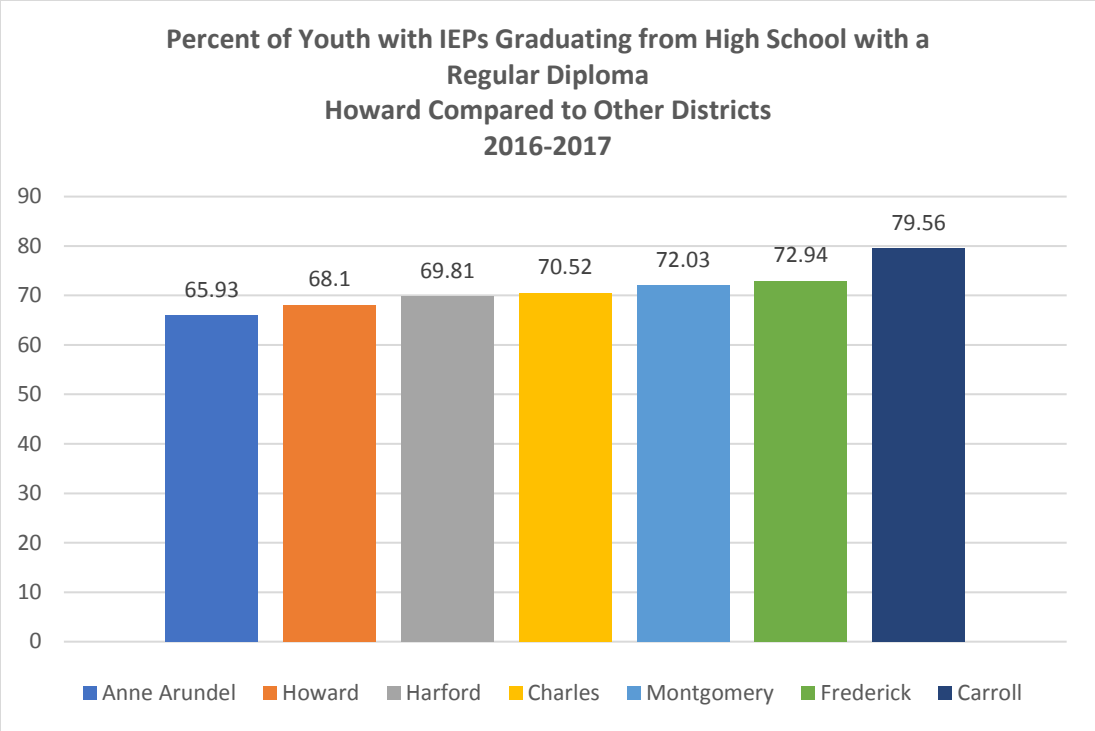
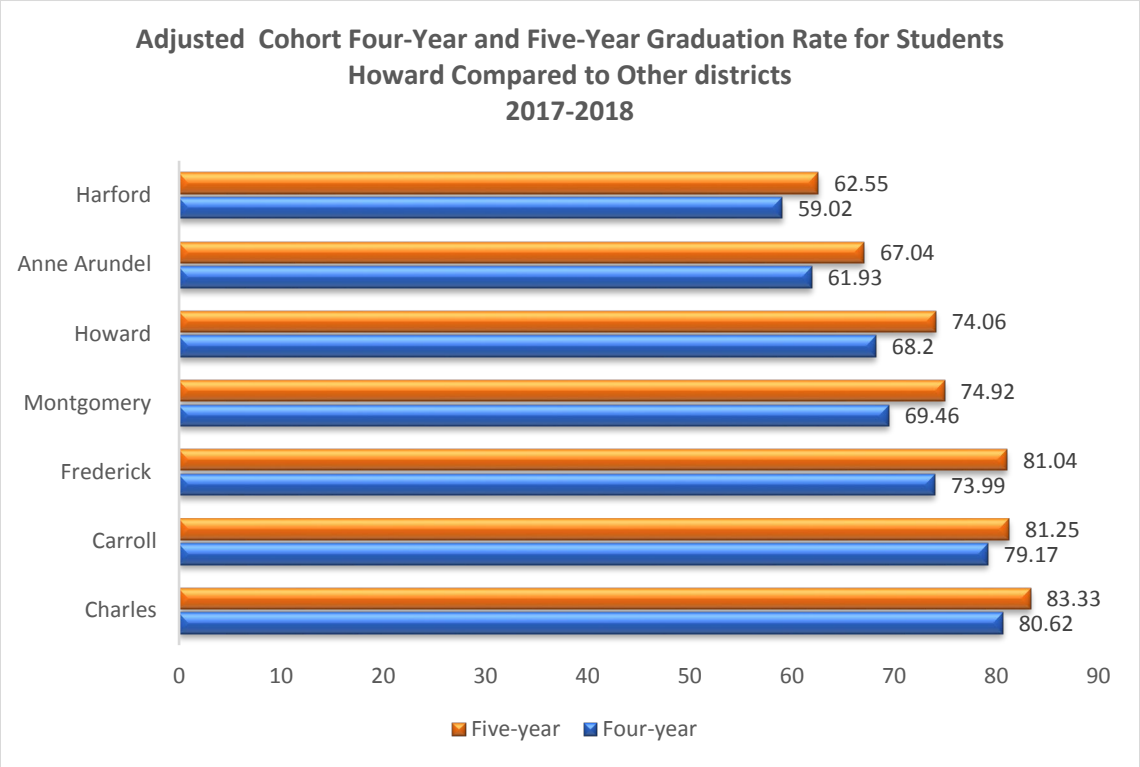
[45] Department of Special Education, HCPSS, Letter to the Commission.

[46] MSDE Public Website of State Performance Plan Results
http://mdideareport.org/CompareSpp.aspx?IndicatorID=1

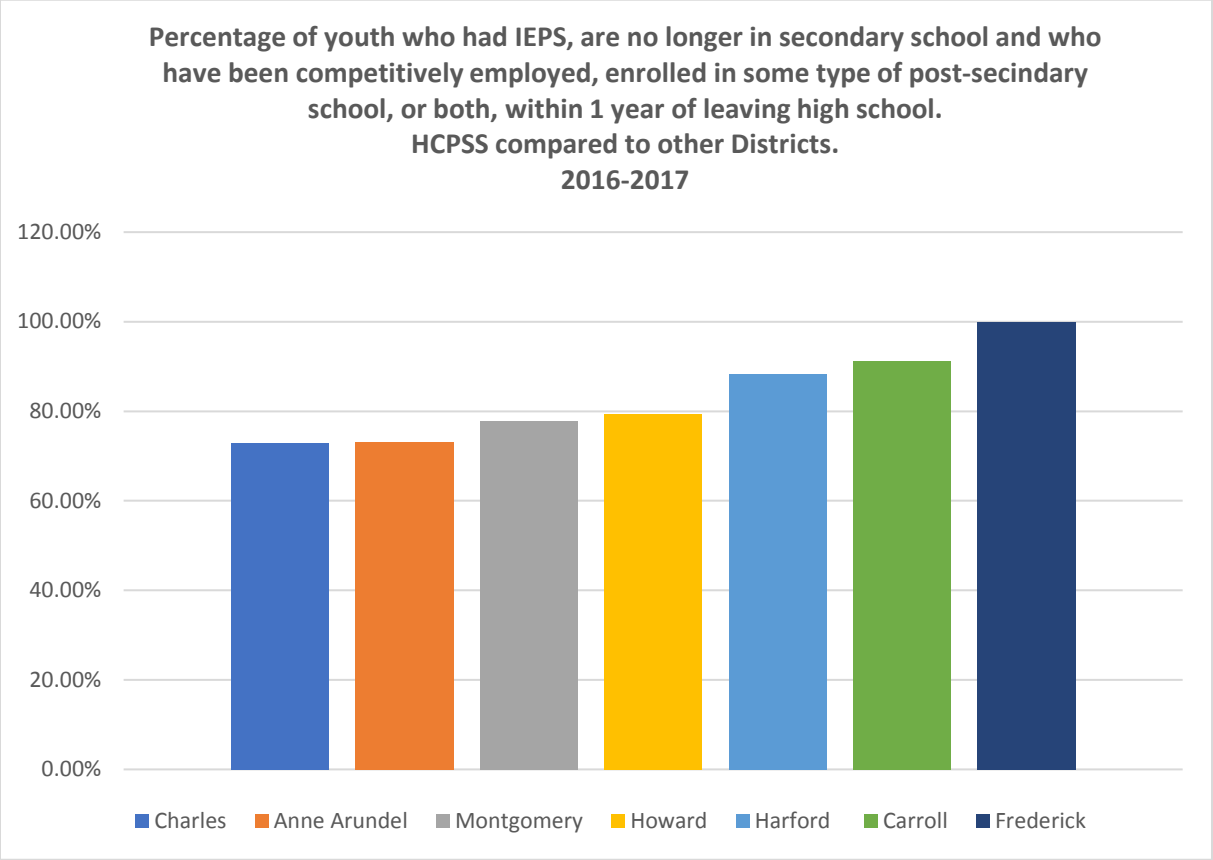
[47] The Graduation Rate indicator measures the performance of students in a school who graduate with a regular high school diploma. This indicator is comprised of two measures of a cohort of ninth grade students graduating within four years or five years, respectively. Maryland Report Card
http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/


Percent of Youth with IEPs Graduating from High School with a Regular Diploma
Howard Compared to Other Districts
2016-2017
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
65.93
68.1
69.81
70.52
72.03
72.94
79.56
Anne Arundel
Howard
Harford
Charles
Montgomery
Frederick
Carroll


Adjusted Cohort Four-Year and Five-Year Graduation Rate for Students
Howard Compared to Other districts
2017-2018
Harford
62.55
59.02
Anne Arundel
67.04
61.93
Howard
74.06
68.2
Montgomery
74.92
69.46
Frederick
81.04
73.99
Carroll
81.25
79.17
Charles
83.33
80.62
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
Five-year
Four-year

Post-Secondary Endeavors Within 1 Year of Leaving High School

Since 2014-2015, HCPSS has seen a gradual increase from 69.92% to 79.37% of students who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school, who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of post-secondary school or both, within 1 year of leaving high school.[49] The chart below shows HCPSS' performance in this area, when compared to other Districts.



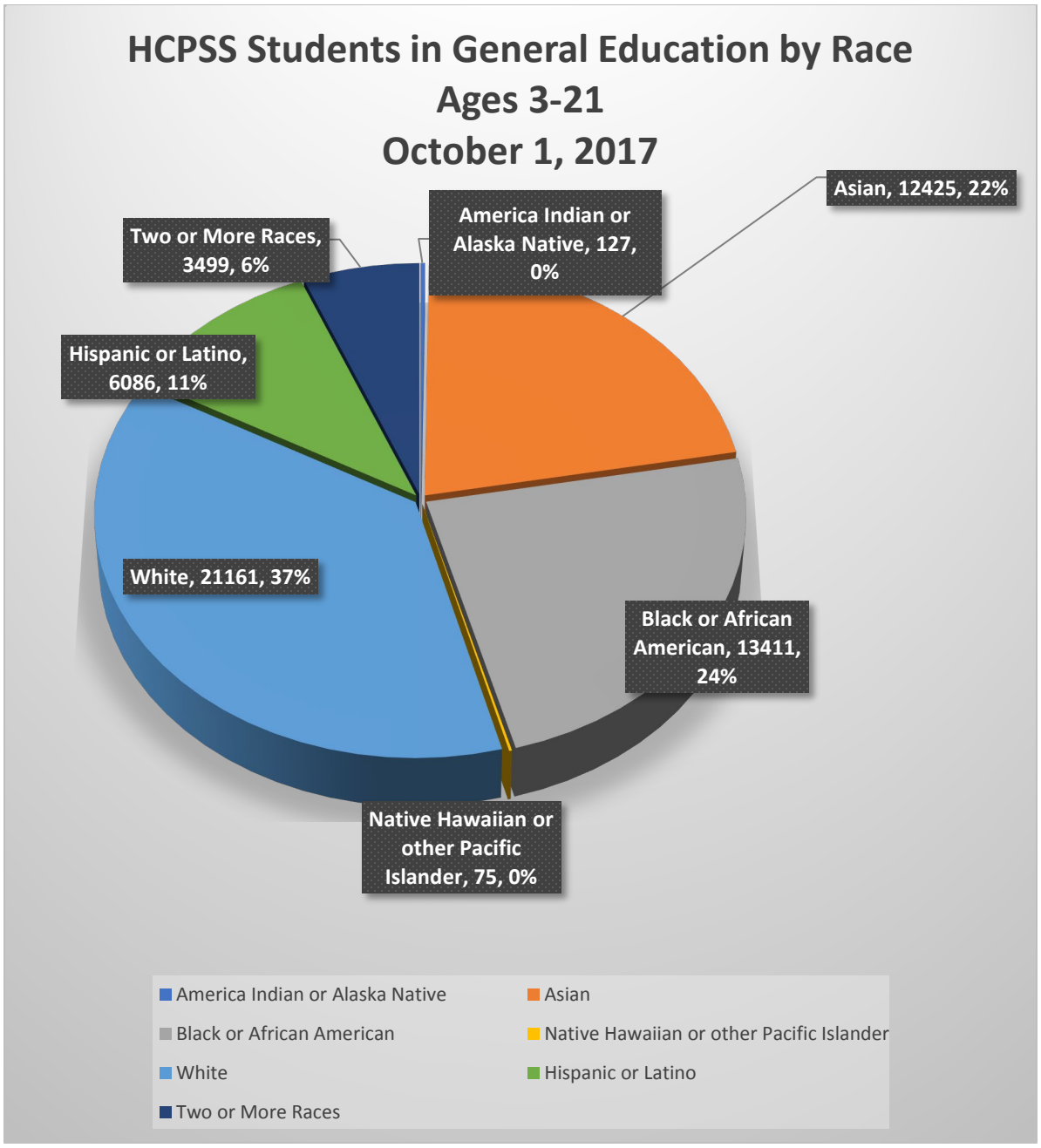
[49] MSDE Public Website of State Performance Plan Results. http://mdideareport.org/CompareSpp.aspx?IndicatorID=15

Disproportionality

When examining students identified as requiring some form of special education, it is notable that relative to their composition of the general education population, there is a disproportionate representation of African Americans, who are at higher risk of being classified as students with a disability, when compared to Asian students who are significantly less likely to be classified as students with special education needs and White students whose classification is proportionate to their representation of the general education population.[50]

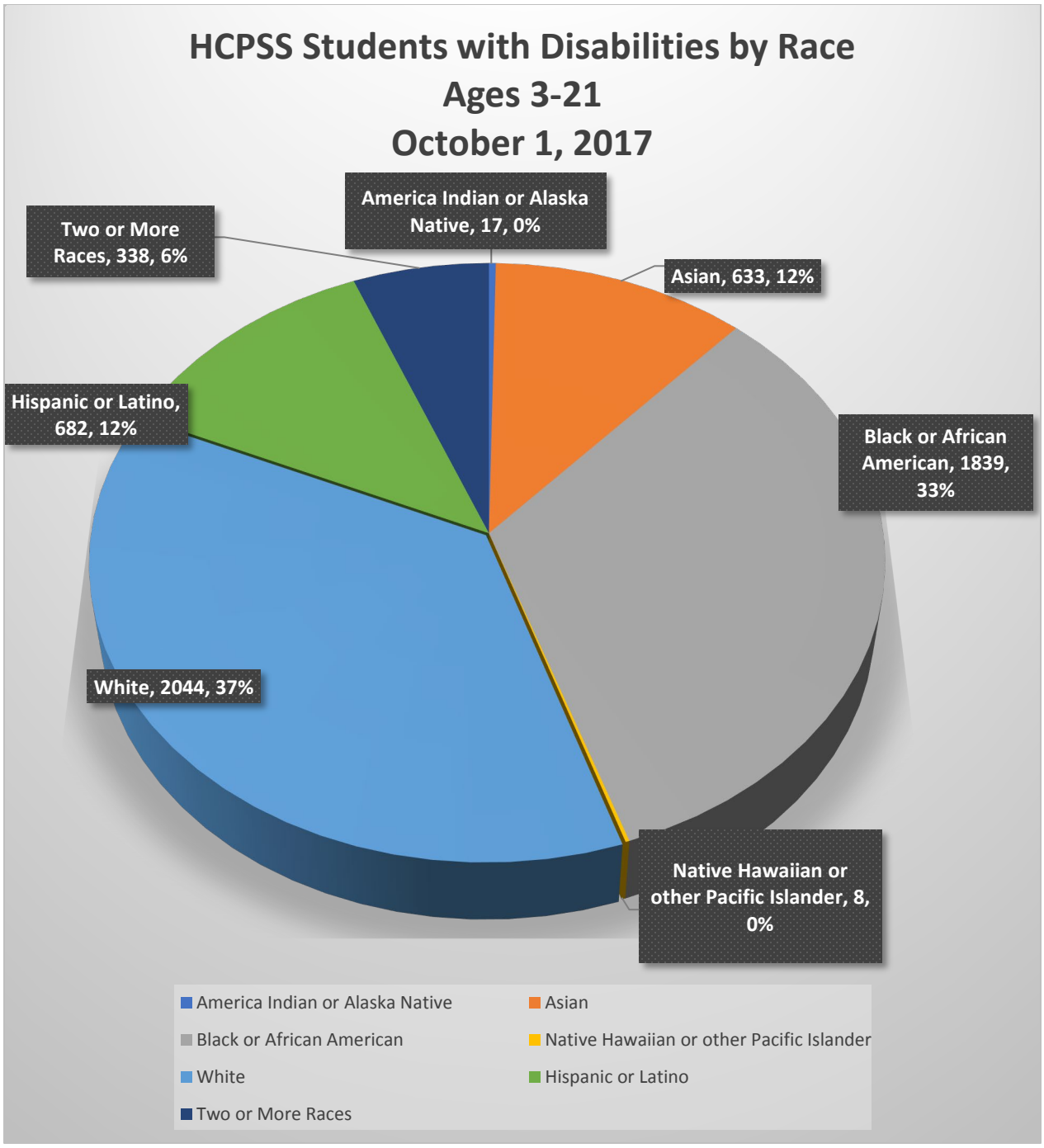
The disproportionality is reflected in the charts on the next two pages.

[50] *Maryland Special Education/Early Intervention Services Census Data and Related Tables,* October 1, 2017, p.16.
http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20172018Student/2018SPED.pdf



[51]

[51] General education number includes students with disabilities, Eligibility 1 and 2 students and does not include extended Individualized Family Service Plan Students, *Maryland Special Education/Early Intervention Services Census Data and Related Tables,* October 1, 2017.


