1962 / 2007  
Minnesota Survey of Attitudes  
Regarding Developmental Disabilities  

prepared for:  
Minnesota Governor’s Council  
on  
Developmental Disabilities  

Cosponsors:  
The Arc of Minnesota  
The Autism Society of Minnesota  
The Minnesota State Council on Disability  
Self-Advocates of Minnesota  
United Cerebral Palsy of Minnesota  

prepared by:  

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A survey of the Minnesota general population was conducted in the summer of 1962, to measure awareness and attitudes regarding (developmental disabilities).

The survey was updated and repeated in January 2007 to assess and measure changes during the past 45 years.

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In January 2007, a 20-minute telephone survey was conducted among adults throughout the state of Minnesota.

The final sample, n=806, closely corresponded with the Minnesota population, based on income, age and race representation.

Given a sample size of 800, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling could be as much as 3.5% in either direction, on proportional results.
2007 Survey Introduction, read to all respondents:

As you may know, one current issue in Minnesota concerns services for people with developmental disabilities. The term “developmental disability” is an umbrella term that includes mental retardation, cerebral palsy, autism and epilepsy. It is a lifelong condition and means that about 1% - 2% of the Minnesota population has significant or severe disabilities.

- 76% of respondents said they were either very or somewhat familiar with developmental disabilities.
Have you ever known of a person who was thought to have a developmental disability?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Familiarity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962 (n=900)</td>
<td>Yes 83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 (n=806)</td>
<td>Yes 84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How well would you say you know him/her?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>1962</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Familiar</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Familiar</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Familiar</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all Familiar</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of Minnesotans know someone who has a developmental disability. While this level of awareness has remained unchanged in 45 years, the levels of familiarity with people with developmental disabilities has increased. This is an indication of improvement in integration.
1962 - 2007 perceptions: People with developmental disabilities...

.... should be cared for by the immediate family, as much as possible. (2007) at home. (1962)

Agree strongly: 40
Agree somewhat: 37
Neither agree / disagree (Don’t know – 1962): 9
Disagree somewhat: 58
Disagree strongly: 13

In 1962 people generally disagreed with the idea of care being provided at home; whereas, in 2007 Minnesotans were predominantly in favor of care by the immediate family, as much as possible.
1962 - 2007 perceptions: People with developmental disabilities...

.... should be kept in an institution

Agree strongly
- 2007: 1
- 1962: 4

Agree somewhat
- 2007: 2
- 1962: 31

Neither agree / disagree
- 2007: 3
- 1962: 10

Disagree somewhat
- 2007: 18
- 1962: 47

Disagree strongly
- 2007: 78
- 1962: 8

Opposition to the idea of institutionalizing people with developmental disabilities grew substantially from 1962 -- when 8% strongly disagreed with the idea -- to 2007, when 78% strongly disagreed.
In 2007 Minnesotans were less inclined to think of people with developmental disabilities as looking different from others.
1962 - 2007 perceptions: People with developmental disabilities...

.... can learn to live normal lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>1962</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree / disagree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Don't know – 1962)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree somewhat</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 1962 to 2007 Minnesotans grew stronger in their belief that people with developmental disabilities can learn to live normal lives.
In both the 1962 and 2007 surveys, a majority of Minnesotans did not believe that people with developmental disabilities had parents with developmental disabilities; however, in 2007 there appeared to be more certainty of that premise.
In 1962 40% of Minnesotans agreed with the statement that (people with developmental disabilities) are also mentally ill. In 2007, a greater majority disagreed with that statement.
1962 - 2007 integration:
People with developmental disabilities...

.... should be able to use public playgrounds and beaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes – 1962)</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree somewhat</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Qualified Yes - 1962)</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree / disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Don’t know – 1962)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree somewhat/strongly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Strongly No – 1962)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1962 one out of four Minnesotans were opposed to the idea that people with developmental disabilities should be allowed to use public playgrounds and beaches. In 2007 that opposition was replaced by overwhelming belief in integration.
The degree of certainty that people with developmental disabilities should be allowed to attend movie theaters grew substantially from 1962 to 2007.
The belief that people with developmental disabilities should be treated at regular hospitals grew much stronger over the past 45 years.
1962 - 2007 independence: 
People with developmental disabilities...

