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Editorial: Increasing Accessibility in Academic Publishing and Upcoming Initiatives

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Editorial:

Increasing Accessibility in Academic Publishing and Upcoming Initiatives

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of producing this journal is the opportunity that it provides us to see all the great work that is happening right now. It has been incredibly humbling to read and review all the submissions that have come in over the past year and a half. It has provided us with an unprecedented glimpse into the innovations and outstanding work that is occurring across the Developmental Disabilities Network. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed articles, helped review, or been involved in any other aspect of the editorial process on this issue of the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal (DDNJ)*. From reviewing to editing we could not make this journal work without the tireless efforts of our staff and our contributors.



Matthew Wappett, Editor-in-Chief

The last issue of *DDNJ* was entirely focused on the impact of the COVID pandemic on individuals with disabilities and the programs that serve them. This issue also includes a few additional articles about the impact of COVID that we could not include in the prior issue, but it also includes a wide variety of other reports from the field on multiple timely issues including health promotion, sexuality education, advanced care planning, and more. The work reflected in all the articles in this issue demonstrates the broad engagement of the Developmental Disabilities Network across the lifespan and the multiple systems that support individuals with disabilities and their families.

This issue also includes the second installment of the history of UAP/UCEDD programs, with a specific focus on the impact of UCEDD programs on some of the important disability policy issues in the 1980s and 1990s. This article is one of the last projects that Marv Fifield was working on before his passing in 2015. Marv was a pioneer in the disability field and had an incredible impact on the direction and development of the UCEDD network. Marv also worked with Senators Hatch and Kennedy to help shape the direction of the ADA and the DD Act reauthorization in 2000. We are excited to publish this segment of Marv's legacy, co-authored and edited by his son, Bryce Fifield, who has also been instrumental in the development and expansion of UCEDD programs in Utah, Idaho, and North Dakota. Both Marv and Bryce have been fixtures within the DD Network for almost 50 years, which gives them a unique, big-picture perspective on the development of the UCEDD system. We are honored to publish this important, but often overlooked, history in this issue.

Podcast Launch

We are also excited to announce that we will be launching a new podcast to accompany the

DDNJ. The podcast is called *DDNJ Author Insights* and will include interviews with authors from the latest issue of the journal. Each episode will be structured as a conversation with the authors and will provide a more informal approach to the author's article...but it will also include some fun, behind-the-scenes insights on the process of designing, implementing, analyzing, and writing up their work. We want to acknowledge that authors are people too, and we want to help our readers gain a better understanding of the many voices who are working in the field today.

The launch of this podcast is part of our ongoing commitment to increasing the accessibility of the journal for a wider readership. We recognize that it is important to present our information in a wide range of media and hope that this podcast will help provide another alternative to access the information within the *DDNJ*. Not everyone has the time to sit down and read an entire article these days, and more and more people are choosing to get their information through podcasts and audiobooks. The launch of this podcast means that you can access the *DDNJ*'s content while you are on the go, and you can share it more readily across social media and other online platforms.

The first episode of our podcast will be coming out in early November 2021 and will include an important conversation with Dr. Heather Church and Dr. Jacqueline McGinley, two of the authors on the article entitled: "Advance Care Planning Within Individualized Care Plans: A Component of Emergency Preparedness" in the most recent issue of *DDNJ*. We felt that this article was a perfect representation of the type of work that we like to highlight in the *DDNJ*—research with immediate, real-world applications! Drs. Church and McGinley share some poignant stories and timely insights that really shift the way that we think about transition planning for older adults with disabilities.

Our plan is to release one episode per month, beginning in November 2021. Please take some time to check out the podcast when it comes out and please be sure to share it with your friends and colleagues.

AUCD Conference on Accessibility in Academic Publishing

We are also thrilled to announce that we will be participating in a session at the upcoming 2021 AUCD Conference about increasing accessibility and inclusion in academic publishing. This session will be led by the editors of the *Review of Disability Studies* published out of the UCEDD in Hawaii, the *Journal of Rehabilitation* published out of the Sonoran UCEDD in Arizona, and the *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal* published out of the UCEDD in Utah. These three journals hope to move the dialogue about inclusive information dissemination forward over the next few years.