HCPSS Students with Disabilities by Race
Ages 3-21
October 1, 2017
America Indian or Alaska Native, 17, 0%
Two or More Races, 338, 6%
Asian, 633, 12%
Hispanic or Latino, 682, 12%
Black or African American, 1839, 33%
White, 2044, 37%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 8, 0%
America Indian or Alaska Native
Asian
Black or African American
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
White
Hispanic or Latino
Two or More Races

There is a notable gap in the academic performance of HCPSS' African American and Hispanic students when compared to all HCPSS students.[52] Consistent with differences in academic performance based on race in academic proficiency of all students, African American and Hispanic special education students in Howard County are trailing their peers with disabilities in Language Arts and Math proficiency.[53] It is also noteworthy that HCPSS' African American and students who receive special education services are suspended at higher rates than students of other races and students without disabilities. [54]

Department of Special Education's Mitigation Action

IDEA section 618(d) requires States to collect and examine data to determine if significant disproportionality[55] based on race and ethnicity is occurring in the State and the local educational agencies of the State with respect to, among other things, the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions.[56] HCPSS recently stepped up its equity and inclusion efforts following discomfiting incidents of racism in the school

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[52] Maryland Report Card: http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Assessments/ElaPerformance/1EL/8/10/3/3/3/3/3/3/3/13/XXXX

[53] Maryland Report Card: http://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Assessments/ElaPerformance/1EL/3/10/3/1/3/3/3/3/3/13/XXXX

[54] https://www.hcpss.org/f/news/trends-in-school-suspension-2017.pdf

[55] IDEA section 618(d) requires States to collect and examine data to determine if significant disproportionality based on race and ethnicity is occurring in the State and the local educational agencies (LEAs) of the State with respect to: (A) the identification of children as children with disabilities, including the identification of children as children with disabilities in accordance with a particular impairment; (B) the placement in particular educational settings of such children; and (C) the incidence, duration, and type of disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions. IDEA does not define "significant disproportionality." Nor do the regulations explicitly define the term. Instead, they require States to use a standard methodology for analysis of disproportionality, which includes States setting a threshold above which disproportionality in the identification, placement, or discipline of children with disabilities within an LEA is significant. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/significant-disproportionality-qa-03-08-17.pdf

[56] https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/significant-disproportionality-qa-03-08-17.pdf

system. These enhanced initiatives place student equity at the core of HCPSS' agenda.[57] HCPSS' DSE has also taken steps to align its Special Education Strategic Plan to the "action imperatives" of the 2016 Maryland Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services' strategic plan. The action imperatives include an Access, Equity and Progress Action Imperative with Measures of Success that seek to eliminate disproportionate suspensions of student with disabilities by race or ethnicity and to narrow the achievement gaps in reading and math performance of elementary and middle school children.[58]

The DSE Special Education Strategic Plan is a collaborative, optimistic undertaking that is designed to drive continuous improvement in the DSE and focuses on (1) interventions that are better aligned with individual student needs; (2) developing curriculum that addresses social emotional learning; (3) special education compliance and related data accountability; (4) staff training for all staff who support the IEP process, including general education teachers and paraeducators; (4) case management and expanding school system services and placement options for students with various disabilities; (5) staffing (case management for special education teachers and other providers).[59]

Bullying

Children with disabilities are at an increased risk of being bullied. [60] One third grade survey respondent wrote: " I am being discriminated against because I am [sic] Asperger and I was bullied. My Mom filed a bully report last May against the school and the school is now retaliating…"[61] It is notable that 38% of special education professionals in this study reported

[57] https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/howard/ellicott-city/ph-ho-cf-diversity-schools-1102-story.html

[58] https://www.hcpss.org/f/special/2017-2020-dse-strategic-plan.pdf

[59] Special Education Strategic Plan Update, May 17, 2018, HCPSS' Board of Education of Howard County Meeting Agenda Item, as submitted by DSE, *Letter to the Commission*. (February 19, 2019). Department of Special Education, HCPSS.

[60] Bullying and Youth with Disabilities and Special Education Needs. https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/special-needs/index.html. Retrieved on 1/30/19.

[61] Individual with Disability survey respondent.

that students with disabilities are bullied.[62] Of concern is that 32% of special education professionals in this study reported that the handling of bullying was a moderate to severe unmet need.[63]

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) requires all school districts to report incidents of bullying, harassment or intimidation against students in public schools.[64] In 2009, the Maryland State Board of Education developed a model anti-bullying policy (Model Policy).[65] The Model Policy is the basis of Howard County's anti-bullying policy, which includes a prohibition against cyberbullying.[66] Howard County employs the Standard Victim of Harassment or Intimidation Report Form, which has been modified over time to reflect Maryland's requirements, including those regarding including fields to capture information related to cyber-bullying and advances in technology.[67] The Report Form can be used by students, parents, family members and school personnel for reporting incidents.[68] Any person who wishes to report bullying or other unsafe behaviors may use *Sprigeo,* HCPSS' online reporting tool.[69]

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[62] Supra, p. 31.

[63] Supra, p. 31.

[64] Maryland State Department of Education. *Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation in Maryland Public Schools, A Report to the Maryland General Assembly on Incidents Reported under the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005.* (March 31, 2017). http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/Bullying/BullyingHarassmentReport2017.pdf

[65] *Ibid*., pp. 1-2.

[66] https://www.hcpss.org/f/board/policies/1060.pdf

[67] Maryland State Department of Education. *Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation in Maryland Public Schools, A Report to the Maryland General Assembly on Incidents Reported under the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005.* (March 31, 2017), p. 2. http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/Bullying/BullyingHarassmentReport2017.pdf

[68] https://www.hcpss.org/f/parents/form_harassment.pdf

[69] https://app.sprigeo.com/

In 2013, Howard County Executive Ken Ulman, announced a new community-based anti-bullying initiative for Howard County.[70] It included a social marketing campaign to raise awareness about bullying among children and adults. That same year, the County Council passed a resolution (CR16-2013) requesting that Howard County Voices for Change Youth Coalition (Voices for Change) provide the County Council, the County Executive and the School Safety Task Force a report from the youth perspective on bullying in the community.[71] Voices for Change prepared a report,[72] and recommended some practical solutions to the bullying problem, including, improving and expanding education and outreach programs as well as adopting new ones.[73] The Voices for Change report also recommended several countywide activities to support the anti-bullying initiative.[74] More recently, Dr. Michael Martirano, the current Superintendent of HCPSS has made eradicating bullying an immediate priority. [75]

Even with the efforts of federal, state and local jurisdictions to eliminate bullying in schools, the reported incidents of bullying, harassment and intimidation in Howard County, increased from 275 in School year 2013-14 to 366 in school year 2015/16.[76] Continued countywide initiatives and campaigns are important in the struggle against bullying. Anti-bullying campaigns that are mindfully inclusive of students with disabilities are necessary to eliminating bullying. Another

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[70] Ulman, K. *et. al.* (June 17, 2013). A Community Based Approach to Bullying. Retrieved from https://www.stopbullying.gov/blog/2013/06/17/community-based-approach-bullying.html

[71] https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/VFC_Youth_Coalition_Report_on_Anti-Bullying

[72] Voices for Change. *Response to Resolution No. 16 – 2013* (June 4, 2013). https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=2l_AN21P3JY%3d&portalid=0

[73] *Ibid*., p. 7.

[74] *Ibid*., p. 8.

[75] https://www.facebook.com/HoCoSchools/posts/our-schools-and-community-will-no-longer-accept-the-horrible-pain-inflicted-by-b/850009988499826/

[76] Maryland Stade Department of Education. *Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation in Maryland Public Schools, A Report to the Maryland General Assembly on Incidents Reported under the Safe Schools Reporting Act of 2005.* (March 31, 2017), p. 6. http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DSFSS/SSSP/Bullying/BullyingHarassmentReport2017.pdf.

approach to eliminating bullying may, in appropriate cases, require IEP teams, with proper parental input, to craft specialized approaches for preventing and responding to bullying.[77]

Continuum of Alternative Placements

Many respondents in the Commission's study commented on inadequate teacher/student ratio in the regular education setting, overcrowded classrooms, and the lack of appropriate behavioral interventions and supports. There were comments from respondents regarding the inappropriateness of children's educational placements in an inclusive general education setting and the lack of appropriate training for paraprofessionals working with students with special education needs. Similar concerns were noted in the District Management Council's review.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires as a condition of federal funding, that public agencies ensure that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who do not have disabilities and that removal of children with disabilities occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.[78] The IDEA also requires that each public agency ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services. The IDEA provides that the continuum includes alternative placements such as instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions; and makes provision for supplementary services (such as resource room or itinerant instruction) to be provided in conjunction with regular class placement.[79] Implicit in these IDEA requirements is that a child's educational placement must be appropriate and based on the child's individual needs.

Transition Services

Effective transition planning requires the active participation of students and their families; the process starts by the time a student reaches age 14. Transition planning helps to ensure a

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[77] Bullying and Youth with Disabilities and Special Education Needs. https://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/groups/special-needs/index.html. Retrieved on 1/30/19.

[78] 34 CFR Sec. 300.114 (a)(2)(i)(ii).

[79] 34 CFR Sec. 300.115.

smooth transition from "entitlement" of services available through the school system to post-high school employment, education, and the "eligibility system" of services for adults. Students with disabilities need to learn about transportation options and develop skills in mobility and travel, so integrating that information and training[80] into transition planning is critical. [81]

"The difference between the entitlement of public education and adult services based upon eligibility can be very confusing. In Maryland, a student with a disability who is receiving special education services, is entitled to a free appropriate public education through the school year in which the student turns 21 years of age (IDEA, 2004) or has met the requirements for a

Maryland High School Diploma. Once a student exits school, he or she must meet the eligibility criteria and funding availability to receive services from adult service agencies."[82]

For transitioning youth and their families who have not made adequate preparations, the termination of educational services results in families feeling overwhelmed and a sense of falling over what has been dubbed, the "benefits cliff." Transition planning is essential in ensuring that students with disabilities who are exiting the school system are appropriately connected with providers of post-secondary education, employment and other adult services.

For example, the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) is the primary State agency that authorizes and funds community-based services and supports for people with developmental disabilities. The high demand for DDA-funded services and insufficient resources have resulted in waiting lists. However, with proper advance planning, eligible transitioning students with developmental disabilities are able to access DDA-funded services within a

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[80] Note that the IDEA includes travel training in the definition of special education. Travel training is defined as instruction that enables children with disabilities to develop an awareness of the environment in which they live; and to learn the skills necessary to move effectively and from place to place within that environment. Travel training is an important service IEP Teams should consider when they plan for a child's postsecondary needs. Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Eligible for Transportation, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), November 2009.

[81] Flexer, R.W., Baer, R.M., Luft, P. & Simmons, T.J. (2013). *Accessible Community Transportation in Our Nation*, Easter Seals Project Action, *citing Transition Planning for Secondary Students with Disabilities.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

[82] Maryland State Department of Education. (January 2010). Transition Planning Guide: Preparing Children with Disabilities to Move from School to Appropriate Postsecondary Outcomes, p 10.

specified 12-month window of time and without being placed on lengthy waiting lists, through the Governor's Transitioning Youth Initiative. [83]

Transitioning students, ages 14 to 22, who have documented disabilities are eligible to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services through Maryland's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). Available services can include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, and training to increase employment readiness and self-advocacy skills.[84]

The Howard County Transition Council for Youth with Disabilities was established in April 2013 via Executive Order 2013-04; the term of the Council was later extended to December 2015 via Executive Order 2014-08.[85] One of the primary responsibilities of this entity was helping to ensure effective planning and delivery of transition services to students with disabilities. In 2016, Council Bill 36-2016 officially established the Council as a permanent commission – the Commission for Transitioning Students with Disabilities.[86] The duties of the Commission:

1. Advocate for policy
2. Make recommendations to improve post-secondary outcomes
3. Make recommendations that would facilitate successful customized employment and post-secondary education for students exiting the HCPSS
4. Foster greater collaboration between business, academic, non-profit, and public sectors to engage in successful initiatives designed to immerse students with disabilities in a work environment and provide important job skills

The Howard County Transition Outreach Partnership, a collaboration between the Howard County Autism Society (HCAS), County Government, the public school system, and other local non-profits, was formed to coordinate and expand educational events for transitioning students

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[83] Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration website, https://dda.health.maryland.gov/Pages/TY.aspx

[84] Maryland State Department of Education Division of Rehabilitation Services website, "DORS Pre-Employment Transition Services Fact Sheet," https://dors.maryland.gov/Brochures/Pre-ETS_Fact_Sheet.pdf

[85] Howard County Executive Orders 2013-04 and 2014-08, Howard County Public School System website, https://www.hcpss.org/f/special/transition-council-exec-order.pdf.

[86] Howard County Council Bill 36-2016, Howard County Council website, https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/olis/PrintSummary.aspx?LegislationID=1720.

with all types of disabilities, their families, and service providers. These have included day-long Transition Symposiums, an event initiated by HCAS, as well as workshops focused on advocacy, employment, Social Security benefits, self-directed services, and person-centered planning.

Nationally, 11% of youth aging out of public special education services are employed full-time. Only 40% of parents feel that their children received an education that prepared them for adult life.[87] Clearly, there is much more work to be done to prepare students with disabilities for a successful transition to post-high school education, employment, and adult life.

Stakeholder and Respondent Input And Comments

The need for improved special education and related service in Howard County is reflected in comments from stakeholders and survey respondents. A sample of these comments include the following:[88]

"I would suggest continued expansion of our region programs to allow for quick entry into appropriate specialty programs that have the human and physical resources to safely transition new student into an unfamiliar school system. Adopting a reactive stance to our every changing student needs places children and staff at high risk for physical injury as well as emotional distress. Dr. Cousins once identified his employees as the greatest resources HCPSS had to offer our families. Our current protocol for meeting the needs of new students with emotional and behavior concerns is slowly but surely depleting our most valuable student resource; our staff."

— Educational Professional, Survey Respondent

"The mental health needs of our students are continuing to increase at an exponential rate, including students who are expressing suicidal thoughts. Data from the Office of Psychological services indicates that we are addressing more and more suicidal students every year. These students are presenting with mental health needs and we do not have the staffing to adequately address their needs. In addition, it is extremely challenging for special education staff (including teachers and related services providers) to provide instruction/services, complete assessments, attend meetings, and complete required documentation within the required timelines. These timelines are federally mandated; however, worklog data from the

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[87] Engquist, G. et al. (2012). *Trends and challenges in publicly-financed care for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities*.

[88] Statements in quotation marks reflect stakeholder and respondents' comments. Statements were reproduced as written and may only have been edited to protect privacy, and some spelling errors corrected for the sake of clarity.

Office of Psychological Services indicates that many psychologists are working long hours outside of contract hours in order to stay within these legally mandated timelines. Our colleagues (special education teachers and related service providers) are experiencing the same difficulty - it is in the best interest of our students for them to receive the supports that they need to help them be successful in a timely manner...and as such, it is important that staff are given the time to adequately plan and help them achieve these goals."

— Educational Professional, Survey Respondent

"HCPSS students should have the option to learn American Sign Language (ASL) just as they do to learn other languages such as Spanish and French. Some students get high school credit for completing ASL classes at Howard Community College. Why can't these ASL classes be offered throughout HCPSS schools?"

— Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Untrained paraprofessionals and temporary employees are working with high-need special education students."

—Member, Commission on Disabilities

"Deaf ASL instructors are preferable because they can provide an immediate 'immersion experience' into ASL <u>and</u> deaf culture."

— Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Families with limited English proficiency (LEP) may not be getting the information and services they need. Missing opportunities to gain information and get linked to services. Families may not always acknowledge language deficiency. LEP can also impact obtaining medical care including being accurately diagnosed. Suggest translating resources into different languages."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"...deaf parents were not able to access their child's education due to not being provided qualified interpreters in interactions with school staff. Some students were provided with interpreters who were not qualified, causing them to miss educational content.

— Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Students with disabilities exit the school system without marketable job skills."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Reading intervention for struggling readers is almost non-existent, as there is not HCPSS staff trained in specific reading interventions."

—Member, Commission on Disabilities

"IEP goals and reading interventions should be matched up. If students have reading foundation goals then they should be in a reading foundation based intervention. If students have reading comprehension goals they should be in reading comprehension interventions. "

— Educational Professional, Survey Respondent

"Transition of students with IEPs needs to be improved – actual employers or secondary education representatives, as well as DDA service coordinators, need to be asked to the table for IEP meetings during the student's last couple of years in school."

—Member, Commission on Disabilities

"More staffing and commitment to utilize behavioral supports in lieu of removing students and sending them to more restrictive placements."

— Educational Professional, Survey Respondent

"Require staff to be trained when working with challenging students, train on intensive specialized training - what is specialized instruction - teachers are not trained on tier III research based intervention. High school special ed is a joke. It's a glorified 504 plan and students are just passed so they can graduate poorly prepared."

—Educational Professional, Survey Respondent

"Caseloads of special educators and related service providers are too high, and requests for additional staff to bring caseloads down are often ignored."

—Member, Commission on Disabilities

"There are inconsistencies between different schools regarding before and after-school activities, transition services, staff qualifications, and staff workloads/caseloads."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"*The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Department of Special Education (DSE) has a new inclusive schools committee that focuses on many aspects of disability awareness, and the Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) has presented to multiple schools (all grades and to staff) on autism awareness and inclusion, with many more activities planned for the spring. This type*

of activity can be expanded to all schools with proper volunteer, administration and staff support."

—Written Comment submitted in response to CR23-2018 draft report

"RECC class sizes are too high, do not have enough support staff, and miss too much school due to scheduled late openings/early closings and those for inclement weather."

—Member, Commission on Disabilities

When examining the survey findings and comments, as well as input from stakeholders, a number of recurrent themes emerged:

- More resources are necessary (i.e., more teachers, more aides, more classroom materials, more training)
- More wrap-around services and linkage between staff and service providers are needed
- Expansion of existing services are needed to include expanding continuum of services so that students can be served in a setting appropriate to their needs
- More options for vocational training/certificates and apprenticeships in HCPSS are needed

Recommendations[89] Specific to Education

1. **Implement DMC Recommendations:** Implement applicable recommendations contained in the Special Education Opportunities Review report that was developed by District Management Council, including those regarding:

    - Shifting the roles of paraprofessional staff to emphasize providing nonacademic support rather than content instruction.

[89] The recommendations enumerated here are given priority based on the Commission's assessment of greatest special education and related services need and immediacy of achievement. The recommendations listed here are not assigned numerical priority or importance. Additional recommendations from stakeholders and respondents are listed in Appendix A.

- Increasing the amount of time related service providers such as physical therapist, speech-language pathologists and psychologists spend with students and closely manage group size.

