

A Communication from the Policy Information Exchange

Slice of Pie

A Slice of Pie is an ongoing publication keeping our readers informed about important public policy issues. It is the mission of the Policy Information Exchange to **educate and inform Pennsylvanians with disabilities, their families and advocates, and the general public, regarding public policy issues and to further the exchange of policy information between the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council and federal, state and local policy makers.**

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State News

Emergency Preparedness Starts Before an Emergency

Emergencies can happen at any time, whether because of severe weather, flooding, extended power outages, or other unexpected events. For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, advance planning is especially important to ensure continued access to medications, assistive technology, medical equipment, transportation, communication supports, and personal care services.

Taking a few simple steps now can help individuals, families,

and support professionals be better prepared for emergencies. Creating a personalized emergency plan, gathering essential supplies, and understanding local alert systems can make a significant difference during a crisis. Advocates can also help build more resilient communities by sharing preparedness resources and promoting proactive planning.

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Pennsylvania offers several disability-focused preparedness resources, including Ready PA, which provides guidance on emergency planning, alerts, and disaster readiness. Additional resources tailored to people with disabilities are available through AID in PA and MyODP to help individuals and families prepare for emergencies.

[Learn more and access planning tools](#)

Celebrating Employment and Financial Empowerment

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. It is a time to celebrate the skills, talents, and achievements of workers with disabilities and to support more opportunities for people with disabilities to find and keep good jobs in their communities.

To celebrate, the Pennsylvania Treasury is offering a free webinar series for people with disabilities, family members, advocates, employers, educators, and service providers.

The first webinar, [Build a System of Financial Self-Care](#), will be held on October 2. Participants will learn ways to manage debt,

save money, reduce financial stress, and use PA ABLE accounts to save for disability-related expenses while keeping important public benefits.

The second webinar, [The Neurodiversity Employment Landscape](#), will be held on October 27. It will cover employment trends, workplace inclusion, and ways employers can recruit, support, and keep neurodivergent employees. Participants will also learn about resources that can help create more welcoming workplaces and expand job opportunities for people with disabilities.

These webinars provide useful information for anyone who wants to support financial independence, community inclusion, and successful employment for Pennsylvanians with disabilities.

[Learn more about National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#)

Public Health Regulations Under Review in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania is considering changes to its public health rules. These rules help guide how health agencies respond to disease outbreaks and other

Go to our digital version of Slice at <https://www.paddc.org/publications/slice-of-pie/> to access the links.

public health emergencies. State officials say the changes would update older regulations to match current public health practices. Some people support the proposal, while others have concerns about privacy, personal rights, parental decision-making, and government authority.

Public health policies can affect people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. These policies may influence access to healthcare, community supports, education, and emergency services. As discussions continue, advocates may want to stay informed about the proposed changes and how they could affect people with disabilities and the services they rely on.

To learn more, including how to review the proposal and public comments, visit the Independent Regulatory Review Commission's regulation page.

[View Regulation #3490](#)

Waiver Policies Face Legal Challenge in Pennsylvania

A lawsuit in Pennsylvania challenges two policies used by the Office of Developmental Programs (ODP). One policy

affects how much paid caregiving family members can provide, and the other limits reimbursement for some services received outside Pennsylvania and in nearby states. The people who filed the lawsuit argue that these policies should have gone through Pennsylvania's formal regulatory review process before they were put into place.

The case is important to many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, service providers, and advocacy groups. Supporters of the lawsuit believe the policies can make it harder for people to access services, receive support from family caregivers, travel, and participate in their communities. State officials argue that the policies are legal and help protect Medicaid funding and ensure the waiver program is managed responsibly.

The court's decision could affect how Pennsylvania creates and implements future waiver policies. It could also have a broader impact on people who receive home and community-based services through ODP programs.

[Pennsylvania's Unified Judicial System](#)

Expanding Accessible Transportation in Philadelphia

Having accessible transportation helps people get to work, school, medical appointments, community activities, and other everyday destinations. The Southeast Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) recently received an \$80 million federal grant to improve accessibility at the 22nd, 33rd, and 36th Street trolley stations in Philadelphia.

The project will add elevators and remove barriers caused by stair-only access. Once completed, the stations will meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. These improvements will make it easier for people with disabilities, older adults, and others who need accessible transportation to use the transit system.

The station upgrades are part of SEPTA's larger effort to make public transportation more accessible and support independent travel throughout the region. Reliable and accessible transportation plays an important role in helping people with disabilities participate fully in community life.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Changes

Recent [changes to SNAP](#), the federal food assistance program, could make it harder for some Pennsylvania families to afford groceries. This may be especially challenging for families raising children with disabilities, who often have extra costs related to healthcare, transportation, caregiving, and disability supports. Losing food assistance could add financial stress and make it harder for families to meet basic needs.