.... should be allowed to drive a car

Agree strongly
(Yes – 1962) 2

Agree somewhat
(Qualified Yes - 1962) 20

Neither agree / disagree
(Don’t know – 1962) 3

Disagree somewhat/strongly
(Strongly No – 1962) 75

While there is less opposition to the idea that people with developmental disabilities should be able to drive a car, in 2007 45% were still opposed to the idea, and 24% were uncertain.
While there was less opposition to the idea that people with developmental disabilities should be allowed to drink alcohol, in 2007, half of the state was still opposed to the idea.
The percent of people who strongly believed that those with developmental disabilities should be allowed to vote more than doubled over the past 45 years, from 15% to 37%.
People with developmental disabilities should…

- be able to use public playgrounds and beaches
  - Disagree: 11
  - Strongly Disagree: 11
  - Neither: 87

- be able to attend movie theaters
  - Disagree: 12
  - Strongly Disagree: 19
  - Neither: 77

- be integrated into society as much as possible
  - Disagree: 11
  - Strongly Disagree: 21
  - Neither: 77

- be included in public places and social events
  - Disagree: 12
  - Strongly Disagree: 21
  - Neither: 76

- be encouraged to get out and be involved in the community
  - Disagree: 11
  - Strongly Disagree: 23
  - Neither: 75

- be treated at regular hospitals
  - Disagree: 2
  - Strongly Disagree: 4
  - Neither: 5
  - Agree Somewhat: 19
  - Agree Strongly: 71

There was strong agreement, on specifics - and in general - that people with developmental disabilities should be integrated into society as much as possible.
### Attitude Statements: Integration / Inclusion

- **It's OK to exclude people with developmental disabilities from many public situations; they cannot be expected to fit in.**
  - Disagree Strongly: 55
  - Disagree Somewhat: 23
  - Neither: 8
  - Agree Somewhat: 12
  - Agree Strongly: 3

- **If a person with a developmental disability moved into my neighborhood, I'd be concerned.**
  - Disagree Strongly: 79
  - Disagree Somewhat: 13
  - Neither: 4
  - Agree Somewhat: 41

- **Everyone would be better off if school-aged children with developmental disabilities were taught together in the same classes as other children.**
  - Disagree Strongly: 14
  - Disagree Somewhat: 23
  - Neither: 12
  - Agree Somewhat: 29
  - Agree Strongly: 23

Most Minnesotans believe in integration, even when it extends to their own neighborhood; however, there appears to be less agreement about inclusion in the classroom.
attitude statements: productivity

I have a lot of respect for companies that employ people with developmental disabilities

When society helps people with disabilities live to their highest potential, we’re all better off

With the right training, most people with developmental disabilities could be very productive workers

Minnesotans expressed strong support and positive beliefs that “everyone wins” when people with developmental disabilities are trained, hired and given the opportunity to be employed.
**attitude statements: independence**

People with developmental disabilities should...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree Strongly</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Agree Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be able to drive a car</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not be allowed to live on their own; they need to be closely monitored</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be kept in facilities where they can be provided with the specialized care they need</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2007 45% of Minnesotans did not believe people with developmental disabilities should be allowed to drive a car; and about one in five Minnesotans believed people with developmental disabilities should not be allowed to live on their own.
People with developmental disabilities should…

- **be allowed to vote**
  - Disagree Strongly: 5
  - Disagree Somewhat: 12
  - Neither: 13
  - Agree Somewhat: 34
  - Agree Strongly: 37

- **be allowed to have children, just like everyone else**
  - Neither: 10
  - Disagree Somewhat: 19
  - Disagree Strongly: 24
  - Agree Somewhat: 31
  - Agree Strongly: 16

- **be able to drink alcohol**
  - Neither: 29
  - Disagree Somewhat: 22
  - Disagree Strongly: 24
  - Agree Somewhat: 20
  - Agree Strongly: 5

While most Minnesotans believe people with developmental disabilities should be allowed to vote, 29% believed they should not be allowed to have children, and half of those surveyed believed they should not be allowed to drink alcohol.
Most people with developmental disabilities should be kept in institutions

Most people with developmental disabilities are not capable of any real level of self-determination; they need someone else to make most of their daily decisions

Most people with developmental disabilities can learn to live normal lives

The majority of Minnesotans believe that most people with developmental disabilities are capable of living normal lives, and with real levels of self-determination.
attitude statements: help / assistance

Most people with developmental disabilities should be cared for by their immediate family, as much as possible

If someone has a child with a developmental disability that’s their problem. There’s really no reason why the rest of us should have to pay any of the extra costs of raising that child

Parents of children with developmental disabilities cannot be expected to provide all necessary services themselves

While most Minnesotans believed that the immediate family is in the best position to provide care for a family member with a developmental disability, there was great support for the idea that the family cannot carry the responsibility alone.
attitude statements: help / assistance

When someone is born with a severe disability, we shouldn’t assist them too much, because ultimately it’s survival of the fittest