- Ensuring that struggling students receive instruction from educators who have received subject-specific training.[90]

2. **Continue to implement the Special Education Strategic Plan and the Strategic Call to Action:** HCPSS should continue to implement the Special Education Strategic Plan and the Learning and Leading in Equity Strategic Call to Action, with a focus on narrowing achievement gaps between students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers and eliminating disproportionality in areas set by the State and as required by the Federal government.
3. **Expand Mental Health Services:** Develop and implement a framework of expanded school mental health services.[91]
4. **Revisit the recommendations contained in the Voices for Change Report on Bullying:** Revisit the recommendations contained in the Voices for Change Report on Bullying, including adopting new outreach programs and engaging in countywide activities and initiatives which are mindfully inclusive of students with disabilities.
5. **Adhere to IDEA:** Strictly adhere to the requirements of the IDEA, including the IDEA's requirements for parental involvement, evaluations, eligibility determinations,

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[90] (https://www.hcpss.org/f/special/special-education-opportunities-dmc-project-2015-16.pdf)

[91] Principles of Expanded School Mental Health
1. Open access to all children and families.
2. Assess individual and system-wide needs, while building on strengths.
3. Reduce barriers to learning and development.
4. All stakeholders in and around the school are involved in program design and oversight.
5. Continuous progress monitoring and data driven improvements.
6. Continuum of care, ranging from prevention to acute treatment.
7. Key staff are ethical, passionate, and flexible in their treatment approach.
8. Staff appreciate and respect developmental and cultural differences among all stakeholders.
9. Treatment is driven by interdisciplinary collaboration.
10. School-based mental health programs are coordinated with community-based services.
Best Practices in School Mental Health, Issue Brief - No. 19 Date: February 20, 2013.
https://www.chdi.org/index.php/download_file/261/131/

individualized education programs, re-evaluations and educational placements, including:

- Ensuring the availability of a continuum of educational placements and appropriate supplementary aids and services so that students' individual needs are met.
- Ensuring that students are evaluated in all areas of suspected disability using technically sound instruments that may assess the relative contribution of cognitive and behavioral factors, in addition to physical or developmental factors.
- Conducting re-evaluations on a regular basis and at least every three years, except under the limited circumstances when such re-evaluations are not required.
- Re-evaluating a child with a disability before determining that the child is no longer a child with a disability.
- Ensuring adherence to the requirements that each child's IEP contains measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability;
- Ensuring that a description of how the child's progress toward meeting his/her annual IEP goals will be measured and when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided;
- Ensuring appropriate provisions are made through each child's IEP for special education and related services, supplementary aids and services, program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals; to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities.

6. **Strengthen the Transition Process:** Conduct timely and appropriate transition assessments and develop transition plans with meaningful, measurable goals and objectives, beginning no later than middle school. Employment and the ability to move

about one's community are essential components of preparing for adulthood. When developing IEPs, including transition plans, consider transportation needs and develop as appropriate, travel training goals and objectives. Ensure that students have the opportunity to explore career options and experience paid employment prior to exiting the school system. Offer more transition options, including internships, trade and apprenticeship opportunities that have the potential to lead to paid employment. Develop system-wide accountability measures to ensure that every student with a disability, regardless of which HCPSS school they attend, receives consistent, high quality transition services.

7. **Expand Language Course Options:** Provide HCPSS students the option to learn American Sign Language (ASL) in addition to other foreign languages[92] Increase the number of ASL instructors, with a focus on hiring deaf ASL instructors, which would facilitate an immediate and authentic "immersion" experience into ASL and the deaf culture.
8. **Increase Peer Relationship Opportunities for Students who use ASL:** Provide deaf students the opportunity, when appropriate and at their choosing, to interact with other deaf students and also with students who can communicate through sign language, in order to promote the development of natural age-appropriate social interaction and peer relationship skills. These opportunities should involve direct communication between peers, communication which is neither facilitated nor hampered by (adult) interpreters.
9. **Promote Diversity and Disability Awareness Programs:** From preschool to high school, develop and implement both classroom and extracurricular activities which increase awareness and acceptance of diversity, including disability. Utilize classroom instructional activities which give all students the opportunity to learn and practice self-advocacy and social skills. Expand integrated programs which provide natural interaction opportunities between peers, with and without disabilities. Explicitly include awareness and education about people with disabilities in HCPSS' cultural proficiency and diversity and inclusion training and initiatives.
10. **Accommodate ASL and LEP Needs:** Ensure accurate and effective communication through the provision of qualified ASL and foreign language interpreters. Consider translating written materials, including resource documents, into different languages.
11. **Ensure Website Accessibility:** Design, utilize, and maintain user-friendly websites that are accessible to web users with disabilities who may be utilizing screen readers and

[92] ASL classes are reportedly only offered in one school.

other forms of assistive technology. This is critical due to the amount and type of information that is distributed electronically to students, parents and families, and the general public through the HCPSS website and social media.

CHAPTER 6.

EMPLOYMENT

For individuals with and without disabilities, the opportunity to earn a living and support oneself is a valued and widely-held goal. Work, whether part-time or full-time, often serves to define a person and provide a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

The desire to work is reflected in the survey responses from individuals with disabilities. Of the 67 respondents, 36% reported being employed and another 26% reported not being employed but seeking work.[93] Nearly half of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the sense of control they felt they had over decisions regarding employment, and nearly half indicated that their needs were not met with regard to assistance in finding a job. In addition, of the 69 family/unpaid caregiver survey respondents, 58% indicated that the individual for whom they provided care had an unmet employment-related need.[94]

Work also provides economic benefits to the community. Employment earnings increase income tax and other tax revenues, increase consumer spending power, and can reduce the incidence of poverty and reliance on publicly-funded benefits.

Barriers that Impede Employment

A combination of factors including discrimination, attitudinal barriers, low expectations, lack of education and training, lack of reliable transportation, and misperceptions regarding reasonable accommodations, all reduce employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities - a segment of the population likely to unemployed or underemployed.

[93] Supra, p. 24

[94] Supra, p. 29.

Nationally, the labor force participation rate of non-institutionalized civilians age 16 and over who have a disability is just 20.8%, compared to a labor force participation rate of 68.4% for the same age group who do not have a disability.[95]

Job seekers with disabilities need expanded opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for jobs that pay a living wage, and that are in line with their interests and abilities.

Employment Initiatives

For those individuals receiving SSDI or SSI disability benefits, as outlined in Chapter 3 of this report, both the SSDI and SSI programs contain work incentives which allow benefit recipients to work and, in many cases, retain not only health insurance coverage but also at least a portion of their income benefits.[96] Benefits counseling is available through the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, Centers for Independent Living and other entities to educate individuals receiving SSDI and/or SSI on these work incentives and how their benefits are impacted by employment.

Numerous initiatives can be found at federal, state and local government levels to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Under the federal government, the Schedule A Hiring Authority for People with Intellectual Disabilities, Severe Physical Disabilities, or Psychiatric Disabilities (5 CFR 213.3102(u)) provides a non-competitive hiring process and is the basis for preferential hiring of those with disabilities along with statutory hiring authority of Veterans who are 30% or more disabled.[97]

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[95] U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, News Release dated February 26, 2019, "Persons With a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics – 2018," "Table A. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutionalized population by disability status and age, 2017 and 2018 annual averages." https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf

[96] Social Security Administration Publication No. 64-030, January 2018, "2018 RED BOOK: A Summary Guide to Employment Supports for Persons with Disabilities Under the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program." https://www.ssa.gov/redbook/.

[97] https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/individuals-with-disabilities/.

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is a federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain targeted groups, including those with disabilities, who have faced significant obstacles to employment.[98]

Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of disability, and generally requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities in all aspects of the application and employment process. To support the employment provisions of the ADA, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy funds the Job Accommodation Network, a free, confidential service providing guidance on workplace accommodations to businesses and individuals.[99]

In July 2010, then-President Barack Obama signed Executive Order 13548, "Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities." This Executive Order called for the federal government to become a model for the employment of people with disabilities, establishing accountability measures and the development of recruitment and hiring strategies to meet that objective.[100]

In January 2017, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) amended the regulations for Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under these new regulations and to support the employment of individuals with significant disabilities, federal agencies are now required to provide Personal Assistance Services as a reasonable accommodation.[101]

Other States have implemented programs to increase the employment of individuals with disabilities. Delaware, for example, implemented a Selective Placement program which offers job candidates with disabilities a non-competitive process for applying for state merit system jobs.[102] Another example can be found in Minnesota, where State Statute 43A.19 mandates

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[98] Internal Revenue Service website, https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/work-opportunity-tax-credit.

[99] Job Accommodation Network website, https://askjan.org/about-us/index.cfm).

[100] https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2010-07-30/pdf/2010-18988.pdf.

[101] Equal Employment Opportunities Commission website, https://www.eeoc.gov/federal/directives/personal-assistance-services.cfm.

[102] Delaware State Government website, Selective Placement, http://delawarestatejobs.com/explore/disability-resources.shtml

the adoption of an affirmative action program to provide qualified job candidates equal access to State jobs, and to utilize the skills and abilities of qualified members of protected groups, including people with disabilities.[103] To meet the affirmative action goals, Minnesota State Statute 43A.15 established procedures for job applicants whose disabilities are of such a severe nature that they are unable to demonstrate their skills and abilities in the standard competitive selection process. The procedures, referred to as the "Connect 700" program, allow eligible applicants, with the assistance of a job coach, up to 700 hours to demonstrate their qualifications through an on-the-job trial work experience. [104]

Maryland State government offers incentives for workers with disabilities, including the Special Options Eligible List (SOEL).[105] The SOEL process enables qualified job applicants with appropriate documentation of disability to be placed on the list of eligible candidates for a specific job opening without having to compete in a selection test. Maryland also offers the Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) Medicaid Buy-In Health Insurance program.[106] The EID Medicaid program offers premium-based health insurance coverage to working Marylanders with disabilities. The eligibility criteria allow much higher income and asset levels than those found in other Medicaid programs, and eligible participants can qualify for EID while keeping their Medicare and private health insurance coverage intact.

Maryland also provides a State tax incentive, the Maryland Disability Employment Tax Credit, which allows businesses that hire employees with disabilities to take a tax credit for both wages

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[103] Minnesota State Statute 43A.19 Affirmative Action, https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/43A.19

[104] Minnesota State Statute 43A.15, "Noncompetitive and Qualifying Appointments," subdivision 14 "On-the-job demonstration process and appointment," https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/43A.15

[105] Maryland State Department of Budget and Management website, https://dbm.maryland.gov/jobseekers/Pages/Disabilities.aspx.

[106] Maryland Department of Health, Employment - EID Program, https://mmcp.health.maryland.gov/eid/Pages/Home.aspx

paid to these employees as well as for childcare and transportation expenses paid on their behalf.[107]

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration has adopted an "Employment First" philosophy. "The guiding principle of Employment First is that all individuals who want to work can work and contribute to their community when given opportunity, training, and supports that build upon their unique talents, skills and abilities. Everyone of working age, and those supporting them, should consider employment as the first option prior to any other service options. As fully participating members of their community, individuals with developmental disabilities will be afforded the opportunity to earn a living wage and engage in work that makes sense to them."[108]

Implementing an Employment First philosophy in Howard County is challenged by both the transportation system in the County (as addressed elsewhere in this report), which has the problems associated with a rural/suburban jurisdiction, and the nature of the job market in the Baltimore-Washington corridor. Many businesses locate themselves closer to urban centers, which is a challenge due to the difficulty of people with disabilities in Howard County to get to those areas.

Montgomery County Government, a neighboring jurisdiction, has served as one of the host employers for Project SEARCH Montgomery since its inception, hiring more than half of the graduates in the first three years of the program.[109]

Montgomery County also established a Customized Employment Public Internship program in 2007, offering paid, temporary, part-time work assignments which are customized to meet the unique needs of government departments, and matched to the interests, skills, and strengths

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[107] Maryland Comptroller of the Treasury website, https://taxes.marylandtaxes.gov/Business_Taxes/General_Information/Business_Tax_Credits/Maryland_Disability_Employment_Tax_Credit.shtml).

[108] Developmental Disabilities Administration website, https://dda.health.maryland.gov/pages/employment.aspx.

[109] Montgomery County Government website, https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HR/Resources/Files/Staffing/ProjectSearch%204.pdf.

of workers with significant disabilities.[110] Customized employment is a "flexible process designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job seeker and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both."[111] It can involve task reassignment, job carving, and /or job sharing.

Montgomery County Government enacted legislation to promote the employment of people with disabilities, as well as veterans with and without disabilities. This includes amendments to the merit system to allow a hiring preference for veterans and individuals with disabilities through the normal competitive process, established through County Council Bill No. 46-09.[112] Also, a non-competitive hiring process was approved by Montgomery County voters via a ballot question, "Amend Section 401 of the County Charter to allow the County to operate a program within the merit system to recruit and select qualified individuals with severe physical and mental disabilities on a non-competitive basis." As a result, County Council Bill No. 32-12, also referred to as the "Expanded Hiring of Persons with Disabilities Act" was signed into law in February 2012.[113]

Employment Initiatives Undertaken by Howard County Government

Howard County Government has undertaken steps to promote employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

From 2008 to 2018, select Howard County government employees participated in annual Career Exploration Day events, providing job shadowing and workplace exposure activities to transition-age students with disabilities.

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[110] Montgomery County Government website, https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HR/Resources/Files/Staffing/CEFAQsMay2017.pdf.

[111] Job Accommodation Network website, "Accommodation and Compliance: Customized Employment," https://askjan.org/topics/customized.cfm?cssearch=2030813_1

[112] Montgomery County Council website, Bill 46-09, "Personnel-Regulations-Persons with Disabilities-Hiring Preference," https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/bill/2009/20100202_46-09.pdf

[113] Montgomery County Council website, Bill 32-12, "Personnel-Regulations-Persons with Disabilities-Noncompetitive Appointment," https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccllims/bill_details.aspx?doc=842&hl=816

In May 2012, Howard County Council Bill 18-2012 was passed, amending the minimum educational requirement from high school diploma to high school certificate for two job classification descriptions – Office Assistant I and Human Services Aide. It is not known how many County Government departments utilize and hire for these two positions, nor is it known how many individuals with disabilities, if any, have obtained employment with County Government as a direct result of this legislation.

In December 2012, Howard County Council Bill 40-2012 was passed, amending Section 1.112A of the Howard County Code to provide for a hiring preference for qualified applicants with a disability, and applicable only when the hiring authority is establishing an eligibility list.[114]

Not a true hiring preference, this legislation permits the Office of Human Resources to add the names of up to five additional ”most-qualified” candidates (who have disabilities) to the eligibility list given to appointing authorities for review and possible interviewing for vacant positions. It is not known how many individuals with disabilities, if any, have obtained employment with County Government as a direct result of this legislation.

In 2014, Howard County Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Project SEARCH Howard and began serving as host employer for the program. Project SEARCH Howard is now in its fifth year. Forty-eight interns have completed the program to date, four of whom have been hired by the County.

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[114] Howard County Code Section 1.112 (e) provides the following: Eligibility List. (1) If the Personnel Officer approves an employee requisition request, the Human Resources Administrator shall provide the appointing authority with an alphabetical eligibility list [[of at least three and up to ten names of applicants who are most qualified for the position]] based on:(i) The results of open, competitive examinations; or(ii) An examination of an application, resume, or other information provided by the Applicant.2) The eligibility list shall consist of at least three and up to ten names of applicants who are most qualified for the position plus up to an additional five names of applicants who:(i) Were among the next five most highly qualified applicants; and (ii) qualified for a preference under § 1.122a of this Subtitle.

The need for increased employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and ongoing support to assist in maintaining employment, is reflected in comments from stakeholders and survey respondents. A sample of these comments include the following:[115]

"The expectation should be that everyone can and should work."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"I have a job coach, but they have failed in making me successful at my job or finding me the job that I can do successfully. My last job coach could only work with my 3-4 hrs/month. It seems like there is no specialization with people who have had brain injuries for anything in this world."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Finding an employment is a challenge at times, especially with those who are not familiar with disabilities. Providing them some incentives may motivate them to hire people with disabilities."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"....I receive medical benefits under Medicare. If I work, I will lose my Medicare. If I lose Medicare, I will not be able to pay for the medication that allows my survival. If I obtain work with insurance benefits and lose that job, my ability to get insurance is very much in doubt. I have a case manager who has tried to figure out this dilemma, and it seems an intractable problem. I'd love to work and be a "productive member of society"; to live in a house and pay bills; to have a car with less than 300,000 miles on the odometer; to buy nice clothes; to dream of security before I die."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"More businesses need to understand the advantages to hire people with disabilities."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

[115] Statements in quotation marks reflect stakeholder and respondents' comments. Statements were reproduced as written and may only have been edited to protect privacy, and spelling errors corrected for the sake of clarity.

"Create an easy to understand resource document for businesses."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Current model does not support 'Employment First.'"

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"I want to work so bad but no one helps me."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Job support services need to be available on an extended, long-term basis; need larger number of job support personnel who have higher level of skills."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"The time a job coach is with me when I start a new job is too short sometimes I don't understand things right away. I need more help to get used to my job. I want to work more but no one else will have a job for me."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Acknowledge that each of us needs a little help in some areas."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Why is there not more jobs for me? I can do a lot. I like to work with children. I like to work with pets. I like to work in an office. I like having a paycheck. It is good when I am busy. I want to have a chance. I can get the work done and then have my free time. My mom says I need a good mentor to work with me and teach me the job and keep me on task so I can do that."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Lack of continuum of options to meet needs – not meeting the job support needs of those whose disabilities impact employment, but which are not considered severe enough to qualify for services from the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)"

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"I am unable to work meaningfully due to my level of disability."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Compile information and disseminate it to service providers on how to access accommodations and what services are available in the County. Service providers could share this information with their customers and it would be available in one location."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"We need more students exiting HCPSS with both meaningful experience and realistic job opportunities."

—Written Comment submitted in response to CR23-2018 draft report

When reviewing the employment practices of other local jurisdictions, and examining the survey findings and comments as well as input from stakeholders, a number of recurrent themes emerged:

- Increased employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities are needed, and may need to be created through legislation and other local initiatives
- Breaking down the barriers to employment for individuals with significant disabilities will likely require innovative and customized practices
- More resources are necessary (increased competency of job support staff, long-term availability of employment supports, education regarding reasonable accommodations in the workplace, etc.)

Recommendations[116] Specific to Employment

1. **Establish and Support Non-Competitive Hiring Practices**: Consider legislation to provide non-competitive hiring for people with disabilities for Howard County government jobs (this model exists in places such as the Federal government and Montgomery County). Create and provide funding for a paid internship program for individuals with disabilities, modeled after Montgomery County's Customized Employment Public Internship program. Recognize that these efforts will likely require creative and innovative practices, such as

[116] Recommendations enumerated here are given priority based on the Commission's assessment of greatest employment need and immediacy of achievement. The recommendations listed here are not assigned numerical priority or importance. Additional recommendations from stakeholders and respondents are listed in Appendix A.

customized employment, utilizing expertise and resources which may not currently be available within County government.

