

Section 4: Policies

MEMBER PARTICIPATION POLICY

What is your role as a member?

1. Learn about VTDDC's:
 - History
 - Mission Statement & Vision Statement
 - Publications, Activities and Grant Projects
 - State Plan Goals
 - Public Policy Priorities

2. Accept a share of the responsibility for getting VTDDC's work done.
 - Attend and actively participate at VTDDC Quarterly meetings.
 - Actively participate in a VTDDC Committee or arrange another assignment with VTDDC's Executive Director that furthers VTDDC's work.
 - Read mail from VTDDC and answer as soon as possible.
 - Figure out what you can do to help. Volunteer, and then do what you said you would do to the best of your ability.
 - Share your knowledge, skills and experiences with other members.
 - Be an advocate by communicating with friends, acquaintances, agency staff and state officials (that could include your legislator and the Governor).
 - Help VTDDC know about and work on solving problems in your community and in the State.
 - Be ready to work with other members.
 - Be an active listener: Listen first, and then ask questions.

3. Keep informed:
 - Know what VTDDC needs to do. Ask questions about it.
 - Talk with VTDDC staff and other members when you have questions or concerns.
 - Take time to understand other members' issues and ideas.
 - Look at information about VTDDC work, including what other DD Councils are doing and what is happening in other states.
 - Be willing to attend conferences, trainings or other events that can help you understand issues, and to share with VTDDC.

4. Develop into an effective member and advocate by:
 - Working on your own voice and who you can talk with.
 - Learning to talk about your experiences and ideas clearly.

[Adopted June 26, 2008.]

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

All VTDDC members are encouraged to participate in VTDDC discussions of relevant issues, as well as decision-making processes on those issues. However, VTDDC must avoid any potential conflicts of interest, or the appearance of a conflict, as it performs its duties.

A conflict of interest occurs when a VTDDC member (or family) has a connection with an entity that applies for or is awarded VTDDC funds as a volunteer or paid staff; an elected or appointed member, a member of its governing board or advisory council, or as a person with a financial interest. In addition, a conflict of interest occurs for an ex officio member when VTDDC is taking a position on a bill, law, regulation, rule, or policy that directly affects the programs and services of the agency represented by the member.

Definitions

VTDDC members include persons who are appointed by the Governor and agency members who serve on the VTDDC by virtue of the office they hold or the agency they represent.

Procedural Implementation

1. VTDDC member who is affiliated with an entity applying for or receiving VTDDC funds shall abstain from deliberation and voting about awarding, withholding or terminating grant funds. This policy also applies to any VTDDC member who is a family member of someone affiliated with an entity that is applying for VTDDC funds.
2. A VTDDC member shall abstain from deliberation and voting on policy positions when the agency he or she represents is affected by that VTDDC policy position.
3. A VTDDC member must declare any potential conflict of interest and disqualify himself or herself from deliberation and voting on a grant award or policy position when those conflicts of interest occur. Such abstention from voting shall be noted in the minutes of the VTDDC meeting.
4. No VTDDC member's salary may be paid from any contract or grant of the VTDDC.
5. Challenges by other members of VTDDC regarding an individual's potential conflict of interest will be brought to the attention of VTDDC's Chair and determined in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order.

[Adopted June 26, 2008.]

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

(This policy also applies to committee meetings, as appropriate.)

1. Call meetings to order at appointed time, or as soon thereafter as a quorum is present.
2. If requested, have the Minutes of the previous meeting read aloud (if lengthy, a summary will do), make corrections and/or approve.
2. If committee is making a recommendation to the VTDDC it should be in the form of a written motion and included on the VTDDC agenda.
3. The President should repeat all motions and ensure that the recorder has a proper written motion before it is seconded or debated. After debate closes, the motion should be read to the assembly and the effect of a “yes” or “no” vote will be explained before a vote is taken.
4. Prior to each formal vote, the VTDDC will take a break for up to 5 minutes in order to provide members with time to think and to discuss decisions with support people or other VTDDC members or staff. Additional time will be given to members upon request.
5. Votes shall be made by voice and by raising one’s hand.

[Adopted October 22, 2004.]

6. After every vote, the President should state whether the motion passed or failed and the next order of business.
7. Robert’s Rules of Order Revised should be followed as much as possible. Realizing that most people are not experts on Rules of Order, the President should be allowed considerable latitude while conducting business – Rules of Order should not be allowed to impede the conduct of VTDDC business. However, standard procedures for making motions and amendments and disposing of each should be followed.
8. The President should adjourn meetings at the prearranged time or ask for a motion for a meeting extension.

