



August 2021

Dear Friends of UCP Heartland,

Over my 22-year career, I have worked with several different providers in the nonprofit sector and been privileged to serve amazing people living with disabilities and their courageous families. One common element among providers is the jockeying for position with a limited employment pool, funders, referral sources, donors, and other stakeholders. The message is universal; focusing on painting a clear portrait to the community on the significant impact made in people's lives. Believe me, the work in this sector has and continues to be commendable. I am proud to play a small part in the continued improvement we are making in the lives of the people we support. My point in saying this is that COVID-19 and the public health crisis sheds a light on the on-going struggles the developmental disabilities services system has endured for several years. These struggles are often talked about, but many times overlooked because we made it work and the beautiful portrait communicated was front and center in the message.

One of the things I value in this industry is being connected to associations and/or affiliate groups who work together for the common good of people with disabilities. As you know, UCP Heartland is an affiliate of UCP National. Since 2006, UCP and the American Network of Community Options and Resources Foundation (ANCOR) have partnered to research, measure and analyze progress and/or regressions of community integration of state programs that assist people with disabilities. This yearly report named, *The Case for Inclusion*, compiles data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The 2021 report gives a different perspective due to the pandemic and does an outstanding job painting the portrait of some of the long-standing challenges in disability supports and services. This report focuses on the sustainability of community-based services in America in three areas:

1. Brings focus to the ways in which providers of disability services have been significantly impacted by the pandemic
2. Highlights the actions taken by state and federal government to help ensure the continuity of disability services during COVID-19
3. Provides specific policy actions that should be taken by state Medicaid programs, the Administration, and the federal Congress to ensure providers can be sustainable and viable through and beyond the public health crisis, at the same time, transforming the disability services in the future.

This valued report paints a real picture of what people with disabilities, their families, providers, and support staff have and continue to face. The Direct Support Professional workforce crisis has been a challenge for years but is now significantly amplified as a result of the pandemic. People are emotional, confused on the "new" normal, exhausted, and feeling isolated. UCP Heartland is thankful for the opportunity to take advantage of all the COVID-19 Relief funding

this past year and half. This was a temporary fix to get us through a period, but a mere band-aid in really addressing the issues at hand.

Please take some time to read the 2021 Case of Inclusion report: <https://ucpheartland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Case-for-Inclusion-2021-Special-Report.pdf>

It is very informative and hopefully will motivate you to join us in our continued advocacy efforts for not only the people and families we support but the people that have chosen a career to create positive impact on their lives.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Clint