Too much money is being spent on people with developmental disabilities

Society should do everything in its power to help those who are most vulnerable

Minnesotans overwhelmingly rejected the concept of survival of the fittest, and were strongly in favor of the idea that society should do everything in its power to help those who are most vulnerable.
As far as you know, what kinds of services are available around here and in the state to help (people with developmental disabilities)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1962 responses (n = 900)</th>
<th>2007 responses (n = 807)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State institutions/ hospitals. ........... 42%</td>
<td>Special ed./ schools/ education programs. .... 26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special classes (public schools). ....... 24%</td>
<td>Social service/ community, government programs/ etc. ............. 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day schools/ day care. ............... 13%</td>
<td>Group homes/ foster homes/ assisted living. . 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other state services. ............. 0.6%</td>
<td>Private services/ religious organizations/ advocacy groups/ charities ............. 18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic centers/ clinics. ........... 5%</td>
<td>Employment/ job training/ job services, occupational training. ................. 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational guidance/ workshops. ........ 5%</td>
<td>Insurance/ healthcare/ MinnesotaCare/ Medicare/ medical services. ............. 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private homes (rest/foster). ........... 4%</td>
<td>Don’t know/ not aware. ...................... 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/ unsure/ not aware ......... 31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1962 the most top-of-mind service to (people with developmental disabilities) was state institutions/ hospitals, mentioned by four out of ten respondents. However, in 2007 state institutions/ hospitals were rarely if ever mentioned. Thus, there has been a substantial change in perceptions as to the kinds of services that are available in Minnesota to help people with developmental disabilities.
In terms of spending the tax payers’ money, please say whether you agree or disagree that it’s important for government to provide these services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>% agree</th>
<th>% select as most important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centers where people with developmental disabilities can learn job skills</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special classes to educate and train people with developmental disabilities</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assurance of access to quality health care services</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection services to prevent abuse of people with developmental disabilities</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and counseling services for parents of people with developmental disabilities</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research to learn about the causes of developmental disabilities</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2007, Minnesotans expressed overwhelming support for a wide range of government services to people with developmental disabilities. The services which were most often selected as most important are shown above.
## Attitudes Towards Government Services

In terms of spending the tax payers’ money, please say whether you agree or disagree that it’s important for government to provide these services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Select as Most Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized training for people with developmental disabilities, and/or their advocates, on how to exercise rights and speak up for oneself</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of personal care attendant services, who assist people with developmental disabilities, to enable them to live more independently, or as they choose</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the job assistance, so people with developmental disabilities can work in regular businesses</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies to families to pay for extra costs of caring for children with developmental disabilities</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Attitudes Towards Government Services

In terms of spending the tax payers’ money, please say whether you agree or disagree that it’s important for government to provide these services:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Select as Most Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual teaching assistants who would enable children with developmental disabilities to attend regular public school classes</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions to care for people with developmental disabilities</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster homes for children of parents with developmental disabilities</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidies to adults with developmental disabilities so they can purchase their own homes if they choose to</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From institutions to integration

Attitudes regarding people with developmental disabilities have changed substantially over the past 45 years. In 2007, Minnesotans in general embraced the ideas of integrating and including people with developmental disabilities into their community and society at large.

Belief in the family

From 1962 to 2007 the majority opinion has shifted from disagreement to agreement, that the best way to care for people with developmental disabilities is through *their immediate family, as much as possible.*

While most Minnesotans believe that the immediate family is in the best position to provide care, there was great support for the idea that the family cannot carry the burden alone.
Integration benefits everyone

In 2007 Minnesotans embraced the idea that everyone is better off when people with developmental disabilities are integrated into society, and living independent and productive lives as much as possible.

- Over 90% believed that, with the right training, people with developmental disabilities could be very productive workers.
- 85% of respondents strongly agreed that they have a lot of respect for companies that employ people with developmental disabilities.
conclusions

Some uncertainties related to independence and self determination

While the majority of Minnesotans believe that most people with developmental disabilities are capable of living normal lives, and with real levels of self determination, uncertainties linger regarding some personal rights and freedoms, such as:

*Whether people with developmental disabilities should be allowed . . .*

- to have children;
- to drink alcohol;
- to live on their own;
- to drive a car.
Wide majority support government and taxpayers’ services/ support

In 2007 Minnesotans expressed overwhelming support for a wide range of government services for people with developmental disabilities.

• Services often selected as most important were:
  – education, training, job skills;
  – access to quality health care;
  – protection from abuse;
  – training and counseling for parents;
  – advocacy training;
  – research to learn about causes of developmental disabilities.

• Only 6% agreed with the statement that too much money is being spent on people with developmental disabilities.