[Adopted November 19, 1982. Revised September 14, 1992. Revised May 2, 2003. Revised October 22, 2004.]

COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

1. Be accepting of everyone's opinion.

Every member of VTDDC is entitled to his/her own opinion. While members might disagree with an individual's opinion, it is important to honor that person's right to that opinion.

2. Be honest.

It is important that members state their feelings and opinions honestly. While being honest about what you really think and feel may be difficult, members are encouraged to do their very best in this regard.

3. Take risks.

Members acknowledge that being honest, pushing oneself beyond the usual limits, and truly listening to others may involve a degree of personal risk taking. Members feel that such risk-taking assists the VTDDC to be more effective.

4. Ask questions to learn more.

Active listening is important. Ask questions to learn more about what another person thinks or feels. Asking questions helps them feel more valued.

5. Be all of who you are.

Sometimes VTDDC members present only a certain side of themselves, i.e., as a parent, or as a service provider, etc. All VTDDC members have feelings and opinions that may not be reflected in their particular role. Members are encouraged to share their full perspectives and resources in VTDDC activities.

6. Identify specific goals.

By defining tasks and goals in specific terms, accomplishments and successes are more obvious and more tangible.

7. Listen to each other.

In any group where there are individuals with strong personalities and opinions, it is difficult for people to effectively listen to each other. In order for people to feel comfortable participating fully and to ensure that the diverse opinions of members are heard, people need to actively listen to each other. In some cases, this might mean waiting before you react to someone's comments. You might want to ask questions to find out more before you respond, or you can paraphrase what someone has said to ensure that you heard them correctly before you respond. However it is accomplished, listening to each other will positively support overall communication.

8. Work to balance participation.

Sometimes, talkers need to be quiet while non-talkers need to push themselves to participate more.

9. Close the gap.

Often in large groups, individuals go along with decisions or the public discussion, but later, outside of the meeting and in a smaller group, they express their discomfort with the decision or the discussion that occurred. People who have feelings contrary to the group must make an effort to raise their concerns before a decision is made. This will allow the group to benefit from everyone's thoughts and feelings.

10. Bring discussions to closure.

We need to provide enough time and information for members to make effective decisions. We need to bring discussions to adequate closure so that everyone feels comfortable about moving on with the next order of business.

11. Talk about our successes.

Given the advocacy nature of VTDDC and the large amount of work it seeks to accomplish, people often focus on what still needs to be done rather than on what has been accomplished. We need to pay attention to VTDDC successes so members can approach activities in a positive manner and be more aware of the positive results of our efforts.

12. Evaluate our progress in communicating effectively.

At each meeting, we will provide an opportunity for the group to evaluate their progress using these Communication Guidelines.

[Adopted 1990. Revised March 19, 2000.]

EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

Stipends for VTDDC and Committee Meetings: VTDDC members not paid by another agency to attend VTDDC business may, upon request, be given a stipend of \$10 an hour for VTDDC and committee meetings (of which they are members), to a maximum of \$50 a day.

Expenses for VTDDC and Committee Meetings: Members not paid by another agency to attend VTDDC business will, upon request, be reimbursed for expenses associated with attending VTDDC and committee meetings. Agency members will be reimbursed only on prior arrangement with the Executive Director.

Procedures for Claiming Stipends and Reimbursements: VTDDC members may claim stipends and reimbursements. To claim stipends and reimbursements, members must submit a State of Vermont Personal Expense Claim Form. It works best if members submit the expense claim at the close of a meeting or at the time a member has paid the expense. The VTDDC follows the guidelines applied to state employee expense accounts. Expense claim forms may be submitted monthly or whenever a member has incurred expenses. At a minimum, members should report their expenses quarterly. Reimbursement expenses for expenses incurred more than six months prior to submitting an expense claim form may not be honored.

- Specialized Services. Child care, personal assistance services, special transportation services, etc. can be reimbursed if arranged and approved in advance by the Executive Director. The required receipt is an itemized bill signed by the vendor. [The VTDDC can assist you with forms.]
- Mileage. Indicate the number of round-trip miles traveled and the current state reimbursement rate will be applied. Note: You cannot be reimbursed for expenses like gasoline, accessories, damages, repairs, depreciation, anti-freeze, towage, or insurance because they are considered part of the mileage rate.
- Tolls and Parking. Actual expenditures for tolls and parking can be reimbursable. Receipts are required.
- Meals (including tips). The VTDDC follows state guidelines. In-state meals can be reimbursed at the State rates if you have arranged and received approval in advance from the Executive Director. Out-of-state meals will be budgeted as part of trips on behalf of the VTDDC. Receipts are required. The cost of alcoholic beverages is never reimbursable.