2. **Fund Innovative Employment Initiatives:** Through a competitive bidding process, award grants or contracts to community-based organizations to fund new and innovative, integrated programs that address identified gaps in employment for individuals with disabilities who reflect the diversity of the County, and whose needs are not currently being addressed through County-funded programs. Consider awarding grants to the highest ranked proposal(s), based on available funding and needs-based criteria that should be tied to priorities identified by the County on an annual basis or at other regular intervals.
3. **Expand Support of Project SEARCH and other HCPSS Work Experience Programs for Students with Disabilities**: Continue to support Project SEARCH, work study, and job shadowing activities and expand work experience opportunities (worksites) by strongly encouraging participation in these programs by all departments in County government.
4. **Create Apprenticeships:** Support and expand apprenticeship opportunities within Howard County Government, for students with disabilities. Include those who are on track to graduate with a high school diploma as well as those on track to exit the school system with a certificate of completion.
5. **Revise Educational Job Requirements**: Revise, where appropriate, additional job descriptions for Howard County Government jobs by eliminating the high school diploma as the minimum education requirement, to expand entry-level employment opportunities for students with disabilities who are transitioning to employment, including but not limited to those who may have training certifications but who lack a high school diploma. Provide funding for the hiring of qualified candidates into these entry-level positions.
6. **Develop Accountability Measures:** Within Howard County Government, track information regarding the hiring of individuals with disabilities and also the County's participation in both County-sponsored and HCPSS-sponsored disability employment initiatives, to ensure accountability and to monitor progress toward desired outcomes. To the extent feasible, make this information publicly available.
7. **Consider Employer Outreach and Incentives:** Through relationships with private-sector businesses, develop ways to promote awareness and creation of internship and employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities. Through workforce initiatives, consider providing local tax credits**,** or other incentives, to Howard County businesses who hire individuals with disabilities; and develop an educational campaign to inform businesses of available resources for recruitment of qualified job candidates, employment support such as job coaching and workplace accommodations, and incentives such as federal, state and local tax credits.

8. **Ensure Website Accessibility:** Design and maintain a user-friendly website that is accessible to web users with disabilities who may be utilizing screen readers and other forms of assistive technology. As stated in the January 2019 Transition Team Report, "The public's entry into all things Howard County government is the website."[117] Website accessibility is critical due to Howard County Government's online posting of job openings and web-based employment application process.

[117] Transition Team for Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. (January 2019). Howard County Transition Team Report Prepared for Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. p. 6. https://www.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5VnU7PGY-RI%3D&portalid=0

CHAPTER 7.

HOUSING

Howard County is considered a very desirable place to live. Located between the employment, education, and cultural hubs of Baltimore and Washington D.C., the County's Columbia and Ellicott City communities have repeatedly been ranked as some of the best places to live in America. Howard County also has some of the highest housing prices in the nation.

Scarcity of Affordable Housing

In calendar year 2017, 123 head of household individuals self-reported to CSHS some form of a disability or medical condition[118]. These included:

- 78 mental health
- 32 chronic health
- 28 physical
- 15 developmental
- 14 physical/medical
- 1 hearing
- 1 vision

Affordable and accessible housing remains scarce and unattainable for many people with disabilities, particularly those with extremely low incomes and those who need physically accessible units. As illustrated in the "Prevalence and Nature of Disabilities in Howard County" section of this report, poverty disproportionately affects people with disabilities, many of whom are among the County's most vulnerable residents.

The scarcity of affordable and accessible housing in the County is reflected in the survey responses from individuals with disabilities, regarding unmet needs. Of the 67 respondents,

[118] CSHS report generated in ServicePoint data system.

43% reported needing accessible features in the home, 41% reported needing financial assistance to help pay rent, and 40% reported needing an opportunity to live by themselves. Eighty-two percent reported living with family. Nearly one third of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the sense of control they felt they had over housing decisions.[119]

In the County overall, 47%[120] of renter households are classified as "rent burdened"[121] (paying more than 30% of household income toward rent), with an unknown (but almost certainly higher) figure among individuals with disabilities due to the higher prevalence of poverty and lower median income. Additionally, as stated by Schaak (2017), "non-elderly adults with disabilities who rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are among the groups most severely affected by the extreme shortage of affordable rental housing across our nation." [122]

Housing Options

There are existing "affordable" County housing programs that are designed to help individuals and families, including those with disabilities, who have low to moderate incomes. Many of these "affordable" housing programs, such as the Moderate-Income Housing Units (MIHU), target those with incomes between 30 % and 60% of area median income.

There are existing County housing programs that are designed to assist homeless individuals and families, including those with disabilities. Examples are the HUD-funded Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program, the Housing Stability Subsidy Program (HSSP), The Residences at the Leola Dorsey Community Resource Center, and shelter diversion/rapid rehousing initiatives.

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[119] Supra, pp. 23-27.

[120] https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk

[121] The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines cost-burdened families as those who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/affordablehousing/

[122] Schaak, Gina*, et al. (*December 2017). *Priced Out: The Housing Crisis for People with Disabilities*.

Deeply subsidized housing options in Howard County are needed for individuals and households with extremely low incomes; that is, those below 15% of area median income.

A single adult with a disability whose sole income is from SSI or SSDI benefits will find it nearly impossible to obtain housing without a rental subsidy. The cost of a modest 1-bedroom apartment in Maryland is approximately 167% of SSI income – the third highest statewide average housing rate in the nation. [123]

Rental subsidy programs such as the Housing Choice Voucher and unit-based subsidies are unavailable for those most in need of them.

The Howard County Housing Choice Voucher tenant-based rental subsidy program (also referred to as "Section 8") waiting list has been closed to new applicants since June 2012. As of March 2016, this waiting list contained 5,208 applicants seeking housing subsidy assistance; 24% indicated a disability, and 71.7% are considered to have extremely low incomes (30% or below the area median income).[124] Information posted on the Howard County Housing Commission website indicates that for those applicants currently on the waiting list, there is at least an eight to ten year wait for rental subsidy assistance. Closing a waiting list is permissible under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines if the average wait is considered excessive; however, by doing so the opportunity for gathering accurate documentation of need is lost.

In Fall 2018, the Howard County Housing Commission was awarded 35 Mainstream vouchers from HUD.[125] According to oral testimony received at the February 13 public hearing, these 35 vouchers were awarded to Howard County in partnership with Harford County and, reportedly, 17 of the vouchers are to be used in Howard County to assist eligible non-elderly people with disabilities on the current Housing Commission waiting list.[126] It is expected that HUD will issue new Notices of Funding Availability for Mainstream Vouchers in the next year. The Housing

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[123] *Priced Out: The Housing Crisis for People with Disabilities* Technical Assistance Collaborative 2016 report.

[124] Data obtained from the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) waiting list as of March 2016, per information received from the Howard County Department of Housing and Community Development on August 27, 2018.

[125] United States Department of Housing and Urban Development website, "2018 Mainstream Voucher Awards," https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PA/documents/2018MainstreamVoucherFinalChart.pdf

[126] Sylvester, P.R. (February 13, 2019). Public testimony on the draft of this report.

Commission should be encouraged to continue to compete for these new housing resources for people with disabilities.

Unit-based subsidy programs also exist in Howard County, but most of these have also closed their waiting lists or have established minimum income eligibility requirements that preclude participation by individuals and families with extremely low incomes.

Individuals needing physically accessible housing face unique challenges due to the limited number of available units containing these features, and the high cost of housing in the County. Requests for reasonable modifications and reasonable accommodations are sometimes denied or ignored by landlords, property managers, and homeowner/condominium associations. Many home modification assistance programs available to County residents are limited to homeowners, older adults, veterans with disabilities, and/or those who have the financial means to repay loans.

Maryland State housing initiatives such as the HUD Section 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA) program[127] and the Weinberg Apartments[128] have lengthy waiting lists, with no units currently available in Howard County.

However, "a new development in Howard County, Robinson Overlook, recently received an award of Low Income Housing Tax Credits from the State of Maryland. This development will include eight Section 811 PRA units and one Weinberg Apartment. The units will be one and two bedrooms and are reserved for occupancy for people with disabilities with incomes at or below 30% of the Baltimore area median income. Residents pay 30% of their actual income for rent plus utilities. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2019 with occupancy in summer of 2020."[129] Tenants for these nine units will be selected from waiting lists managed by the Maryland Department of Disabilities – waiting lists which are currently open for new applicants.

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[127] Maryland Department of Disabilities website. Housing - Section 811 Program. http://mdod.maryland.gov/housing/Pages/section811.aspx

[128] Maryland Department of Disabilities website. Housing - The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation's Affordable Rental Housing Opportunities Initiative for Persons with Disabilities. http://mdod.maryland.gov/housing/Pages/MPAH.aspx

[129] Sylvester, P.R. (February 13, 2019). Public testimony on the draft of this report.

Individuals and families with extremely low incomes are severely limited in choices for housing. For many, independent living is out of reach without rental subsidies. Transitioning youth and adults with disabilities are unable to afford housing and remain living in their parent's homes, even as the parents age or become ill. Adults with disabilities who lack financial means, living in group homes, nursing homes, or other congregate settings, are unable to move into homes of their own and integrate into the community.

Precarious Housing Risk

Different types of disabilities result in different risk profiles for homelessness. When compared to individuals with more significant disabilities, individuals with moderate learning and intellectual disabilities are at higher risk of precarious housing. Individuals with profound core activity restrictions are at low risk of precarious housing.[130]

One approach to addressing precarious housing is to maximize independence by making home environments more accessible to individuals (I.e., closing the person-environment fit). Studies have commented upon the fact that home modifications and assistive technologies serve to "enhance independence and community participation by reducing the need for formal support services and long-term care."[131]

The Coordinated System of Homeless Services

The Coordinated System of Homeless Services (CSHS) is a network of community services and supports that coordinates efforts to end homelessness in Howard County. CSHS is comprised of public and private entities partnering to provide resources to households in need, to prevent loss of stable housing or regain housing that has been lost. Eviction prevention assistance is available; households needing additional resources may contact the CSHS system's Single Point of Entry for assessment and connection to varying levels of support, including intensive case

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[130] Beer, A., *et al*. (July 2012). Addressing homelessness amongst persons with a disability: Identifying and enacting best practice. Project No. 1-EFBLTW. The University of Adelaide, Hanover Welfare Services, Melbourne City Mission, The University of Melbourne National Homelessness Research Projects.

[131] Owuor, J. *et al.* (2018). Does assistive technology contribute to social inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities? A systematic review protocol. BMJ Open, 8, e017533, DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2017-01753.

management. Case managers assist households to identify and address barriers to housing stability; connect to resources and ongoing supports; identify appropriate and affordable housing. CSHS supports include employment services and addiction and trauma treatment.[132]

Stakeholder and Respondent Input and Comments

The need for accessible, affordable housing for people with extremely low incomes is reflected in comments from stakeholders and survey respondents. A sample of these comments include the following:[133]

"Other jurisdictions have seeded innovation by providing incentives for developers to pilot new housing designs and federal programs have provided no-interest loans to get qualified individuals into their own accessible homes."

— Stakeholder, Commission/Board Member

"Fully accessible housing is extremely limited and many folks are forced to accept congregate care because it is unavailable."

— Stakeholder, Commission/Board Member

"Severe lack of affordable and subsidized housing for people with disabilities county wide."

—Community Member, Survey Respondent

"Segregated housing might be considered 'ok' for people living in 55+ communities, it is not 'ok' for people with disabilities."

— Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"More options and choice."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

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[132] https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/Community-Resources-and-Services/Office-of-Community-Partnerships/Coordinated-System-of-Homeless-Services-CSHS.

[133] Statements in quotation marks reflect stakeholder and respondents' comments. Statements were reproduced as written and may only have been edited to protect privacy, and spelling errors corrected for the sake of clarity.

"Affordable housing options need to be located on or near fixed bus routes."

"The Howard County Housing Commission's waiting lists are disproportionately representative of the extremely-low income households of Howard County. While there are some similarities, such as the need for affordable, decent, safe, sanitary housing; the needs for the lowest income residents of Howard County are specific to the need for highly subsidized housing, as well as supportive services."

—Stakeholder meeting Participant

"Although I live with my family, my dream is to live independently with a little support."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Six hundred students with disabilities will be aging out of the school system over the next 5 years. Housing options are limited for those wanting to move out of their parents' home and live on their own in the community."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"I am 16 years old and I don't know where or how I will live when I am grown up."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"I currently live with family but have no hope of living on my own someday in Howard County as I have no income and rely on a very small amount of SSI."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"The person I care for would like to live semi-independently one day, but there is no ability to do that in Howard County."

—Caregiver, Survey Respondent

"I would love to see a visitability law passed in Howard County for all of the new housing to allow for a powder room and one level entrance into the home for those with disabilities to be able to visit."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"I do not have the finances to make modifications to my home to assist me in living as safely as possible."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"'More options and choice.' This comment from an individual with a disability appears in the report and we believe it sums up the importance of looking at a range of options to meet housing demand. With many young people with disabilities aging out of the school system over the next several years, we must get more creative with new solutions. Another local nonprofit is exploring a database to match landlords/housing to individuals with disabilities, equivalent to connecting roommates in college. Last year several families visited the Tiny House exhibit at the HC County Fairgrounds, another potential solution that could warrant exploration."

—Written Comment submitted in response to CR23-2018 draft report

When reviewing housing programs available in other jurisdictions, and examining the survey findings and comments as well as input from stakeholders, a number of recurrent themes emerged:

- There is a shortage of housing options affordable to individuals and households with extremely low incomes
- There is a shortage of housing units containing physical accessibility features for individuals with mobility and other types of disabilities
- More resources are necessary (rental subsidies, home modification assistance, etc.)

Recommendations[134] Specific to Housing Needs

1. **Support the Development of a Howard County Housing Master Plan:** This was the first recommendation appearing in the 2018 final report of the Howard County Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force, which stated: "Develop a master plan for identifying the housing affordability needs of the broad spectrum of vulnerable populations, establish goals for addressing the needs, including sources of adequate sustained funding, and providing metrics for regularly evaluating progress toward

[134] The recommendations enumerated here are given priority based on the Commission's assessment of greatest housing need and immediacy of achievement. The recommendations listed here are not assigned numerical priority or importance. Additional recommendations from stakeholders and respondents are listed in Appendix A.

[134] Howard County, MD. "2018 Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force Report," 16, https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Portals/0/final%20report%2012-21-18.pdf

achieving the goals."[135] The creation of a Housing Master Plan was also a recommendation of the January 2019 Transition Team Report, which stated: "Develop and formally adopt a comprehensive, actionable strategic plan with measurable goals and a diverse set of legislative, regulatory, economic, and social tools for expanding housing opportunities in Howard County."[136]

2. **Increase Availability of Rent Subsidies:** Provide County funding to create additional rental housing subsidies for people with extremely low incomes, including those with disabilities. (Model after a program offered in Montgomery County that provides County general funds to finance the creation and rental of housing units for low income households.) Advocate for and support local requests for additional rental subsidy funds from federal and state government.
3. **Facilitate Housing Development:** Identify sources of grant funding for housing developers, such as in the Weinberg Apartments program, to create additional unit-based rental subsidies. (The Weinberg Apartments program is based on grants awarded to housing developers up-front. In exchange for the building funds, a portion of the units must be made available at rent levels affordable to applicants receiving SSI or SSDI, for a specified number of years.)
4. **Fund Innovative Housing Initiatives:** Through a competitive bidding process, award grants or contracts to community-based organizations to fund new, innovative and integrated housing programs that address identified gaps in housing for individuals with disabilities who reflect the diversity of the County, and whose needs are not currently being addressed through County-funded programs. Consider awarding grants to the highest ranked proposal(s), based on available funding and needs-based criteria that should be tied to priorities identified by the County on an annual basis or at other regular intervals.
5. **Create an Educational Campaign:** Establish an educational campaign to inform landlords, property managers, homeowner/condo associations, tenants, and

[136] Howard County, MD. Transition Team Report Prepared for Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. (January 2019). P. 43. https://www.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5VnU7PGY-RI%3D&portalid=0

homeowners of their responsibilities and obligations under federal/state/local fair housing laws designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities.

6. **Assist with Home Modifications and Assistance Technologies for low income individuals in Need:** Establish and fund a home modification and assistive technology program specifically for renters with extremely low incomes who need accessible housing units and who are required to pay for the cost of disability-related housing modifications and assistive devices.
7. **Increase Stock of Accessible Housing:** Create legislation offering tax credits and other financial incentives to builders for including specific accessibility features in home construction. Model after Design for Life LIVEable Homes program in Montgomery County.[137]
8. **Ensure Website Accessibility:** Design and maintain a user-friendly website that is accessible to web users with disabilities who may be utilizing screen readers and other forms of assistive technology. This is critical because information regarding housing opportunities and housing assistance is likely to be distributed electronically to the general public through the County's website and social media.

[137] Refer to: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/design/professionals.html)

CHAPTER 8.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Our relations with our peers play a major role in our overall development at every stage of our life. Peer relationships are often cited as one of the top five priorities/unmet needs among people with disabilities, across the lifespan. People who do not have a close family member with a disability may underestimate the critical importance of socialization among individuals with disabilities. Studies have consistently shown that the greatest predictor of happiness and perceived quality of life is not physical health, but social connectedness. However, as noted by Wilson, et al,[138] "people with intellectual disabilities often have few friends and experience social exclusion."

Gaps in Socialization Opportunities

For individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), often the greatest challenge with social connectedness occurs after formal education ends at age 21. Attending school provides a regular avenue for interaction with other individuals, both with and without disabilities. After formal education ends there is often no regular access to socialization opportunities. As one Commissioner noted, "The greatest unmet needs or gaps in services with regard to peer relationships are (1) providing children without disabilities, at the youngest age possible, the skills to be friends with children with disabilities, and (2) providing well supported opportunities outside of school for children with disabilities to interact with their typical peers and build friendships. The magnitude of the need is expansive in that it affects more than the approximately 5,600 students with IEPs in Howard County (ages only 3-21, only). It also affects siblings and families. Exclusion is not singular. Children with disabilities are significantly at a higher risk for bullying."

[138] Wilson, N., *et al*. First published: 24 August 2016). *From Social Exclusion to Supported Inclusion: Adults with Intellectual Disability Discuss Their Lived Experiences of a Structured Social Group*, (https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12275.

Noting missed opportunities for social engagement and awareness building, the Commissioner also noted that "the Civil Rights movement pairs nicely with discussions on the Disability Rights movement, yet we barely discuss it and not until government class in 10th grade."

Regular and on-going socialization (e.g., employment, clubs) is much more likely to meet socialization needs than one-time or short-term events and activities.

Shared interests, activities and goals provide a natural foundation for peer interactions and the development of friendships.

Howard County's Opportunities for Social Engagement and Peer Interactions

There are numerous leisure and recreational activity options in Howard County for children and adults, both integrated and segregated. These activities can serve to decrease social isolation and promote social interactions between individuals with and without disabilities.

