



## Featured Partner

This month, our featured partner is the [Oklahoma Disability Law Center \(ODLC\)](#). ODLC's mission is to "protect, promote, and expand the rights of people with disabilities" in Oklahoma. The ODLC offers help to answer to legal questions, systemic advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities, and client advocacy on behalf of individuals. ODLC also monitors and investigates issues that apply to and/or affect people with disabilities. Staff of ODLC offer training on a variety of topics including voting rights for people with disabilities.

Years ago, the ODLC, along with the Center for Learning and Leadership/UCEDD and the Developmental Disabilities Council of Oklahoma named themselves "Redlands Partners" and they are the [DD Act Partners](#) in Oklahoma.

## OSU is the first Special Olympics Unified College in Oklahoma

This summer, Oklahoma State University (OSU) in Stillwater became the [first Special Olympics Unified College in Oklahoma](#). This will allow adults who participate in Special Olympics to participate in unified intermural sports alongside OSU students. "Unified intramural sports at OSU will fulfill a long-term goal of Special Olympics in offering athletes opportunities to participate in an inclusive league alongside their peers and to demonstrate their abilities to a very large audience," said Special Olympics Vice-President of sports and training, John Seals. Interested in Special Olympics in Oklahoma? Visit their [website](#) to learn more.

## New COVID-19 Boosters are Available

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, the [CDC recommended the first updated COVID-19 booster](#) that will help with protection from Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 variants, which is the most recent and highly contagious version of COVID-19. The current recommendations are for people aged 12 and older. Pediatric recommendations for people less than 12-years old should be out in the coming weeks. [OKDHS](#) is continuing to offer assistance with COVID-19 vaccines and boosters for eligible people including those who have a difficult time accessing vaccines due to their health or disability along with their caregivers. Please visit the [OKDHS Vaccine and Booster assistance portal](#) for more information. Stay informed of your community's ongoing COVID-19 levels through the [CDC's COVID Data Tracker](#).

## Waitlist is being funded, but there are still statewide staff shortages

Legislators gave DHS about \$35 million this year to help end the DDS Waitlist that currently has more than 4,650 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities waiting for services. Wonderful news! However, the state still faces a staffing crisis that makes it hard to provide the support that is needed. The staffing crisis in direct care service is longstanding and was amplified by the pandemic. Even with the 25% provider rate increase that was also approved with the last legislative funding, this may only bring hourly pay up to 13/hr. The pay rate for direct care staff may not be attracting workers, and may not compete with jobs in other industries, some that require less skill. Read more about the staff shortage in Oklahoma in this [article from The Frontier](#).

## EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### October 4<sup>th</sup> Wrightslaw Special Education Law & Advocacy Conference

SoonerSUCCESS invites parents, educators, and disability advocates to this one-day conference that will go over special education law, rights and responsibilities, tests and measurements to measure progress & regression, SMART IEPs and introduction to tactics & strategies for effective advocacy. [Please visit the SoonerSUCCESS eventbrite page](#) for more information and to register.

### October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Inclusion Symposium for Educators

The Oklahoma Department of Education, the Developmental Disabilities Council of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Autism Center is bringing the Inclusion Symposium for Educators to the Edmond Conference Center on October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> from 9am-4pm. The two-day event will go over the "What, Why, and How" of inclusion education. [Register for this FREE Inclusion Symposium event](#) to reserve your spot.

### October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> SAFE Initiative Public Forum

The [SAFE \(Supporting Access For Everyone\) Initiative](#) will be hosting a live, virtual, public forum on October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> from 10am-4pm. Professionals and people with lived experience relating to children with autism and neurodevelopmental disabilities in medical settings are invited to share their perspectives. [Register for the SAFE Forum here](#).

## Giving Season

As the holiday season approaches, please make a [donation](#) to help the Center for Learning and Leadership/UCEDD continue our support of people with disabilities and their families. Your donation helps most where we cannot use federal or state money to support a need.

## We want to hear from you!

Do you have news or an event to share? Please send all information including a link (if applicable) to [learn2lead-ucedd@ouhsc.edu](mailto:learn2lead-ucedd@ouhsc.edu). All submissions should be in no later than the fourth Friday of the month before publication (ex: 4<sup>th</sup> Friday in June for July's newsletter).

Sign-up to receive our free monthly newsletter *focus facts on community living* <http://tiny.cc/focusfacts>

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The University of Oklahoma advances a diverse, equitable, and inclusive university community by embracing each person's unique contributions, background, and perspectives. OU Norman, OU Tulsa, and the Health Sciences Center recognize that fostering an inclusive environment for all, with particular attention to the needs of the historically marginalized populations, is vital to the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of our institutional mission and enhances the OU experience for all students, faculty, and staff.

*focus facts* is published for the University Affiliated Developmental Disabilities Network members. Its purpose is to highlight specific information and data items relevant to developing and sustaining positive community environments. Individual information items are provided for use in this form, or for further circulation. When re-printing information please reference *focus facts* and the month of issue noted below the banner at the top of this page. The name of a contact person for additional information on items referenced in the newsletter is provided for your convenience. If you have data, information or a story to report relevant to community living, please send it to *focus facts* Editor at the Center for Learning and Leadership/UCEDD OU Health Sciences Center, PO Box 2690, Oklahoma City, OK 73126.

Please include the information source, by title, a one paragraph (or less) description or story, a contact name who can provide additional information on the subject, and a daytime or evening telephone number for the contact. If you have questions regarding the format for submissions, please call the Center for Learning and Leadership/UCEDD Headquarters Office at (405) 271-4500.

The University Affiliated Developmental Disabilities Network is open to membership by any organization or individual who shares the interests of Network members. The Network is dedicated to identifying opportunities for collaboration and information exchange among its participating members, which leads to improving our statewide, regional or local capacity to provide a better living environment in Oklahoma for people with developmental and other disabilities and their families. The Network is partially supported through a grant from the U.S. Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Health and Human Services, and by the Offices of the Designated Representatives of the Center for Learning and Leadership/UCEDD Collaborating Partners.

If you have a disability (Deaf/hard-of-hearing, Blind/low-vision, mobility, cognitive, etc.), and require accommodations, please reach out to [Learn2Lead@ouhsc.edu](mailto:Learn2Lead@ouhsc.edu). It is helpful if you share what type of accommodations will be needed to ensure that you are able to use the resource materials.