Reimbursement for Disability-Related Events, Trainings, or Conferences Connected with VTDDC Business (in-state and out-of-state). The Executive Director may approve requests for reimbursement for activities when total expense costs less than \$250, including attendance at outreach activities on behalf of the VTDDC.

For events costing more than \$250, VTDDC members will confer with the Executive Director, who will present a request to attend to the Executive Committee based on availability of funding. When several members apply to attend the same event, members will be asked to complete applications following the Executive Committee Fund format.

Regarding out-of-state travel:

- Primary Travel Expense (airfare, train etc.). Travel reimbursement will be for the most economical and direct mode of transportation. Side trips must be paid for by the individual. Receipts are required. If you fly, your copy of the flight ticket must be submitted with your expense voucher.
- Lodging. Reimbursement cannot exceed the rate charge for a single room unless you have an attendant sharing the room. Receipts are required. Receipts for lodging must accompany the expense voucher and must be on a receipt of the lodging establishment. The receipt must show either proof of payment or incurrence of a debt by credit card. Handwritten receipts from small lodging establishments are acceptable.
- Other Travel Expense. Taxi fares are authorized for travel between common carrier terminals and hotels or business sites. These include travel to and from the airport and hotel by taxi, limousine or bus: parking at the airport; mileage to and from the airport, etc. Limousine service should be used when it is available and less expensive. These expenses should be built into the budget for the member's trip. Receipts are required.

[Adopted February 9, 2006, based on November 13, 1995 revision.]

ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT POLICY

All members shall receive the accommodations and support they need to fully participate in all VTDDC activities, including but not limited to VTDDC meetings and committee meetings. The Membership Committee shall have oversight of the member accommodation and support policy. It is the responsibility of VTDDC staff to ensure that all members are provided with needed accommodations and support.

Identification of Support and Accommodations for New Members

1. The Executive Director will meet personally with each new member.
2. The Executive Director will review the VTDDC Handbook and provide basic information about the role of the VTDDC and the responsibilities of members.
3. The Executive Director and new member will complete the Member Accommodation and Support Checklist together.

On-going Accommodations and Support

1. Support and accommodations include those needed prior to, during and after VTDDC and committee meetings to ensure full participation of all members.
2. Prior to each VTDDC or committee meeting, VTDDC staff shall arrange for the support and accommodations identified in each member's Checklist. If support will be provided by the member's usual support worker, VTDDC staff will check to make sure she/he will be available to provide the needed support. If not, alternative arrangements will be made.
3. Prior to voting at VTDDC or committee meetings, the President or Chair shall take a break for up to 5 minutes for members to consult with their support persons, other VTDDC members or staff, and to entertain questions about the pending motion. Additional time will be given to members to consider decisions upon request.
4. The VTDDC shall assume responsibility for payment of support persons hired by the VTDDC, or a member's usual support worker whose contract does not include hours to provide support for VTDDC meetings.
5. The VTDDC shall assume responsibility for payment for all accommodations needed to make meetings fully accessible to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired.
6. The VTDDC shall assume responsibility for payment for transportation arranged by VTDDC staff. If a member arranges for her/his own transportation, the person providing the transportation shall be reimbursed for the hours providing transportation (unless paid by another source) and for mileage at the state rate for automobiles or accessible vans.

7, The Executive Director shall communicate at least annually with members who request support and accommodations to get input and feedback on the effectiveness of the support and accommodations.

Training for Support Persons.

1. Prior to providing support for a VTDDC or committee meeting, support persons will receive written information on how to support participation of self-advocates or people with learning disabilities. Support persons should also consult with the person she/he will be supporting about the specific kinds of assistance the VTDDC member would like.
2. As needed, the Membership Committee shall arrange for training for support persons on effective ways to provide support for VTDDC and committee meetings. This training shall be open to all VTDDC members, as well.

Pool of Support Persons

1. The Executive Director shall maintain a list of trained support persons to provide support for VTDDC and committee meetings to members who require support but do not have a usual support worker, or when their usual support worker is unavailable. When a support person cannot be obtained, other VTDDC members or staff may provide support.
2. The VTDDC shall reimburse support persons at a reasonable rate. Mileage and expenses for support persons shall be reimbursed at the state rate.

[Adopted October 22, 2004.]