For example, the County's Department of Recreation and Parks provides a wide variety of sports/fitness activities, leisure and performing arts classes, trips, social events, and summer camps through their after-school care, general recreation, and therapeutic recreation programs. Financial assistance is available to those who qualify, to help pay for program fees. While a limited number of therapeutic recreation activities are offered specifically for participants with disabilities, individuals with disabilities are encouraged to register for general recreation programs. Accommodations such as interpreters and inclusion companions are provided free-of-charge, by request, to meet the need for additional support and to facilitate full participation in integrated activities. Waiting lists sometimes form for some of the more popular Recreation and Parks activities; this may indicate the need to expand the capacity of these programs.

HCPSS offers a wide variety of school-based sports, clubs, performing arts, and other extra-curricular activities for students. The Allied Sports Program, for example, brings together high school students with and without disabilities. Sports activities include bowling, golf, soccer, and softball. The program was honored with an award by the Commission on Disabilities in 2012 for providing a welcoming environment for participants with disabilities and for promoting fitness activities. Another example is Best Buddies, which is a student-run friendship club that pairs people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities for participation in activities. The program offers social opportunities and strives to promote friendships between the participants, thus improving the quality of life and the level of inclusion for a population that is often isolated and/or excluded.

Howard Community College offers a wide selection of non-credit skills-building and personal enrichment courses through the Division of Continuing Education & Workforce Development. Accommodations can be provided by request, and tuition waivers may be available for students with disabilities.

Special Olympics of Howard County provides year-round sports training and competition for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics athletes socialize with each other, with Unified Partners, and with volunteers. In addition to sports activities, the organization sponsors dances, parties and restaurant nights.

Integrated opportunities for socialization are also available through community activities offered by retail stores, public libraries, private athletic/fitness facilities, art, cultural, tourism, village center, and faith-based organizations.

The County's Office on Aging and Independence operates seven membership-based 50+ Centers. A variety of health and wellness, social, and personal enrichment activities are offered, some fee-based and some free-of-charge. The Office on Aging and Independence also operates fee-based social day programs for older adults, adults living with dementia, and adults with disabilities who need a more intensive level of support than is provided at the 50+ Centers. Social day program participants receive therapeutic, social, and personal assistance services in a group setting. A sliding fee scale is available for those who qualify.

Local non-profit agencies serving children and adults with disabilities also provide opportunities for social interactions and the development of peer relationships. Some of these agencies are receive public funds through entities such as the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration and the Maryland Public Mental Health System. Others are privately funded. One organization, for example, partners with local businesses to provide various sensory-friendly activities throughout the year for individuals with disabilities and their families. Parent support groups and social groups for individuals with disabilities who are of similar age, are also offered.

Lack of programs for adults with more significant disabilities

Notwithstanding the opportunities for social interactions noted above, an ongoing concern expressed by some parents of adult children with significant disabilities, is the lack of available day programs in Howard County that are capable of meeting the needs of people with significant disabilities. Parents have reported that their adult children with significant disabilities have not been able to access day program services offered by non-profit organizations that operate in the County because of lack of capacity at those organizations. Parents have also noted the availability of programs in other jurisdictions that are able to meet

the needs of people with significant disabilities. This gap in services may serve to contribute to isolation of persons with significant disabilities who, without access to services afforded other people without significant disabilities, may not have the same opportunities for social interactions.

The desire to have greater control over social/peer relationship choices as well as the need for integrated social and leisure opportunities, is reflected in the survey responses from individuals with disabilities. Of the 67 respondents, nearly half expressed dissatisfaction with the sense of control they felt they had over decisions regarding socialization, with 50% reporting unmet needs for friendships with peers in the same age group, and 45% reporting unmet social/leisure activity needs. Survey respondents with disabilities also indicated a lack of available opportunities to interact with non-disabled peers in all five focus areas of this report, from 35% in the education environment to 61% in the transportation and employment environments.[139] In addition, of the 69 family/unpaid caregiver survey respondents, 53% indicated that the individual for whom they provided care had an unmet social/peer relationship need.[140]

Accessible Facilities and Activities

Howard County Government ensures that newly-built and renovated facilities comply with accessibility mandates. There are, however, segments of the population for whom certain building features that comply with accessibility requirements, may not be accessible. One parent of an adult child with a disability testified at the public hearing on the draft of this report, regarding the lack of public restroom facilities that would afford her adult child the ability to attend and participate in community-based activities. More specifically, the parent suggested requiring adult changing tables in public restrooms.[141] While required in some jurisdictions, adult changing tables are currently not required by federal, state or local accessibility standards. California requires a commercial place of public amusement with a daily occupancy greater than 2,500 people to have at least one adult changing table located in an enclosed bathroom. "Commercial place of public amusement" is defined as an auditorium,

[139] Supra, pp 23-27.

[140] Supra, p. 29.

[141] Suggs, L. (February 13, 2019). Public testimony on the draft of this report.

convention center, cultural complex, exhibition hall, permanent amusement park, sports arena, or theatre or movie house having a maximum occupancy greater than 2,500.[142] The Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Aviation Administration amended its Design Standards in 2015 to require adult changing tables and exceed the minimum requirements included in ADA Accessibility Guidelines and other accessibility requirements for buildings.[143] Family restrooms with adult changing tables are available at other airports, including Phoenix International Airport and Orlando International Airport.[144] Efforts are currently underway in Phoenix, AZ to mandate adult changing tables in all public restrooms.[145] The absence of toilet facilities that are appropriate to the needs of people with certain disabilities may preclude opportunities for outings and socialization that are afforded people without disabilities.

Howard Community College Theatre Department offers performance opportunities for students and community members throughout each year, including fall and spring plays and musicals, touring children's theatre, showcases, and outdoor Shakespeare performances.[146] There are opportunities for students and members of the community to audition for and attend performances. With a significant increase in enrollment at the College over the last several years, the College has expanded its capacity by adding or renovating buildings and parking facilities. Howard Community College is home to the Peter and Elizabeth Horowitz Visual and Performing Arts Center, which comprises three performance venues, Horowitz Center Studio Theatre, Monteabaro Recital Hall and the renovated Smith Theatre.[147]

Howard Community College serves a vital role in the education and cultural enrichment of the people of Howard County. Ticket prices for performances are low enough to encourage public

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[142] California Code, Health and Safety Code - HSC § 19952.5

[143] https://public.airportal.maa.maryland.gov/edocs/Design_Standards/HistoricEditions_and_Supplements/2015/DST%202015-03,%20Section%2011.8.4%20Adult%20Changing%20Rooms_20150807.pdf

[144] https://orlandoairports.net/getting-around-mco/accessibility/

[145] https://www.abc15.com/proposed-bill-would-require-changing-stations-for-babies-and-adults-in-public-restrooms

[146] https://www.howardcc.edu/discover/arts-culture/horowitz-center/areas-of-interest/theatre.html

[147] https://www.howardcc.edu/discover/arts-culture/horowitz-center/about-us/seating-chart.html

patronage and allow meaningful opportunity for socialization. However, without adequate access to Howard Community College's performing arts center, people with physical disabilities may be denied opportunities for socialization. One person who testified at the public hearing on the draft of this report said, "I am here to speak for many aging and mobility-impaired Howard Countians, who find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to access performances at HCC's Horowitz Center for the Visual and Performing Arts. Access to the Smith Theater and Monteabaro Recital Hall involves parking in the garage, crossing a street, a longish walk to the building entrance, then navigating a long triple ramp or steps to reach the Smith Theater. This is too much of an effort for many with mobility, heart or respiratory issues. Pushing a wheelchair up the ramps is also an onerous task. The distance from Parking Lot A, which would put you at the Smith Theatre level, is also a long walk. Once in the Theater, the only seats that don't require [using steps] are temporary uncomfortable chairs. If one attends the Black Box Theater on the lower level, he or she must walk up the triple ramp to use a restroom,...there is none on that level."[148]

In entertainment facilities, gaps in accessible routes, seating and restroom facilities may serve to deter people with disabilities and their families and companions from attending events and may have a chilling effect on people with disabilities engaging in social activities.

Shopping and dining are an important part of the human experience. Being able to access stores and restaurants is sometimes vital to opportunities for socializing with friends and family members. Historic districts such as Old Ellicott City often present with several barriers that make it difficult, if not impossible for people with mobility disabilities to access stores and restaurants that people without disabilities are able to enjoy. Ellicott City has flooded twice in recent years. Some Main Street businesses have added features to improve accessibility. Others have not. There is a common misconception that historical buildings are exempt from accessibility requirements. There are requirements under the ADA for making historic sites accessible. The U.S. Department of the Interior[149] and the U.S. Department of Justice[150] have published briefs and guidelines on accessibility of historic sites. As Ellicott City re-builds after

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[148] Wengel, L. (February 13, 2019). Public Testimony on the draft of this report.

[149] https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/32-accessibility.htm

[150] https://www.ada.gov/comprob.htm

the last flooding, consideration should be given to strictly following mandates for making historic sites accessible. Accessibility features during the rebuilding process should also include sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signals and all facilities in the public right-of-way.

Stakeholder and Respondent Input and Comments

The concerns regarding opportunities for peer relationships is reflected in comments from, and input provided by, stakeholders and survey respondents. A sample of these comments include the following:[151]

"I think the biggest issue is defining who are the peers of people with disabilities? My answer would be "anyone we choose". We don't necessarily need or want to be in groups where our only commonality is our disability."

—Stakeholder, Commission/Board Member

"Opportunities like everyone else"

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Social inclusion is a multidimensional dynamic relational process … combating exclusion involves mitigating disadvantages, whereas facilitating inclusion is about actively creating opportunities."[152]

—Staff Member/Report Contributor

"We can't just look at opportunities for socializing without looking at transportation. This topic is also related to housing – where people live affects their relationships."

—Member, Commission on Disabilities

"HCPSS funded a position for a Disability Awareness Program coordinator years ago. The program would move around school to school with a host "DAP DAY" with all kinds of activities (wheelchair basketball, simulations of blindness or deafness, sensory rooms) and various guest

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[151] Statements in quotation marks reflect stakeholder and respondents' comments. Statements were reproduced as written and may only have been edited to protect privacy, and spelling errors corrected for the sake of clarity.

[152] Citing Owuor J, Larkan F, Kayabu B, *et al*. *Does assistive technology contribute to social inclusion for people with intellectual disability? A systematic review protocol*. BMJ Open 2018;8:e017533. doi:10.1136/ bmjopen-2017-017533.

speakers with disabilities. The program lost funding. We don't necessarily need a paid position. Disability advocacy groups could be tapped to provide such training and activities. School counsellors could organize such activities for their schools."

—Member, Commission on Disabilities

"There is a great diversity of needs and diversity of interests among segment of the population who have disabilities!"

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"In the area of peer relationships, [ ][153] has few opportunities for peer interaction. As [ ]is not in a structured day or educational program, it is difficult for [ ] to interact with [ ] peers. Day programs in Howard County for [ ] level of need are at or near capacity and all the Agencies that I have visited stated they are unable to meet [ ] service needs. As a result, [ ] self directs [ ] transition services and there are limited opportunities for peer interactions. …kudos to …Director of Therapeutic Recreation at Howard County Recreation and Parks for creating meaningful classes during the work day and after hour leisure programs for adults with disabilities. Without these classes/programs, [ ] would have very little to do and this provides [ ] with the opportunity to interact with peers."

—Caregiver, Survey Respondent

"We also need to consider how we build actual skills so that peers can communicate with each other. For instance, if a student communicates without speech (iPad, PECS, typing, pointing, etc.) his peers may need to be taught how to talk to that student."

—Member, Commission on Disabilities

"Diverse groups (integrated) vs. peer/similar groups (segregated) - both might have merit for different people."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Services need to be person-centered and designed to address the specific needs and desires of an individual. It is no longer sufficient to provide services that are segregated or developed a program designed for individuals with disabilities."

—Community Member, Survey Respondent

"Some of the challenges for socialization include but are not limited to:

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[153] [ ] indicates removal of possible identifying information.

Lack of transportation
Lack of regular/organized interaction that occurs when schooling ends
Lack of knowledge/awareness of what does exist"
"Need meaningful sensitivity and inclusion training."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Best practices and currently provided includes, but is not limited to:
VOICES (model of an educational/awareness process that seeks to make people aware of diverse populations with different experiences/needs/perspectives)."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"My family and I do not know how to connect in Howard county as an adult with significant disabilities who because of health issues was not accepted even into a day program but is able to go to events. If my parents cannot take me with them to their activities I have nothing else."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Identify and utilize integrated opportunities for community activities."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"The amazing Hussman Center for Adults with Autism in Towson is a dream destination and many families make that journey north each Friday evening for programs. Their facility is staffed by volunteer Towson University students – nursing, speech-language, OTs, PTs and more – who, as part of their course requirements, must give a certain number of hours to support the program. What an amazing experience for those students and for the participants who are surrounded by typical peers. And, what an advantage for the program to have this free flow of willing hands. But not everyone can or wants to drive to Towson. We recommend the County collaborate with Howard Community College to explore a possibility of implementing a similar or cross-disability program in Howard County, which could leverage the HCC student body and programs."

— Written Comment submitted in response to CR23-2018 draft report

Recommendations[154] Specific to Peer Relationships

1. **Fund Innovative Social Program Initiatives:** Administer Program Development Grants (PDG) to community-based organizations to fund new innovative and integrated social and recreational programs that address identified gaps in services to individuals with significant disabilities and their families who reflect the diversity of the County, and whose needs are not currently being addressed through County-funded programs. Consider awarding grants to the highest ranked proposal(s), based on available funding and need-based criteria that should be tied to priorities identified by the County on an annual basis or at other regular intervals.
2. **Review County-Owned or Operated Facilities for Accessibility.** Conduct a review of county-owned or operated facilities, programs and activities, including those at Howard Community College and the Fairgrounds, to ensure physical accessibility; review policies, practices and activities to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements; ensure that staff are trained in accessibility requirements, including those pertaining to reasonable modification of policies and procedures to allow access.
3. **Ensure accessibility of Historic Ellicott City.** Through the permitting process, require that buildings undergoing alterations or renovations, to the extent feasible,[155] be brought into compliance with the accessibility requirements of the ADA and the Maryland Accessibility Code. Ensure that facilities in the public-right-of-way are compliant with applicable standards.
4. **Assess Capacity of Existing County Programs:** Existing County resources should be fully utilized, to meet the needs of residents of all ages, with and without disabilities. Conduct a review of existing County Government-operated or funded programs and facilities offering social/leisure opportunities, including but not limited to, the Department of Recreation & Parks, the Department of Community Resources & Services, the Howard County Library and Howard Community College, to identify resources that are currently being underutilized and also areas where capacity may need to be expanded. Provide funding as needed and appropriate.

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[154] The recommendations enumerated here are given priority based on the Commission's assessment of greatest peer relationship need and immediacy of achievement. The recommendations listed here are not assigned numerical priority or importance. Additional recommendations from stakeholders and respondents are listed in Appendix A.

[155] Develop objective criteria, procedures and policy for determining feasibility and undue hardship and a formal process for waiving conformity to accessible standards and for setting minimum alternative accessibility requirements in such cases.

5. **Expand Diversity Awareness Programs:** Develop and conduct community events and media campaigns which increase awareness and acceptance of all aspects of diversity, explicitly including disability.
6. **Create an Educational Campaign:** Establish an educational campaign to inform the general public of the vast social, leisure, and recreational opportunities available throughout the County.
7. **Ensure Website Accessibility:** Recognize that technology plays a huge role in the way people communicate and connect with each other. Design, utilize, and maintain user-friendly websites that are accessible to web users with disabilities who may be utilizing screen readers and other forms of assistive technology. This is critical due to the amount of information that is distributed electronically to the general public through the County Government website and social media.
8. **Consider Legislation to Require Adult Changing Tables:** Consider legislation to require, where feasible, companion/family restrooms with adult changing tables in newly-renovated or built public places and places of public accommodations.

SEE TOO, PEER RELATIONSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS IN CHAPTER 5 OF THIS REPORT, UNDER EDUCATION.

CHAPTER 9.

TRANSPORTATION

A comprehensive public transportation system is a critical need in Howard County due to the nature of the county (i.e., mixture of rural and suburban) and the reality that the ability to move, reliably and timely, from point A to point B is essential for independence of any individual in our current society.

Inadequate public transit services impact individuals with disabilities who depend on public transportation to get to and from work, school, medical appointments, shopping, recreation, and other community activities. In addition, employment patterns in the Baltimore-Washington corridor mean that many people with disabilities may find it necessary to go outside the county for employment. Transportation barriers may also make it more difficult for employers to hire people with disabilities who lack the means to get to the worksite.

The lack of an adequate and reliable public transportation system is reflected in the survey responses from individuals with disabilities. Of the 67 respondents, 48% expressed dissatisfaction with the sense of control they have over decisions regarding transportation, with 53% reporting unmet fixed route transportation needs, 44% reporting unmet paratransit needs, 40% reporting an unmet need for assistance with transportation costs, and 32% reporting an unmet need regarding accessible sidewalks and curbs.[156]

Public Transportation System

Public transportation services in the County are managed through a contractual agreement between Howard County Government and the Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland (RTA). The County's public transit system includes fixed route and paratransit services.

[156] Supra, pp. 25-27.

Fixed route transit services operate on a regular, pre-determined schedule and offer flexibility in that riders do not need to schedule trips in advance. Fixed route services are also much more cost effective than paratransit services. Training on how to use the fixed route system is available free-of-charge from a local organization; this training can be customized to individual, group, and train-the-trainer formats. Expansive areas of the County, however, are not served by fixed route and this severely limits transportation options for individuals residing in or wishing to travel to these areas.

Paratransit, called "RTA Mobility" in Howard County, is a curb-to-curb, shared-ride transportation service for riders unable to use fixed route due to disability or age. Pre-certification is required, and trips must be scheduled in advance. RTA Mobility offers two types of paratransit service – ADA and General.

Under ADA paratransit riders, regardless of age, must have a disability which prevents them from using fixed route services. Recertification is required at three- or five-year intervals. ADA paratransit is required by federal law and must, at a minimum, mirror what is available on fixed route transit services. The service is available the same days, times, and areas as the fixed route. ADA paratransit is not available in areas of the County not served by fixed route, as pick-up and drop-off points must be located within ¾ mile of a fixed bus route. For ADA paratransit riders only and subject to safety considerations, door-to-door service may be available by request. There are no limits on the number of trips or restrictions on trip purposes for ADA paratransit services.