Food security matters for children's health, learning, and school success. When families struggle to afford food, children may have a harder time concentrating, attending school regularly, and being ready to learn. Schools may also need more meal programs and other supports if more families face food insecurity.

The changes could also affect disability services and the workforce. Some direct support professionals, home-care workers, paraprofessionals, and other support staff rely on SNAP

to help cover living expenses. Increased financial pressure on these workers could worsen existing workforce shortages.

The new law will also require Pennsylvania to cover more SNAP costs. As a result, state leaders may need to make difficult future budget decisions about funding for education, disability services, and other important programs.

Federal News

Texas v. Kennedy, Decided

A recent court decision in Texas v. Kennedy has raised concerns for many people with disabilities and their families. The ruling removes some federal regulations that supported the right of people with disabilities to receive services in their communities instead of institutions.

Even with this decision, key disability rights laws remain in place. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision continue to protect the rights of people with disabilities. These laws support the right to live, learn, work, and receive

services in the most integrated setting that meets a person's needs.

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, the decision creates uncertainty about how community-based services and independent living supports may be promoted and enforced in the future. Many advocates believe it will be important to continue speaking up for policies that help people with disabilities live in their communities, find employment, attend school, and fully participate in community life.

To learn more about the case and its potential impact, visit the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) [statement](#) or The Arc's [statement](#). Additional [information](#) about community integration rights under Olmstead.

Equal Access, Not Special Treatment

Disability advocates are watching a U.S. Supreme Court case called St. Mary Catholic Parish v. Roy. The case could have important effects on the rights of students with disabilities and the accommodations they receive in educational programs.

An amicus brief filed in the case argues that disability accommodations are not special treatment. Instead, accommodations are tools that help students with disabilities have the same opportunities as other students and fully participate in school and other programs.

As the Court reviews questions about Colorado's universal preschool program and nondiscrimination requirements, the decision could affect how schools and public programs across the country provide accommodations and support for people with disabilities.

The outcome may help shape how disability rights and equal access are understood in education and other public services for years to come.

[View the amicus brief and case information from the ACLU of Colorado](#)

Alternatively, for broader case background, see [SCOTUS blog's case page](#).

Help Shape a New Learning Program for Adults with Disabilities

What information would help people with disabilities better understand healthcare,

employment, technology, housing, community services, and other important systems? The American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) wants to hear from adults with disabilities, people with chronic health conditions, and others whose health needs affect their daily lives.

AAPD is asking people to complete a survey and, in some cases, join focus groups. The goal is to help create a new national learning program based on real-life experiences and practical solutions. Organizers want to learn what resources, information, and support people need to overcome challenges, speak up for themselves, and make informed decisions.

People selected to participate in focus groups will be paid for their time. The survey is available in several accessible formats, so more people can take part.

This is an opportunity for self-advocates, family members, and community members to share their experiences and help create a resource that reflects the needs and priorities of people with disabilities.

[AAPD Community Input Survey for New Learning Program](#)

Protecting Special Education at the Federal Level

Several federal proposals and court decisions could affect special education programs and services for students with disabilities.

One legislative proposal would keep much of the Department of Education together ([S.5046](#), [H.R.10232](#)). A separate proposal focuses on keeping important special education programs within the U.S. Department of Education ([S.5038](#)). Supporters say this would help ensure that special education experts continue to provide guidance, oversight, and support for students, families, and schools.

These discussions have gained attention because of recent changes involving federal special education staff and programs. Advocates, educators, and families are paying close attention because these programs help oversee special education services and funding across the country.

A separate federal court ruling has challenged efforts to end grants that help prepare and train teachers. Supporters of the ruling say these programs are important for recruiting, training, and keeping teachers, especially in special education and other

fields where staff shortages are common. Well-trained educators play an important role in helping students with disabilities succeed.

For people in Pennsylvania and across the country, these developments could influence the future of special education services, funding, oversight, and support. Many advocates believe it is important to stay informed and continue supporting policies that help students with disabilities receive a high-quality education.

With less government support and oversight, families are increasingly using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to learn about special education, but experts recommend [using AI carefully](#), checking information for [accuracy](#), and protecting personal information.

Proposed Head Start Changes and Public Comments

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has [proposed](#) major changes to Head Start rules. Head Start provides early learning and family-support services to young children and their families.

The proposal would remove some federal requirements and give states and local Head Start programs more flexibility. The

Arc of the United States opposes parts of the proposal. The organization is concerned that removing certain requirements could weaken developmental screenings, accommodations, and inclusion for children with disabilities.

These changes are only proposed. They are not final. The public may submit comments through October 6, 2026.