DIVERSITY POLICY

There is a myth that little human diversity exists in Vermont and it is, therefore, a place where a policy addressing diversity is not needed. This, of course, is denial of the truth and ignorance of the state's history. The University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council (VTDDC), and the Vermont Protection & Advocacy (P&A) Board has formulated the following as a definition of "diversity."

Definition of Diversity

Diversity is not a theory, but a reflection of everyone in the human family. Diversity includes those characteristics that span all dimensions of individual and societal experiences.

Diversity acknowledges the richness of our differences in a way that unites and celebrates our unique qualities. Diversity requires a commitment to creating a society designed to value rather than blend or diminish our individual or group distinctiveness, while still promoting our common bonds as people.

Dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, the following:

- * gender
- * race
- * sexual orientation
- * economic status
- * religion
- * language
- * nation of origin
- * physical, mental and behavioral ability
- * communication differences
- * learning differences
- * physical or mental health status
- * age

Too often, these human dimensions divide rather than bring people together and become the basis for discrimination. There are many types of discrimination - open and hidden, conscious and unconscious - all of which can and does interfere with all that people attempt to accomplish. Thus, it is necessary to take a step by step, common sense approach to making this definition of diversity real.

VERMONT DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL

In order to prevent the continued denial of diversity within this state, as well as other forms of discrimination, this policy directs action to take on three fronts – 1) membership within the UCEDD, VTDDC, and P&A; 2) knowledge and competence regarding diversity; and 3) design and delivery of services. Although our definition covers all forms of diversity, because of the continually changing demographics of our society, it is important to give particular attention to ethnic minorities in the implementation of this policy.

Goals

What follows are specific goals to promote diversity within the Administration for Developmental Disabilities (ADD) funded organizations (i.e., UAP, DDC, P&A Board) and associated councils.

Membership

The overarching goal is to maximize the diversity of membership of the UCEDD, VTDDC, and P&A Board. To this end, the VTDDC recommends that a plan be formulated to recruit individuals reflecting diverse membership (e.g., see definition of diversity above). A "nurturing" environment be consciously developed so all members representing diverse group membership feel welcomed, supported, and respected.

Knowledge and Competence Regarding Diversity

The goal is to promote awareness and sensitivity to, and competence regarding, diversity among all staff and volunteer affiliates of the organization. To this end, it is recommended that:

1. All members have the opportunity to explore their own biases, prejudices, cultural values and beliefs.
2. All members have the opportunity to explore expressions of diversity other than their own.
3. All members have the opportunity to be trained in conflict resolution around issues of diversity.
4. Training experiences will be initiated within the next year, and will be ongoing for all employees and associated volunteers to address the above three objectives.

Design and Delivery of Services

The goal is to conduct research and design and deliver service systems that are sensitive to the diverse needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families. To this end, it is recommended that:

1. Outreach and a continuing assessment of people with developmental disabilities and their families in Vermont be conducted to determine their differing needs that are unique to their socio-cultural background or situation.
2. Service design and delivery reflect the information derived from this assessment.
3. The VTDDC submits/selects grants that respect diversity.

4. Grant proposals submitted by or to the UCEDD, VTDDC, and P&A Board have a component that addresses issues of cultural and other types of diversity.
5. The organizations involved ensure that information they or their grantees produce and disseminate is presented in a format which is understandable by and respectful of recipients' diverse needs and dimensions.
6. Information that is disseminated by these organizations includes the promotion of diversity awareness, sensitivity, and competence of the general public.

[Adopted December 5, 1994.]

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REPRESENTING THE VTDDC

1. Any VTDDC member may articulate approved VTDDC policy or positions to other organizations/individuals and act as liaison between the VTDDC and another party.
2. VTDDC officers, members appointed by the President as representatives, and the Executive Director may serve as spokespersons for the VTDDC.
3. VTDDC representatives have an obligation to report their activities to the VTDDC.
4. When in doubt, a representative should seek advice from the officers, Executive Director, or the VTDDC before committing the VTDDC to any position or activity.
5. Resources may be committed only by the VTDDC, the Executive Committee, the VTDDC President, or the Executive Director.

[Adopted January 5, 1989. Revised September 14, 1992. Revised October 22, 2004.]

PUBLICITY CREDIT STATEMENT

All grant and award recipients must include the following or similar credit line in all advertising, news releases, programs, brochures, and other publicity:

"This activity is sponsored by the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council."

Copies of all advertising, etc., are to be attached to quarterly reports submitted to the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council.

The VTDDC will consider how well these requirements were fulfilled when reviewing subsequent grant applications from individuals and organizations.

[Adopted March 4, 1983. Revised September 14, 1992. Revised October 22, 2004.]