General paratransit (GPT) is an "optional" service offered by the County and is not required by federal law. It is available to Howard County residents on the basis of being age 60+ or, for those age 18 to 59, the individual must have a disability which prevents them from using fixed route services. Approximately 84% of GPT riders in Howard County qualify for the service based on being age 60 or older, and recertification is not required. GPT is available countywide and operates weekdays from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. These hours of operation can be problematic for riders who depend on the service to get to and from full-time employment, as well as employment occurring outside of weekday daytime hours. There is a limit of one round trip per day, and trip purposes are restricted to medical appointments, senior centers, social service agency visits, employment, and college. GPT is generally limited to destinations within the County, with one exception. Three days per week, the service transports eligible Howard County residents to and from medical appointments at specified hospitals in Baltimore City. This includes dialysis, burn treatment, wound care, amputee treatment and other medical specialties that may not be available in the County.

Paratransit is one of the higher profile services funded through the County government that provides transportation for older adults and individuals with disabilities. Currently such services cost an average of $43 per one-way trip, and the Office of Transportation has been asked to propose a budget for FY2020 that results in a reduced budget (and potentially fewer trips provided). In the most recent year (FY18):

- 3764 people were approved for GPT of which 84% are age 60+. If there are budgetary limitations this component of service would likely be impacted first.
- 617 people were certified for ADA paratransit (ADA)
- In terms of ridership, an example is the month of September 2018
    - GPT: 3265 trips (average of 1 ride per person)
    - ADA: 2431 trips (average of 4 riders per person), which constitute 43% of all rides[157]

Howard County, along with its regional transit partners and as required by the Maryland Transit Administration, recently completed a five-year Transit Development Plan (TDP). This TDP was endorsed by the Howard County Council on May 7, 2018 and serves as a guide for future transit development in Howard County and the surrounding region.[158]

The TDP recommends improvements to help transform Howard County's fixed route services into a more viable and attractive transportation option for all riders. Some of these improvements include:

- Additional buses
- Fare changes
- Improved bus stops, bus shelters, and the pedestrian routes leading to them
- Bus route system reconfiguration and expansion

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[157] Howard County Office of Transportation, Stakeholder Meeting, November 14, 2018.

[158] The document can be viewed in its entirety at https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/County-Administration/Transportation/Transportation-Projects.

- Service expansion to areas not currently served by fixed route such as Maple Lawn, River Hill, and Turf Valley
- Greater connectivity to public transit systems and destinations in neighboring jurisdictions

Some of the improvements listed above are already in place. For example, fare increases for both fixed route and paratransit are being phased in, with the first changes in effect beginning July 1, 2018. Persons age 60+ and those with disabilities are now able to ride fixed route for free, with an appropriate identification card, in order to reduce reliance on paratransit and incentivize use of fixed route transit.[159] On January 31, 2019, proposed changes to route reconfiguration and expansion were approved, taking effect May 5, 2019. These changes include the addition of two new fixed routes, an increase in the frequency of service to either 30 or 60 minutes, and new or expanded services on Sundays for select routes.[160]

With regard to paratransit services, page 6-2 of the TDP report states, "This TDP does not make specific recommendations regarding mobility services. As documented in Chapters 4 and 5, the cost of paratransit services is unsustainable in the long term especially as demand is projected to increase. Chapter 5 includes several options designed to ensure that ADA and GPT services continue to be available for riders that need it the most. While these options were presented at the public meeting held on the TDP, there was insufficient time for the detailed engagement with the public that is necessary to fully assess the pros and cons of each of the options and make more specific recommendations. A prerequisite for incentivizing paratransit riders to use fixed route service is having better fixed route service. Therefore, Howard County proposes to begin to implement improvements to the fixed route service while it engages with stakeholders on the paratransit service options."[161]

From the TDP, options identified for ensuring that paratransit services continue to be available to riders who need it the most include:

- Incentivizing paratransit riders to use fixed route service
- Increasing fares

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[159] Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland website, "New Fare Prices – Effective July 1, 2018," http://www.transitrta.com/fares/

[160] Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland website, "2019 RTA Route and Schedule Change Recommendations/Decision Matrix," http://www.transitrta.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FINAL_TDP_Summary_Commission_-Recommendations-with-signature.pdf

[161] *Ibid*., p. 6.2.

- Raising age-based GPT eligibility from 60 to 65
- Providing travel training to educate riders on how to use fixed route
- Making service adjustments such as limits on trips and hours of operation
- Utilizing taxi vouchers/subsidies
- Improving service productivity

Howard County's Office of Transportation is facilitating a Paratransit Workgroup, led by the County's Transit and Pedestrian Advisory Group, to review paratransit policies and services and determine if changes are needed. The Paratransit workgroup includes stakeholders from the public and private sectors and a Commission member.

Accessible Bus Stops, Sidewalks and Other Facilities in The Public-Right-Of-Way (Prow)

Accessible bus stops, bus shelters, and the pedestrian routes leading to them are essential components of an accessible transportation system, and also of walkable, bike-friendly communities. Of the 487 RTA bus stops in Howard County, most are in need of ADA improvements such as landing pads.[162]

The need for these accessibility elements has been documented in a number of County plans and reports, among them, the TDP, the 2017 Complete Streets Draft Policy,[163] the 2017 Howard County Pedestrian Master Draft Plan,[164] the 2018 Howard County Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force Report,[165] and the 2019 Transition Team Report.[166]

For example, the sixth recommendation of the Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force Report states, "The Howard County Administration should budget, and the County Council

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[162] Information received from Howard County Office of Transportation on March 5, 2019.

[163] The document can be viewed in its entirety at https://www.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=PMDGB_6pROI%3d&portalid=0

[164] The document can be viewed in its entirety at https://walkhoward.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/compressed_walkhoward_fulldoc_oct_11_20171.pdf

[165] The document can be viewed in its entirety at https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Portals/0/final%20report%2012-21-18.pdf

[166] The document can be viewed in its entirety at https://www.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5VnU7PGY-RI%3D&portalid=0

should support, full annual funding for its portion of the Central Maryland Transit Plan adopted by the County in May 2018." The report goes on to state, "Addressing transportation challenges requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond just buses, automobiles, and truck movement. It is important to make Howard County a more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly community by funding infrastructure improvements and updating the County's design manual to reflect a Complete Streets approach to transportation."[167]

The Transition Team Report states, "Direct the Office of Transportation to focus on a Complete Streets Mission, including improving overall ADA compliance throughout the system, finding bike lane opportunities, and move Bike Howard forward: Complete Streets will ensure people of all ages and abilities can move around the County safely and efficiently, using their mode of choice, be it driving, walking, biking, or public transit. A focus on this mission will improve safety, quality of life, and sustainability in Howard County."[168]

Accessible Parking[169] as an Aspect of Transportation

Members of the Commission have noted gaps in the availability of van accessible parking spaces, accessible parking signs, vehicle access aisles and placement of accessible parking spaces *vis-a-vis* low-emission vehicles and in relation to accessible entrances. The ADA and Maryland Accessibility Code have clear requirements for accessible parking. Requirements include placement of accessible parking spaces on the closest accessible route to an accessible entrance. The requirements include a requirement for the minimum number of car and van accessible spaces and the required minimum width of parking spaces and access aisles. The requirements also include specifications for signage.

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[167] 2018 Howard County Economic Opportunity and Prosperity Task Force Report, p.29, https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Portals/0/final%20report%2012-21-18.pdf

[168] 2019 Transition Team Report, p.10, https://www.howardcountymd.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=5VnU7PGY-RI%3D&portalid=0

[169] Accessible parking also has ramifications for housing, employment and peer relations, but is addressed here, since transportation is a common thread to all the other activities that are the subject of this report.

In spite of these requirements, there are numerous examples of parking spaces and accessible parking signs that are out of compliance with the ADA and the Maryland Accessibility Code. There appears to be a gap in enforcement since oftentimes there is no entity responsible for enforcing the violation.[170]

Another issue that Commission members have observed is that oftentimes, where accessible parking spaces are adjacent to each other, the van accessible space is often the closest to the building entrance. The placement of a van accessible space that is in a cluster of non-van accessible parking spaces, closest to building entrances, is not required and frequently results in a van accessible parking space being used by people with accessible parking tags or placards, who do not require a van accessible parking space but are not precluded from parking in a van accessible parking space.

Accessible parking gaps serve to impede necessary travel and could likely deter shopping and other social outings.

Private Transportation Options

Private transportation services available in the County have limitations.

There is a fee-based transportation service utilizing volunteers driving their own vehicles; the service is restricted to riders age 60 or older and it cannot accommodate the needs of riders who use mobility devices such as wheelchairs.

Taxi services are licensed by the Department of Inspections, Licenses, and Permits; taxi regulations in the County Code do not require vehicles to be accessible. Of the two taxi companies currently licensed to operate in the County, individual drivers own their own vehicles and the taxi companies serve as "dispatchers" through a fee-based arrangement with these individual owner/operators. There are no "taxi fleets" and the vehicles are mostly inaccessible for those who use mobility devices such as wheelchairs.

Fee-based ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft are regulated by the Maryland Public Service Commission. The services are gaining in popularity and involve paid drivers using their privately-owned vehicles, many of which are inaccessible. Page 7-14 of the TDP notes that, "a

[170] The Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits enforces compliance during relevant phases of the building and renovation process. The Howard County Police Department enforces parking restrictions when signs are adequate to provide violators adequate warning. There is no enforcement mechanism, short of filing a disability discrimination complaint, for out-of-compliance parking facilities that are not in the building or renovation process or are missing or bearing signs that are not compliant.

major issue has been the fact that ride-hailing services that do not have a fleet utilize vehicles which are not wheelchair-accessible, and the operators are not trained to provide accessible service. This poses a significant equity issue that may prevent the use of public funds, as does the use of smartphones to hail the services, as not all members of the public have or use smart phones."

Howard County Government should not enter into partnerships or contractual agreements with transportation providers/entities who lack accessible vehicles.

Howard County Government provides funding to support transportation services operated by five local non-profits. This funding is referred to as the Employment Mobility Program (EMP) and is intended to support work-related trips. Four of the organizations receiving EMP funds serve individuals with disabilities. The Office of Transportation hired a transit consulting firm, KFH Group, to assess EMP policies and practices and to make recommendations regarding continued County funding of the program. The assessment resulted in a January 2018 report.[171] The study found that while current EMP is designed for employment-related purposes, and most services through the program fit this category, some medical, social, and recreational trips are also included. The study also found that the Columbia Association program is fully targeted toward cultural and recreational trips, not employment.[172] Some highlights of the EMP report:

- Neither the recipients nor the level of funding has effectively changed over the course of the funding program[173]
- Oversight of the EMP is limited[174]

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[171] *Howard County Non-Profit Organizations Transit Funding Study, Final Report*. A study of the Employment Mobility Program. (January 2018). Prepared by KFH Group, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland, for Howard County Office of Transportation.

[172] *Ibid*., p. 4-5.

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[173] *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

[174] "While the non-profit organizations submit requests for reimbursement with some backup information, these reimbursements are essentially based on a historical split of the overall annual funding amount among the five non-profit organizations, and not on actual outcomes of the program." *Howard County Non-Profit Organizations Funding Study, Final Report*, pp. 1-2 - 1-3.

- In FY 2017, 339,819 passenger trips were provided[175]
- EMP expenditures for FY 2018 totaled $330,571[176]
- For FY 2017, 11% of the total transportation expenses reported by these organizations were collectively supported by EMP funds[177]
- Cost per trip was $8.89 (compared to $56.33 per RTA paratransit trip.)[178]
- Lower costs were likely due to combined trips, exclusion of administrative costs associated with the transportation program; serving many of the same clients daily and on pre-set runs, with a greater opportunity to combine more trips in one vehicle.

According to the EMP agreements, subscription services are defined as regularly scheduled services, including standard pick-up and departure times. The EMP agreements further specify that funds are approved to assist in transporting clients to employment and employment training sites.

The EMP report included, amongst other recommendations, the following:

- Continuing support for the transportation programs operated by the non-profit organizations
- Reassessing program eligibility and criteria

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[175] *Howard County Non-Profit Organizations Transit Funding Study, Final Report*. A study of the Employment Mobility Program, p. 2-10. (January 2018) prepared by KFH Group, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland, for Howard County Office of Transportation.

[176] *Ibid*., p. 1-2.

[177] *Ibid*., p. 2-10.

[178] *Ibid*., p. 2-10.

- Considering increases to the funding levels for the revised program based on growing costs to provide transportation and expanded program eligibility.[179]

Howard County Accessible Transportation Forum

Saturday, September 29, 2018
Sponsored by Howard County Office of Transportation
Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services
Accessible Resources for Independence
Howard County Commission on Disabilities

Words that come to minds of forum participants when contemplating
Howard County transportation

[179] *Howard County Non-Profit Organizations Transit Funding Study, Final Report*. A study of the Employment Mobility Program, p. 4-1. (January 2018). Prepared by KFH Group, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland, for Howard County Office of Transportation.

Stakeholder and Respondent Input and Comments:

The need for comprehensive, accessible, and reliable public and private transportation options in Howard County is reflected in comments from stakeholders and survey respondents. A sample of these comments include the following:[180]

"Transportation, housing and employment are inter-related."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Headway, or the 'run time' between buses stopping at a particular fixed route bus stop, is too long. Miss the bus and it might take an hour or more for the next bus to come."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Adults with disabilities and those age 60+ can ride the fixed route bus service for free, effective July 1, 2018. This encourages independence and integration."

—Public Transportation Forum Participant

"Because of [[181]]I am not able to easily plan my RTA rides correctly and keep track of the calendar unless I rely on a family member to do it for me. I don't have a smartphone or computer, so cannot use Uber/Lyft, but maybe if I had access to a simple way of doing this, that would be helpful. There are certain places like Special Olympics that don't allow ride services for pickup or special events, so cannot use RTA services for that and I have to rely on family members only if they are available, so I don't get to go everywhere I want to. In my case, [[182]] is so busy that [ ] is unable to give my rides to most places. The RTA service is getting more complicated and I am unable to navigate all the rules myself, so have to rely on [ ] who has no time. It would be great if I had someone who could help plan my rides and also give me rides. There is a Neighbor Ride service, but that is only for elderly people. We need a service like that for disabled and [ ] people. Also, my family will be moving to a location in HoCo that is outside of the fixed bus routes, so RTA will no longer be able to give me rides from there. I don't know what I will do at that point. I will be stranded at home doing nothing a lot."*

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[180] Statements in quotation marks reflect stakeholder and respondents' comments. Statements were reproduced as written and may only have been edited to protect privacy, and spelling errors corrected for the sake of clarity.

[181] * Indicates a disability.

[182] [ ] indicates removal of possible identifying information.

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Some Howard County residents have expressed opposition to having fixed route bus service in their neighborhoods."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"There can be a stigma around public transportation, especially in a wealthier county, with the notion that public transit brings crime, etc."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"Inadequate public facilities such as bus stops and bus shelters can be unsafe, inaccessible, poorly located, lack benches, and have signage issues."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"It costs too much to get the driving hours I need for my license, even with assistance from DORS (Division of Rehabilitation Services). I wish we had a wheelchair accessible Uber or a similar service."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Require that RTA drivers wear ID badges so that you can compliment or complain about them, by name. Some drivers are amazing!"

—Public Transportation Forum Participant

"My job is not 9-5, so I cannot use paratransit. I do not live near a bus stop. Uber is too expensive for me. There are no other options."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"My [ ][183] purchased a van that DDA (Developmental Disabilities Administration) paid to modify but this was a very difficult process in that even supervisors at DDA were unable to tell us the process or help us through it. It took over a year with lots of incorrect information. I think we just wore people down."

—Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

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[183] [ ] indicates removal of possible identifying information.

"Need cross-jurisdictional public transit connections so that people can work, attend school, etc. In neighboring jurisdictions."

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"The Para-Transit rules of only one round trip per day inadequately addresses my transportation needs. It is HIGHLY unfair that Para-Transit restricts the transportation to Medical, Education, Social Services, Employment, and SENIOR CENTERS!! A 21 year old transitioning student with a disability living greater than 3/4 mile from a bus stop who is using volunteer opportunities to establish work skills is unable to use the Para-Transit system and the ADA system for home pickup and transportation to the volunteer site. Many bus stops on the RTA route are uncovered, unpaved, and dangerously close to the road which is a severe health and safety hazard for wheelchair bound individuals."

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"I have [[184]] and live in Western Howard County. I stopped driving about 6 years ago. Thankfully, I have family/friends that assist with driving and we can afford occasional uber services, but they are super expensive. A recent trip to the dentist cost me about $50 (15-20 minutes away). Since I do not live near a fixed route, the mobility bus can only help with employment/college or doctor's appointments, no grocery store, shopping etc. Honestly, it is a very disorganized and confusing system to utilize. If I as a highly educated person with a [ ] degree have trouble using it, I can't imagine how difficult it must be for those individuals with cognitive disabilities. I never thought of transportation as an issue until I stopped driving. In the western part of the county, there are few options."*

— Individual with a Disability, Survey Respondent

"Incentives should be provided for more ride-sharing services to have wheelchair accessible vehicles. Public-private partnerships should be developed that underwrite the cost of these services for folks without the means to pay. "

—Stakeholder Meeting Participant

"'Walkability' focus often creates distances in public areas between parking and public buildings that folks with mobility impairments, heart conditions or breathing problems cannot manage."

—*Stakeholder, Commission/Board Member*

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[184]* Indicates a disability.

"People we support need more access to affordable housing and transportation options. Transportation options outside of the normal business hours, especially weekends. Uber vouchers would be great so people could travel outside of the county if need arises."

—Non-Educational Professional, Survey Respondent

"While the report states that the County should not enter into partnerships or contractual agreements with transportation providers/entities that lack accessible vehicles, we would note that commercial ride share services are constantly evolving. We encourage the County to collaborate with the Maryland Public Service Commission and State policymakers to explore how expanded ride share services can be leveraged on an equitable basis."

— Written Comment submitted in response to CR23-2018 draft report

"The Foundation supports 'complete streets' -streets designed so it is safe and easy to bike, walk, use a wheelchair and use public transportation. We need a complete streets policy, which would require the county and private developers – every time they build or repair a road – to make it accessible for walkers, bikers and wheelchair users."

— Public testimony on draft report. DiSalvo-Thronson, K., Horizon Foundation.

"Many families face a challenge in determining whether it is safe for a young person with a disability to drive and, if so, accessing driver education and driving instruction tailored to people with disabilities. There are programs that offer tailored assessment and instruction for potential drivers in Rockville and Towson, however, there presently are no such programs in Howard County."

— Written Comment submitted in response to CR23-2018 draft report

When examining the survey findings and comments as well as input from stakeholders, several recurrent themes emerged:

- There is a need for increased transportation options, particularly for individuals living in rural areas of the County and for individuals with disabilities.
- There is a need for increased accessible transportation options for individuals who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices.
- The fixed route and paratransit areas and hours of operation, as well as connectivity to neighboring jurisdictions, may not be meeting the employment needs of individuals who rely on public transit.
- There is a lack of public awareness regarding public and private transportation services, and how to navigate them.