Public Participation in Federal Autism Policy

[The Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee](#) created a federal plan for autism research, services, and policy for 2026 through 2028.

Autistic people, family members, researchers, service providers, and advocacy organizations commented on the draft plan. Several disability organizations asked for a process that was easier to understand and access. They also called for decisions to be based on reliable research and meaningful [public input](#).

The committee adopted the plan on August 27, 2026. The plan provides advice and guidance to the federal government. It is not a law or a regulation, and it does not create binding requirements.

Pennsylvania Legislative 2026 First Quarter Review

Pennsylvania Legislative 2026 Third Quarter Review

Note: This newsletter does not include any actions of the state legislature which may have occurred during the session week of September 28, 2026. To look up any bill online, visit <https://www.palegis.us/>

Remaining Session Dates

House

October 5, 6, 7, 19, 20, 21

November 9, 10

Senate

October 5, 6, 7, 19, 20, 21

November 17, 18

What Was Adopted or Enacted

[HB 482, Occupational Therapy Licensure Compact](#)

Enacted July 20, 2026, as Act 28 of 2026. The law authorizes Pennsylvania to join the Occupational Therapy Licensure

Compact. This could make it easier for qualified occupational therapists from participating states to practice in Pennsylvania, potentially improving access to therapy for people with developmental disabilities.

What Is Still Moving

[HR 618, Study of Treatment and Support in County Jails](#)

Reported as committed by the House Judiciary Committee, 26-0, on September 24, 2026. The resolution would direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study treatment and support for people with mental illness, behavioral health disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and autism in Pennsylvania county jails. The study could help identify gaps in disability screening, accommodations, treatment, supports, and planning for people returning to their communities.

New Legislation Since Your Last Slice

[HB 2696, Service Animal Protections](#)

This bill would establish a trained service dog card and database, address access to public

accommodations, and create penalties for falsely claiming that an animal is a service dog. It could help some people with developmental disabilities who use trained service animals, although implementation would need to avoid creating new documentation barriers for people exercising existing service-animal rights.

[HB 2697, Burden of Proof in Special Education Hearings](#)

This bill would place the burden of proof on the school in special education due-process hearings instead of the parent or guardian. It could make it easier for families of students with developmental disabilities to challenge disputed evaluations, placements, services, or IEP decisions.

[SB 1424, Newborn Screening for Gaucher Disease](#)

This bill would add Gaucher disease to Pennsylvania's newborn screening program. Earlier identification could help affected children receive medical monitoring and treatment sooner, including children whose condition may lead to developmental delays, movement difficulties, or cognitive changes.

[HR 618, Study of Treatment and Support in County Jails](#)

This resolution would direct a

study of treatment and supports for people with mental health conditions, behavioral health disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and autism in Pennsylvania county jails. The study could identify service gaps and recommend better screening, accommodations, treatment, and reentry support for incarcerated people with developmental disabilities.

[HB 2774, Professional Licensure Compact Omnibus](#)

This bill would authorize Pennsylvania to join several interstate professional licensure compacts, including compacts for audiologists and speech-language pathologists, dentists and dental hygienists, physician assistants, and social workers. It could expand the pool of professionals available to provide communication, healthcare, behavioral health, and social work services to people with developmental disabilities.

Contact PIE

Contact the PIE Team with any questions, comments, suggestions, or information to share at PIE, c/o The Arc of Pennsylvania, 1007 Mumma Road, Suite 100, Lemoyne, PA 17043, by email at pie@thearcpa.org or by phone at 800-692-7258.

- o **A Slice of Pie** is available by email and contains hyperlinks for ease of accessing websites and internet documents and resources.
- o PIE Alerts, PIE Information, and PIE Job Postings are available by email to keep people informed about disability issues between newsletters.
- o Sign up for A Slice of Pie or PIE electronic messages by phone at 800-692-7258 or by emailing pie@thearcpa.org.
- o Individuals who already get A Slice of Pie and/or PIE electronic messages can make changes at any time by clicking "Update Profile/Email Address" at the end of any PIE email message.
- o A Slice of Pie is available at the Developmental Disabilities Council website www.paddc.org, by clicking on "Publications" and "Slice of Pie". Archived editions can also be found there.
- o **A Slice of Pie** is available in alternate format upon request.
- o The PIE office will download, copy, and mail information mentioned in A Slice of Pie upon request.

Go to our digital version of Slice at <https://www.paddc.org/publications/slice-of-pie/> to access the links.

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Change of Information?

We want to be certain that you do not miss an issue of *A Slice of Pie*, so please send name or address changes either by phone 800-692-7258 or by email to pie@thearcpa.org. Thank you.

The PIE Team

THE ARC OF PENNSYLVANIA

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