



STATE OF MICHIGAN

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LANSING

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March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

LANSING – Statewide, approximately 180,000 adults and children have a developmental disability. To encourage Michigan residents to understand developmental disabilities, Governor Rick Snyder and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) have proclaimed March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in Michigan. This observance is of particular importance this year given Michigan’s focus on improving mental health, including the recommendations made by the Mental Health and Wellness Commission, co-chaired by Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley and MDCH Director James K. Haveman.

“Michigan has made great strides over the past three years to increase support for residents who have developmental disabilities,” Lt. Gov. Brian Calley said. “By recognizing March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness month, we are celebrating them and their accomplishments, because they enrich our lives. Through education, support and understanding, all Michiganders can have the opportunity to pursue their dreams and live more inclusive, self-determined lives.”

The Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) within MDCH is encouraging residents to participate in the awareness month by getting to know someone with a developmental disability and by ending the use of outdated language such as the term ‘mental retardation’ or variations of it. So far, the Council has collected more than 10,000 pledges from residents across the state vowing to stop using the word retarded.

“Policies in Michigan are continuing to expand for people with developmental disabilities,” said Haveman. “This is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of people with developmental disabilities and to continue to educate our communities about the important issues and things we can do to support each other.”

Local self- advocacy groups, such as Michigan’s Regional Inclusive Community Coalitions (RICCs), are hosting events throughout the month of March to celebrate the many opportunities people with developmental disabilities have as well as highlight changes the public can make. Residents can get involved in the month-long awareness effort by contacting their local RICC.

“We believe that people with developmental disabilities should have access to affordable housing, accessible healthcare, and appropriate education in an inclusive community,” said Vendella M. Collins, Executive Director of the DDC. “To achieve this, we must also remove attitudinal barriers and end the use of the word ‘retarded’. Residents can engage in these efforts by embracing people with disabilities, abstaining from hurtful language, and by advocating for system and policy changes within our communities.”

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A developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment, or combination of such impairments, which manifests before the person is age 22 and is likely to continue indefinitely. It results in substantial functional limitations in three or more of these major life activities: self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living and economic self-sufficiency. Some examples of a development disability are autism, cerebral palsy, down syndrome, intellectual disabilities and epilepsy.

For more information about Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, to take the pledge to end the use of the word ‘retarded’, or to identify a RICC in your community, visit www.michigan.gov/ddcouncil.

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