Over the past 20 years, the field of Participatory Action Research (PAR) has created models and practices for integrating individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) into the research design, implementation, and analysis process. However, individuals with I/DD are often overlooked when it comes to the information dissemination and publication process. Most research articles are still geared towards academics and professionals and remain inaccessible to

the subjects who participated in the research. Additionally, the peer-review process for most academic publications in the disability field still rely upon graduate students and researchers and does not include the voice or perspective of self-advocates and family members.

Our AUCD conference session will discuss some of the methods used by the editors of three academic journals to include people with disabilities in the review and publication process. For example, the editors of these journals include individuals with developmental disabilities on their editorial boards, recruit writers with intellectual and developmental disabilities to submit editorials or other articles that highlight their experience and expertise, and articles in the *DDNJ* must include a “plain language” summary or a video abstract to make the content more accessible. Some of these journals also include individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members in the peer-review process. For example, the *DDNJ* strives to have each submission reviewed by at least one content expert and one individual with a disability or a family member of an individual with a disability. This process ensures that these journals are publishing content that reflects the perspectives and needs of people with disabilities and their family members.

The purpose of our AUCD session is to share some strategies and methods that support the inclusion of individuals with I/DD in the academic publication and dissemination process. This session will explore and help redefine how people with disabilities are included in the publication and peer-review process. The editors who are driving this conference session have an unwavering commitment to accessibility and inclusion in all aspects of the review and publication process and are interested in facilitating a broader conversation within the publishing community about how we can do better. Our hope is that this conversation will help define a new standard that can be used by other disability-oriented publications to ensure that the perspectives of people with disabilities are more fully included in the research and publication process.

We would like to invite you, our readers, to join us for this important discussion at the 2021 AUCD Conference. If you are unable to attend the conference, or if you would like to share your ideas about increasing the accessibility of the publication process, please feel free to contact us at editor.ddnj@usu.edu.

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Special Issue

Last, but certainly not least, we are excited to announce that our next issue (Volume 2, Issue 2) will be a partnership with the AUCD Multicultural Council (MCC) and will be focused on issues surrounding the implementation of equity, diversity, & inclusion (ED&I) initiatives in DD Network programs. Over the past year and a half, there has been an exponential increase in focus on addressing diversity issues within the social services, but there have been targeted initiatives within the UCEDD, LEND, IDDRRC, DD Council, and P&A networks to increase cultural responsiveness and inclusion. Similar initiatives are also underway within Independent Living programs and Parent Training & Information (PTI) programs. Therefore, we felt that it would be an ideal time to share some of the lessons, findings, and perspectives from the field on what works when implementing ED&I efforts.

Our Spring 2021 issue was a collaboration with the AUCD Council on Research & Evaluation (CORE). We were thrilled with the response and quality of the submissions that were received. We will be following a similar process for this second special issue on ED&I initiatives. Our plan is to put out a call for abstracts within the next month (October/November 2021). We would then review abstracts in early December to decide which articles we would invite for full submission. Full articles would be due 3-4 months afterwards. These articles would also be reviewed again by our editorial board and MCC members to ensure that they are on target for the focus of the special edition, and we would hope to have the special issue out in March/April 2022.

Watch for our call for abstracts, and please submit an abstract for consideration in this special issue. We are looking for broad representation across programs and populations and we would like to highlight the great work you are doing within your states and programs.

In Conclusion

Finally, we would like to thank you for taking time to read the research and perspectives published in the *DDNJ*. Information does not make a difference unless somebody consumes it and uses it to make the world a better place, so we are grateful to you for your interest and effort to read our journal. If you have questions, concerns, or feedback please feel free to contact us at editor.ddnj@usu.edu.

Sincerely,

Matthew Wappett, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief
Developmental Disabilities Network Journal