Recommendations[185] Specific to Transportation Needs

1. **Implement TDP Fixed Route Recommendations:** Implement the improvements recommended in the 2018 Transit Development Plan to help transform Howard County's fixed route services into a more viable and attractive transportation option. These include but are not limited to additional buses, fare changes, bus route reconfiguration, and service expansion to areas of the County not currently served by fixed route.
2. **Assess Paratransit Services:** Support the efforts of the Transit and Pedestrian Advisory Group's Paratransit Workgroup as it works to review paratransit policies and services, engage in robust discussion with stakeholders, and determine feasibility of options to ensure that ADA and GPT services continue to be available for riders that need it the most. Options include but are not limited to incentivizing paratransit riders to use fixed route service, restructuring fares, altering eligibility requirements, making service adjustments, and utilizing vouchers/subsidies for taxi and ridesharing services.
3. **Fund a Comprehensive Evaluation of Facilities in the Public-Right-of-Way (PROW) and a Transition Plan.** Fund through the Capital budget process, a comprehensive evaluation of barriers in the PROW (i.e., curb cuts, curb ramps, sidewalks, crosswalks and other pedestrian elements, bus stops, etc.) and an Action or Transition Plan, to include a detailed inventory of PROW elements that require upgrades, alterations and modifications to be compliant with PROW accessibility requirements; describes in detail the methods to be used to bring the identified PROW facilities into compliance with accessibility requirements; required completion timelines with accompanying funding. The Department of Public Works should continue to implement Sec. 18.402 of the Howard County Code, which provides for the maintenance of sidewalks and driveways.

[185] The recommendations enumerated here are given priority based on the Commission's assessment of greatest transportation need and immediacy of achievement. The recommendations listed here are not assigned numerical priority or importance. Additional recommendations from stakeholders and respondents are listed in Appendix A.

4. **Ensure that parking facilities are adequate and appropriately placed.** Develop mechanisms for enforcement of building code and other legal requirements that are related to accessible parking. Whenever possible, accessible disability parking should be given preference over low-emission and other "green" vehicles with respect to placement on the shortest accessible route to an accessible building entrance. To discourage people with disability parking tags or placards who do not require a van accessible parking space from parking in van accessible spaces, consider requiring that some van accessible spaces in a cluster of accessible spaces, be placed closer to the end of the row of accessible spaces, further away from the building entrance.
5. **Fund Innovative Transportation Initiatives:** Through a competitive bidding process, award grants or contracts to community-based organizations to fund new and innovative programs that address identified gaps in transportation for individuals with disabilities who reflect the diversity of the County, and whose needs are not currently being addressed through County-funded programs. Ensure that programs receiving public funding provide vehicles accessible to those with disabilities who may be using wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Consider awarding grants to the highest ranked proposal(s), based on available funding and needs-based criteria that should be tied to priorities identified by the County on an annual basis or at other regular intervals.
6. **Create an Educational Campaign:** Establish an educational campaign to inform the general public about available transportation options and how to access them. This includes fixed route, paratransit, private transportation, and travel training services. Provide all information in accessible formats.
7. **Ensure Website and Other Accessibility:** Design, utilize, and maintain user-friendly websites that are accessible to web users with disabilities who may be utilizing screen readers and other forms of assistive technology. This is critical due to the amount and type of information (route and fare information, bus schedules, paratransit applications, etc.) that is distributed electronically to the general public through the County and RTA websites and through social media. Kiosks (such as equipment used in the sale of fare tickets/passes and in the collection of fares on transit vehicles) are generally not accessible to people with disabilities, and don't allow the same degree of privacy/confidentiality available to people without disabilities. Ensure that kiosks, if utilized, are accessible to users with disabilities.
8. **Expand Volunteer Ride Services:** Consider expanding subsidized volunteer ride services to include individuals with disabilities who are not currently eligible for services on the basis of age. Consider requiring that grant recipients who provide transportation services, as a condition of their grant award, demonstrate that they are actively recruiting volunteer drivers who provide accessible vehicles.

9. **Review EMP:** Consider the recommendations contained in the Howard County Non-Profit Organization Transit Funding Study, Final Report, January 2018. This includes maintaining funding support for human service transportation programs, improving administration of the EMP program, and reassessing program eligibility and criteria to ensure that priority is for employment.

APPENDIX A.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

All recommendations for meeting the needs of people with disabilities in Howard County were far too numerous to be included in this report. This Appendix captures some additional recommendations that were submitted by stakeholders and respondents who took time to provide input into the study.

Education

- Transition: Increase programs that help students prepare for transition after high school ends. Expand post-secondary education readiness programs such as Project Access[186] to include more options such as non-credit coursework (model after Montgomery County's program). [187]
- Provide enhanced teacher training opportunities, including
    a. Front-loading professional development days so that they are not wiped out because of snow days

[186] Project Access is a college preparatory program offered at Howard Community College that is designed "to assist high school students with disabilities in making a successful transition into post-secondary education." Project Access' goal is to "increase the success rate and freshmen retention rate at any post-secondary institute of their choice by providing instruction in relevant academic areas, career development, and self-advocacy." https://www.howardcc.edu/services-support/academic-support/disability-support-services/project-access/index.html

[187] Montgomery College's Challenge Program provides "open enrollment enrichment courses for adults with developmental disabilities to help them function more independently in their homes, at work, and in the community. The courses are designed to enhance skills, develop new skills, and/or hone skills students may have already acquired. Of equal importance, students will have the opportunity to increase their social and community awareness by learning at Montgomery College." http://cms.montgomerycollege.edu/wdce/ce/challenge.html

b. Providing paid leave for teachers to get training in special education.

- Require cross-training of general education teachers.
- Provide special education certification opportunities for general educators.
- Ensure that special education teachers are highly qualified.[188] Certify teachers in working with specific disabilities, not just disabilities in general.
- Advocate for a change in the State level teacher curriculum to require special education training for all new teachers.
- Establish an independent parent advocate.
- Expand the practice of matching gifted/talented students with students with disabilities.
- Promote collaboration and partnerships between entities. For example, consider collaborating and sharing resources with the Maryland School for the Deaf – Columbia Campus.
- Orient services to a more person-centered perspective (i.e., what do people with disabilities want as opposed to what family members want). Recognize "dignity of risk" (i.e., danger of overprotecting people with disabilities to the point where it becomes condescending).
- Expand continuum of services so schools can provide all needed services in the student's home school.

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[188] The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) requires that all public elementary and secondary special education teachers be "highly qualified" as special education teachers. The definition of "highly qualified special education teachers" in the IDEA [20 U.S.C. 1401(10)] is aligned with No Child Left Behind's highly qualified requirements under that statute at section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) [20 U.S.C. 7801(23)] and the implementing regulations at 34 CFR §200.56. Section 300.18(g)(1) of the IDEA regulations states that a teacher who is highly qualified under section 602(10) [20 U.S.C. 1401(10)] of IDEA shall be considered highly qualified for purposes of the ESEA. Section 300.18 of the IDEA regulations establishes requirements for special education teachers in general, as well as those teaching core academic and multiple subjects and those not teaching core academic subjects. In addition, it establishes requirements for special education teachers teaching to alternate achievement standards and describes alternative routes to certification. The regulations also clarify what it means to be a "new" special education teacher and that the highly qualified teacher requirements do not apply to teachers hired by private elementary schools and secondary schools. Section 300.156 of the IDEA regulations requires that each SEA establish and maintain personnel qualifications. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/07-0006.HQT_.pdf

Employment

- Provide training for all County employment services staff, to ensure competency in serving job seekers of all backgrounds and abilities, including those who have disabilities.
- Provide training to job developers and job coaches to enable them to provide effective job-related supports. (Note: Currently, job developers and job coaches employed by non-profit organizations can access free or fee-based training opportunities offered by such entities as Maryland Works, Inc. and Maryland State Government).
- Provide training to people with disabilities regarding disclosures and the process for requesting job-related accommodations.
- Provide information regarding resources to individuals who need assistance but who are not eligible for DORS funding.
- Create transportation hubs near major employers.
- Develop more options for self-employment (micro-enterprises).

Housing

- Consider legislation establishing rent stabilization/rent control mechanisms, to help keep rental housing prices in the County as affordable as possible. Model after programs found in cities such as San Francisco.[189]
- Allow rental vouchers to be used for renting rooms in privately-owned homes.
- Consider supporting the creation of a database to help link individuals/families with disabilities with others who are seeking roommates to share housing costs.
- Orient services to a more "person-centered perspective" (i.e., what do people with disabilities want as opposed to what family members want).
- Consider partnering with real estate developers/property management companies that are capable of providing integrated, affordable, permanent supportive housing (PSH) (a concept founded on the importance of combining housing with services, design, and amenities that benefit people with disabilities, including people who are Deaf,

[189] City and County of San Francisco website, https://sfrb.org/rent-ordinance) and New York City. New York City Government Rent Guidelines Board web page, https://www1.nyc.gov/site/rentguidelinesboard/about/about.page.

DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing, persons struggling with addiction and homelessness, and other special needs populations).

- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)[190]is a recognized Best Practice to address the housing needs of individuals with disabilities who experience chronic homelessness.
- People who do not earn a substantial income and/or who may have struggled with homelessness often face additional issues that inhibit the ability to maintain housing. Linking these individuals with case management or supportive services may be the key to allowing them to secure and maintain housing.

Peer Relations

- Provide training in handling peer relationships.
- Expand social opportunities
    a. Volunteer mediated social groups
    b. Meetup groups organized via the County
    c. Facebook page to help individuals/parents connect
    d. Build upon mode that NAMI has to offer groups/assistance
    e. Offer school-based social activities such as structured "lunch bunches,"

    Best Buddies, and Broadway Connections to all schools and at all school levels.

- Consider collaborating with Howard Community College to implement a cross-disability program modelled after Towson University's Hussman Center for Adults with Autism, where students are required to participate in socialization/support programs with people with disabilities as part of the degree requirements for selected specialization(s).

[190] The "permanent" aspect of PSH addresses the problem that many people who have been homeless will not be able to enter the regular housing market in the future and are therefore not well served by time-limited transitional housing models because at the end of the transition time, they will not be able to sustain housing and will cycle back to homelessness. Permanent Supportive Housing. Evaluating the Evidence for Improving Health Outcomes Among People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Health and Medicine Division; Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice; Policy and Global Affairs; Science and Technology for Sustainability Program; Committee on an Evaluation of Permanent Supportive Housing Programs for Homeless Individuals. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2018 Jul 11.

- Expand the membership eligibility criteria of 50+ Centers to include adults with disabilities regardless of their age.
- Establish more parent support groups (such support groups can be associated with, but are not limited to, schools).

Transportation

- Promote / incentivize public carpooling, vanpooling, and ridesharing services such as those found through the local Commuter Connections program at https://www.commuterconnections.org/commuters/ Encourage ridesharing via carpool or vanpool for employees with disabilities who may not be able to use public transportation or whose work shifts do not correspond with public transportation schedules.
- Engage the Howard County business community/local employers to propose creative and innovative transportation options for their employees to get to and from work, especially for those needing physically-accessible vehicles and for those living in rural parts of the County. Include large employers (like National Security Agency and Fort Meade in Anne Arundel County, and the Social Security Administration and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare in Baltimore) who are located outside of the County but who employ large numbers of Howard County residents. Develop and promote incentives to reward innovative employee transportation programs.
- Provide enhanced training for RTA drivers and taxi service providers who are contracted by RTA to provide services, including:
    c. Disability etiquette
    d. Handling of medical equipment/devices
    e. General ADA requirements
    f. Services animals under ADA
- Identify options, including the use of tax credits, for employers who purchase, lease, or retrofit company vehicles so they can be used by all employees.
- Consider collaborating with Howard Community College to develop a driver education program, including driver readiness assessments and adaptive driver education, to increase opportunities for residents with and without disabilities to prepare for, and obtain, a driver's license. Model after Montgomery College program.[191]

[191] Montgomery College Driver's Education Programs, https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/workforce-development-continuing-education/transportation-safety/drivers-ed.html

- Support the creation of a coordinated statewide public transportation system that spans the entire State of Maryland

APPENDIX B.

SURVEYS

INDIVIDUAL WITH DISABILITY

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities is conducting a study pursuant to County Resolution 23-2018, which was enacted on March 5, 2018; and under its statutory authority to advise the County Executive and County Council on disability matters. The Commission on Disabilities' study will assist with identifying the needs of people with disabilities in Howard County, look at best practices and provide recommendations for supporting and facilitating inclusion of persons with disabilities into the community. The survey will help us learn more about the characteristics and needs of, and barriers experienced by, people with disabilities in Education, Employment, Transportation, Housing, and Peer Relationships. If you fall into more than one survey category, please feel free to complete as many surveys as are applicable to you.

This survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete. All information collected will be anonymous. Identifying information (IP address, email, etc.) will be not be captured, shared with anyone else or used to analyze collected data. Information collected will not, and cannot, be used to restrict access to services for any individual.

Thank you in advance for contributing to this study.

If you need accommodations to participate in this study, please contact Erica Lewis by telephone at 410-313-6402 (Voice/Relay); or by Email at ealewis@howardcountymd.gov.

1. Who is completing this survey?
   - Individual with a disability
   - Individual with a disability being assisted by another person

2. Your age (number only)

   [ ]

3. Your zip code (please only enter a number):

4. My ability to read, speak and write English:
   - Fluent
   - Functional but not fluent
   - Difficulty understanding English
   - Do not understand English

5. My race/ethnicity: (check all that apply)
   - White/Caucasian
   - Black/African-American
   - Asian/Pacific Islander
   - Hispanic/Latino

   Other Please specify)

6. My housing situation is:
   - Living with family
   - Living with persons not related to me
   - Living in your family household
   - Living by myself

   Other (please specify)

7. If living with family, the total number of related people living in my household is:

8. My current employment status: (check all that apply)
   - Employed
   - Self-employed
   - Not employed but looking for work
   - Not employed and not looking for work
   - Retired

   Other (please specify)

9. My health insurance: (check all that apply)
   - Private insurance
   - Medicaid / Medical Assistance
   - Medicare
   - None

10. I receive services that are approved and funded by the following systems: (check all that apply)
   - Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)
   - Maryland Public Behavioral & Mental Health System / Beacon Health Options
   - Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Vocational Assistance

11. My source of income: (check all that apply)
   - Earnings / wages from employment
   - Supplemental Security Income ((SSI)
   - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
   - None

   Other (please specify)

12. My yearly income:
   - 0 to $10,000
   - $10,001 to $15,000
   - $15,001 to $20,000
   - $20,001 to $30,000
   - $30,001 to $45,000
   - $45,001 to $60,000
   - $60,001 to $75,000
   - More than $75,000

13. The approximate total yearly Income of ALL persons living in my family household:
   - 0 to $10,000
   - $10,001 to $15,000
   - $15,001 to $20,000
   - $20,001 to $30,000
   - $30,001 to $45,000
   - $45,001 to $60,000
   - $60,001 to $75,000

- More than $75,000

14. **I have a disability which causes difficulty with: (check all that apply)**
- Seeing, even if wearing glasses
- Hearing, even if using a hearing aid
- Physical movement such as walking or climbing steps
- Learning
- Thinking or mood
- Remembering or concentrating
- Ability for self-care such as bathing or dressing
- Ability to live independently
- Social relationships

Other (please specify)

15. My level of satisfaction with the control I have over making my own choices regarding:

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Housing	○	○	○	○
Education	○	○	○	○
Employment	○	○	○	○
Transportation	○	○	○	○
Social Activities	○	○	○	○

16. My level of satisfaction with available opportunities for interacting with non-disabled peers while engaged in:

	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Housing	○	○	○	○
Education	○	○	○	○
Employment	○	○	○	○
Transportation	○	○	○	○
Social Activities	○	○	○	○

17. I participate with others in social / recreational activities through (check all that apply):

- ○ Day program (medical day care, supervised daytime group activities, senior center, etc.)
- ○ Public school system or college
- ○ Department of Recreation and Parks
- ○ Faith-based organizations
- ○ Employer
- ○ Family and friends
- ○ Other Entities (such as Best Buddies, Special Olympics, Columbia Association, Y Center, disability-specific organizations, etc.)

18. The following questions are in regards to your housing and basic needs (check only one answer per row):

	My needs are met	My needs are not met	I do not have any needs in this area
Opportunity to live by myself (either independently or with assistance from others)	○	○	○
Rental assistance or rental subsidy to help pay a portion of my rent and to make housing in Howard County affordable to me	○	○	○
Homeownership down payment / mortgage assistance to help me buy my own home	○	○	○
Housing with physical accessibility features / modifications such as grab bars in bathroom, wide doorways, no-step entrance, no-step bathtub / shower stall, etc.	○	○	○
Housing which is supervised or supported by a service provider agency	○	○	○
Housing needs not specified above (describe in comments section)	○	○	○
Utilities (gas and electricity)	○	○	○
Food and nutrition	○	○	○

19. Comments regarding my housing needs, and suggestions to improve housing for people with disabilities in Howard County:

20. The following questions are in regards to your educational needs (check only one answer per row):

	My needs are met	My needs are not met	I do not have any needs in this area
Opportunity to participate in classroom learning and other school activities with students who do not have disabilities	○	○	○
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan goals and services	○	○	○
Services and assistance from school to help me prepare for college	○	○	○
Services and assistance from school to help me prepare for employment	○	○	○
Services and assistance from school to help me prepare for life after I leave high school	○	○	○
Educational needs not specified above (describe in comments section)	○	○	○

21. Comments regarding my education needs, and suggestions to improve education for people with disabilities in Howard County:

22. The following questions are in regards to your transportation needs (check only one answer per row):

	My needs are met	My needs are not met	I do not have any needs in this area
Availability of fixed bus routes within Howard County and also to travel to places outside of Howard County	○	○	○
Availability of paratransit services	○	○	○
Availability of sidewalks and curb cuts so that I can safely get to and from the closest bus stops	○	○	○
Assistance to help me pay for the cost of transportation	○	○	○
Availability of fee-based taxi and other private transportation services using vehicles that are physically accessible to people who use wheelchairs, walkers, etc.	○	○	○
Availability of ridesharing services (such as Uber, Lyft, Neighbor Ride, etc.) using vehicles that are physically accessible to people who use wheelchairs, walkers, etc.	○	○	○
Opportunity to obtain a driver's license and drive my own vehicle	○	○	○
Availability of family members and friends to drive me to the places that I need to get to and from	○	○	○
Transportation needs not specified above (describe in comments section)	○	○	○

23. Comments regarding my transportation needs, and suggestions to improve transportation for people with disabilities in Howard County:

24. The following questions are in regards to your employment needs (check only one answer per row):

	My needs are met	My needs are not met	I do not have any needs in this area
Availability of work-study and internship positions arranged through my school			
Availability of vocational training to learn specific job skill(s)	○	○	○
Assistance to help me find a job	○	○	○
On-the-job assistance (job coaching, reasonable accommodations from my employer, etc.) to support me while I do my job	○	○	○
Awareness of my rights as a job seeker with a disability or as an employee with a disability	○	○	○
Employment needs not specified above (describe in comments section)	○	○	○

25. Comments regarding my employment needs, and suggestions to improve employment for people with disabilities in Howard County:

26. The following questions are in regards to your social and peer relationship needs (check only one answer per row):

	My needs are met	My needs are not met	I do not have any needs in this area
Friendships with others in my age group	○	○	○
Connecting with others through social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)	○	○	○
Participation in social or leisure activities with others	○	○	○
Participation in sports and fitness activities with others	○	○	○
Social and peer relationship needs not specified above (describe in comments section)	○	○	○

Other types of activities not specified

27. Comments regarding my social and peer relationship needs, and suggestions to improve peer relations for people with disabilities in Howard County:

28. If you have any final comments or suggestions, we welcome your feedback:

Individual with a Disability

Thank you for completing the survey! When you exit you will be re-directed back to the web page that directed you here. If there is another survey that is relevant to your role, please feel free to complete it.

FAMILY AND UNPAID CAREGIVERS OF INDIVIDUAL WITH DISABILITY

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities is conducting a study pursuant to County Resolution 23-2018, which was enacted on March 5, 2018; and under its statutory authority to advise the County Executive and County Council on disability matters. The Commission on Disabilities' study will assist with identifying the needs of people with disabilities in Howard County, look at best practices and provide recommendations for supporting and facilitating inclusion of persons with disabilities into the community. The survey will help us learn more about the characteristics and needs of, and barriers experienced by, people with disabilities in Education, Employment, Transportation, Housing, and Peer Relationships. If you fall into more than one survey category, please feel free to complete as many surveys as are applicable to you.

This survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete. All information collected will be anonymous. Identifying information (IP address, email, etc.) will be not be captured, shared with anyone else or used to analyze collected data. Information collected will not, and cannot, be used to restrict access to services for any individual.

Thank you in advance for contributing to this study.

If you need accommodations to participate in this study, please contact Erica Lewis by telephone at 410-313-6402 (Voice/Relay); or by Email at ealewis@howardcountymd.gov.

1. My relationship to the individual with a disability for whom I provide care:
   - Parent/grandparent
   - Spouse
   - Child
   - Sibling
   - Friend

   Other (please specify)

2. My current age (number only):

3. My current zip code (please only enter a number):

4. My ability to read, speak and write English is:
   - Fluent
   - Functional but not fluent
   - Difficulty understanding English
   - Do not understand English

5. My race/ethnicity: (check all that apply)
   - White/Caucasian
   - Black/African-American
   - Asian/Pacific Islander
   - Hispanic/Latino

   Other (please specify)

6. I live with the person with a disability for whom I provide care:
   - Yes
   - No
   - Yes – some of the time
   - Other (please specify)

7. My employment status: (check all that apply)
   - Employed
   - Self-employed
   - Not employed but looking for work
   - Not employed and not looking for work
   - Retired

   Other (please specify)

8. Changes in my employment status as a result of my caregiving responsibilities:
   - No change

- Increase in work hours
- Decrease in work hours
- Changed jobs
- Began working
- Quit job
- Paid leave of absence
- Unpaid leave of absence
- Laid off
- Early retirement

9. The approximate total yearly income of ALL persons living in my family household:
   - 0 to $10,000
   - $10,001 to $15,000
   - $15,001 to $20,000
   - $20,001 to $30,000
   - $30,001 to $45,000
   - $45,001 to $60,000
   - $60,001 to $75,000
   - More than $75,000

10. The individual for whom I provide care has a disability which causes difficulty with (check all that apply):
    - Seeing, even if wearing glasses
    - Hearing, even if using a hearing aid
    - Physical movement such as walking or climbing steps
    - Learning
    - Thinking or mood
    - Remembering or concentrating
    - Ability for self-care such as bathing or dressing
    - Ability to live independently
    - Social relationships

    Other (please specify)

11. I have been a caregiver for:
    - 1 year or less

- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 or more years

12. On average, I spend the following number of hours each week on caregiving responsibilities:
    - 1-5 hours
    - 6-10 hours
    - 11-15 hours
    - 16-20 hours
    - 21-25 hours
    - 26-30 hours
    - 31+ hours

13. I provide the following types of caregiving functions (check all that apply):
    - Supervision/monitoring
    - Transportation
    - Help with finances
    - Help with groceries/preparing meals
    - Help with medications
    - Help with transferring from bed/chair
    - Help with bathing/dressing
    - Help with toileting

    Other (please specify)

    [ ]

14. I anticipate needing to continue as a caregiver for another:
    - year or less
    - 2 more years
    - 3 more years
    - 4 more years
    - 5 or more years

15. I feel (please rate the following statements):

	Nearly Always	Quite Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
That because of the time I spend as a caregiver, I don't have enough time for myself?					
Stressed between being a caregiver and trying to meet other responsibilities (work/family)?					
Angry when I am around the individual for whom I provide care?					
That my caregiver responsibility currently affects my relationship with other family members or friends in a negative way?					
Strained when I am around the individual for whom I provide care?					
That my health has suffered because of my involvement as a caregiver?					
That I don't have as much privacy as I would like because of my caregiver responsibilities?					
That my social life has suffered because I am a caregiver?					
That I have lost control of my life since I became a caregiver?					
Uncertain about what to do about the individual for whom I provide care?					
I should be doing more for the individual for whom I provide care?					
I could do a better job in my role as a caregiver?					

16. My opinion as to the level of unmet need of the person for whom I provide care, are as follows:

	Needs fully met	Needs partially met	Needs not met	No needs in this area
Housing	○	○	○	○
Education	○	○	○	○
Employment	○	○	○	○
Transportation	○	○	○	○
Social / Peer Relationships	○	○	○	○

17. If you have any suggestions for best practices or would like to provide additional comments, we welcome your input:

Family and Unpaid Caregivers of Individual with Disability

Thank you for completing the survey! When you exit you will be re-directed back to the web page that directed you here. If there is another survey that is relevant to your role, please feel free to complete it.

EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities is conducting a study pursuant to County Resolution 23-2018, which was enacted on March 5, 2018; and under its statutory authority to advise the County Executive and County Council on disability matters. The Commission on Disabilities' study will assist with identifying the needs of people with disabilities in Howard County, look at best practices and provide recommendations for supporting and facilitating inclusion of persons with disabilities into the community. The survey will help us learn more about the characteristics and needs of, and barriers experienced by, people with disabilities in Education, Employment, Transportation, Housing, and Peer Relationships. If you fall into more than one survey category, please feel free to complete as many surveys as are applicable to you.

This survey should take no more than 15-20 minutes to complete. All information collected will be anonymous. Identifying information (IP address, email, etc.) will be not be captured, shared with anyone else or used to analyze collected data. Information collected will not, and cannot, be used to restrict access to services for any individual.

Thank you in advance for contributing to this study.

If you need accommodations to participate in this study, please contact Erica Lewis by telephone at 410-313-6402 (Voice/Relay); or by Email at ealewis@howardcountymd.gov.

"Student" is used in this survey to mean a person with at least one disability in your assigned educational setting(s) from kindergarten through the final year of high school.

1. I work with students in the following grades: (check all that apply)
   - K to 2nd
   - 3rd to 5th
   - 6th to 8th
   - 9th and up

2. I work in the following educational setting: (check all that apply)
   - Public general education
   - Public special education
   - Non-public general education
   - Non-public special education
   - Residential
   - Home/Hospital
   - Other (please specify)

3. I work with students with the following disability classifications: (check all that apply)
   - Autism
   - Blindness
   - Deafness
   - Emotional Disturbance
   - Hearing Impairment
   - Intellectual Disability
   - Multiple Disabilities
   - Orthopedic Impairment
   - Other Health Impaired
   - Specific Learning Disability
   - Speech or Language Impairment
   - Traumatic Brain Injury
   - Visual Impairment
   - I do not know

4. My primary assignment is: (check all that apply)
   - Special education teacher
   - General education teacher
   - Substitute teacher
   - Teacher aide / Classroom assistant
   - Related services provider (provides services under an IEP / 504 Plan)
   - School Administrator
   - Other (please specify)

5. I hold a degree or certification in special education:

- Yes
- No

6. I have received training pertaining to the following: (check all that apply)
   - Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
   - 504 Plans
   - Child Find
   - Least restrictive environment
   - Procedural safeguards
   - Inclusive education practices
   - Presumption of competence
   - Managing disruptive behaviors
   - Transition services
   - Cultural proficiency
   - Other (please specify)

7. I provide the following services to students: (check all that apply)
   - General instruction
   - Specialized instruction
   - College preparation
   - Vocational preparation
   - Case management / Social work
   - Mental / Behavioral health
   - Self-care / Independent living skills instruction
   - Life skills instruction
   - Speech language therapy
   - Physical / Occupational therapy
   - Social / Peer relationship skills instruction
   - Transportation skills instruction
   - Other (please specify)

8. During the school year, I work with the approximate numbers of students in the following categories: (either directly or indirectly, including through IEP meetings and consultations with other educators or professionals. Please approximate if you do not know exactly):

	None	1-10	11-20	21-40	40+	Unsure
Students with IEPs	○	○	○	○	○	○
Students with 504 Plans	○	○	○	○	○	○

9. For students who have IEPs with whom I work:

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Infrequently	Never	Not applicable
I am aware of the IEP goals that I am responsible for implementing	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have adequate opportunities for providing parents periodic updates about their child's progress	○	○	○	○	○	○

10. In my opinion, to meet the needs of students with disabilities, teachers and related services providers receive the following:

	Always	Most of the time	Sometimes	Infrequently	Never
Appropriate training opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Administrative support	○	○	○	○	○
Ample planning and preparation time	○	○	○	○	○
Adequate materials and equipment	○	○	○	○	○
Adequate physical facilities	○	○	○	○	○

11. In my opinion, there are enough:

	True	False
Special education teachers to serve students with IEPs and 504 plans	○	○
Related services providers to serve students with IEPs and 504 plans	○	○
Transition services staff to serve students with disabilities	○	○

12. In my opinion, students with disabilities:

	Strong agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Are included in group activities	○	○	○	○	○
Are treated as a peer	○	○	○	○	○
Have friendships with others with disabilities	○	○	○	○	○
Have friendships with others without disabilities	○	○	○	○	○
Are bullied or victimized	○	○	○	○	○
	○	○	○	○	○

13. My opinion as to the level of unmet need in Howard County for the following:

	No unmet need	Minor unmet need	Moderate unmet need	Severe unmet need
Timely identification, evaluation and development of IEP and 504 plans	○	○	○	○
Appropriate placement of students with disabilities based on students' identified needs	○	○	○	○
Academic progress of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Behavior interventions and supports for students with disabilities	○	○	○	○

Effective appropriate handling of incidents of bullying and victimization	○	○	○	○
Transition services	○	○	○	○

12. For question #13, please explain any ratings marked with a “moderate” or “severe” unmet need: (maximum 150 words)

13. If you have any suggestions for best practices or would like to provide additional comments, we welcome your input: (maximum 150 words)

Educational Professionals Working with Students with Disabilities

Thank you for completing the survey! When you exit you will be re-directed back to the web page that directed you here. If there is another survey that is relevant to your role, please feel free to complete it.

NON-EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONAL ENTITIES WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities is conducting a study pursuant to County Resolution 23-2018, which was enacted on March 5, 2018; and under its statutory authority to advise the County Executive and County Council on disability matters. The Commission on Disabilities' study will assist with identifying the needs of people with disabilities in Howard County, look at best practices and provide recommendations for supporting and facilitating inclusion of persons with disabilities into the community. The survey will help us learn more about the characteristics and needs of, and barriers experienced by, people with disabilities in Education, Employment, Transportation, Housing, and Peer Relationships. If you fall into more than one survey category, please feel free to complete as many surveys as are applicable to you.

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Thank you in advance for contributing to this study.

If you need accommodations to participate in this study, please contact Erica Lewis by telephone at 410-313-6402 (Voice/Relay); or by Email at ealewis@howardcountymd.gov.

"**Entity" includes persons in their individual capacities, corporations, partnerships, organizations, businesses or other distinct bodies.**

"Client" is used in this survey to mean a person with a disability using the services of a professional entity.

1. Number of clients served by your entity:
    - 1 to 25
    - 26 to 50
    - 51 to 100
    - 101+

2. Number of individuals with disabilities on wait list to be served by your entity:
    - 1 to 25
    - 26 to 50
    - 51 to 100
    - 101+
    -
3. Number of staff:
    - 1 to 10
    - 11 to 20
    - 21 to 30
    - 31 to 40
    - 41 to 50
    - 51+

4. Age groups of clients served: (check all that apply)
    - Children (age 0 to 12)
    - Youth (age 13 to 21)
    - Young adults (age 22 to 26)
    - Adults (age 27 to 64)
    - Seniors (age 65+)

5. Type of disabilities served are ones which impact: (check all that apply)

18. Seeing, even if wearing glasses
19. Hearing, even if using a hearing aid
20. Physical movement such as walking or climbing steps
21. Learning
22. Thinking or mood
23. Remembering or concentrating
24. Ability for self-care such as bathing or dressing
25. Ability to live independently
26. Social relationships

Other (please specify)

6. Types of services provided to clients:(check all that apply)
    - Case management
    - Mental/behavioral health

- Day program
- Peer relationships/socialization
- Tutoring
- Transportation
- Housing/residential
- Self-care / independent living
- Medical / nursing care
- Physical / occupational therapy
- Employment / vocational
- Financial assistance
- Respite

Other (please specify)

7. Funding methods accepted / utilized by your entity: (check all that apply)
   - Private pay
   - Medicaid
   - Medicare
   - Private 3rd party insurance
   - Grant funding

   Other (please specify)

8. Average length of time each client receives services:
   - Less than 3 months
   - 3 to 6 months
   - 6 to 12 months
   - 1 to 3 years
   - 3 to 5 years
   - 5+ years

9. Provide your opinion as to the level of unmet need in Howard County for the following:

	No unmet need	Minor unmet need	Moderate unmet need	Severe unmet need
Affordable housing	○	○	○	○
Subsidized housing	○	○	○	○
Supported/supervised housing	○	○	○	○
Financial assistance (for necessities such as food, utilities, etc.)	○	○	○	○
In-home services to assist with activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, cooking, cleaning, etc.)	○	○	○	○
Public transportation (fixed route, paratransit)	○	○	○	○
Access to taxi and shared ride services	○	○	○	○
Job / vocational training	○	○	○	○
Paid employment	○	○	○	○
Educational services	○	○	○	○
Healthcare	○	○	○	○
Social / peer relationships	○	○	○	○
Access to recreational facilities and activities	○	○	○	○
Access to community-based stores, restaurants, theatres, etc.	○	○	○	○

10. Where above you checked moderate or severe unmet need, can you please elaborate or explain your response:

11. If you have any suggestions for best practices or would like to provide additional comments, we welcome your input:

Thank you for completing the survey! When you exit you will be re-directed back to the web page that directed you here. If there is another survey that is relevant to your role, please feel free to complete it.

COMMUNITY MEMBER REGARDING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Howard County Commission on Disabilities is conducting a study pursuant to County Resolution 23-2018, which was enacted on March 5, 2018; and under its statutory authority to advise the County Executive and County Council on disability matters. The Commission on Disabilities' study will assist with identifying the needs of people with disabilities in Howard County, look at best practices and provide recommendations for supporting and facilitating inclusion of persons with disabilities into the community. The survey will help us learn more about the characteristics and needs of, and barriers experienced by, people with disabilities in Education, Employment, Transportation, Housing, and Peer Relationships. If you fall into more than one survey category, please feel free to complete as many surveys as are applicable to you.

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Thank you in advance for contributing to this study.

If you need accommodations to participate in this study, please contact Erica Lewis by telephone at 410-313-6402 (Voice/Relay); or by Email at ealewis@howardcountymd.gov.

1. Personal relationship with individuals with disabilities:
   - I have a disability
   - A family member has, or had a disability
   - I have direct work experience with individuals with disabilities
   - Other (please specify)

2. Zip Code (please only enter a number)

3. My ability to read, speak and write English:
   - Fluent
   - Functional but not fluent
   - Difficulty understanding English

- Do not understand English

4. My race/ethnicity: (check all that apply)
   - White/Caucasian
   - Black/African-American
   - Asian/Pacific Islander
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - Other (please specify)

5. Provide your opinion, if any, as to the level of unmet needs that individuals with disabilities in Howard County have with respect to the following:

	No unmet need	Minor unmet need	Moderate unmet need	Severe unmet need
Affordable housing	○	○	○	○
Subsidized housing	○	○	○	○
Supported/supervised housing	○	○	○	○
Financial assistance (for necessities such as food, utilities, etc.)	○	○	○	○
In-home services to assist with activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, cooking, cleaning, etc.)	○	○	○	○
Public transportation (fixed route, paratransit)	○	○	○	○
Access to taxi and shared ride services	○	○	○	○
Job / vocational training	○	○	○	○
Paid employment	○	○	○	○
Educational services	○	○	○	○
Healthcare	○	○	○	○
Social / peer relationships	○	○	○	○
Access to recreational facilities and activities	○	○	○	○
Access to community-based stores, restaurants, theatres, etc.	○	○	○	○

6. For the items above where you indicated moderate or severe unmet need, can you please provide elaboration or explanation for your response:

7. If you have any suggestions for best practices with respect to individuals with disabilities or would like to provide additional comments, we welcome your input:

Community Member Regarding Individuals with Disabilities

Thank you for completing the survey! When you exit you will be re-directed back to the web page that directed you here. If there is another survey that is relevant to your role, please feel free to complete it.

COMMISSION OR BOARD MEMBER INPUT FORM

County Council Resolution (CR 23-2018) was enacted tasking the Commission on Disabilities to, with respect to people with disabilities in Howard County, conduct a study identifying needs, gaps and best practices in **education, employment, transportation, housing** and **peer relations**. CR 23-2018 requires eliciting input from various stakeholders, including other boards and commission. The Commission on Disabilities requests your input on this study. Please use the space below to provide input regarding any of the topics. Please email your responses to: Mhenry@howardcountymd.gov. If you need assistance or accommodations to complete this form, please call 410-313-6431.

Commission on Aging Member ☐ Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency Member ☐

Transportation Board Member ☐ Other:

(Please note that your name is not required.)

	For each area below, what, in your opinion, are the **greatest needs or gaps in services** for people with disabilities? **Enter responses of any length in gray text fields provided below.**	What, if anything, in your opinion, seems to be working to meet the needs of people with disabilities in this area? **Enter responses of any length in gray text fields provided below.**	Do you have any information regarding best practices in this area or suggestions for meeting needs in this area? **Enter responses of any length in gray text fields provided below.**
EDUCATION			
EMPLOYMENT			
TRANSPORTATION			
HOUSING			
PEER RELATIONS			

APPENDIX C.

WORKS CITED

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