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## Key Facts & Talking Points: The DD Act, UCEDDs, & the USU IDRPP

### The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act):

- **Guarantees Rights and Dignity:** The DD Act ensures that people with developmental disabilities have the right to live with dignity, participate fully in their communities, and influence the policies that affect their lives.
- **Historic Transformation:** Prior to the DD Act, options for families were largely limited to expensive institutional care, often marked by isolation and neglect. The Act shifted the focus to community integration, belonging, and self-determination.
- **Comprehensive Support System:** The DD Act established a nationwide network by funding three core programs in every state:
  - **University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs)** – USU IDRPP
  - **Developmental Disabilities Councils (DD Councils)** – Utah DD Council
  - **Protection & Advocacy (P&A) Organizations** – Utah Disability Law Center
- **Coordinated Impact:** This network drives policy, provides training, and protects civil rights—creating a robust infrastructure for inclusion and systemic change.
- **Economic and Social Benefits:** Investing in community living not only saves public funds by reducing crisis-driven spending and reliance on costly institutions but also strengthens local economies and creates opportunities for people with disabilities as advocates, employees, volunteers, and leaders.
- **Ongoing Returns:** The DD Act's focus on replacing segregation with opportunity continues to yield both social and financial benefits for individuals with disabilities and their families.

### UCEDDs: University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities:

- **Established by Federal Law:** UCEDDs were created under the DD Act and must meet rigorous federal requirements for mission, accountability, and impact.
- **UCEDD Impact over the Decades:** UCEDDs have played key roles in every major disability initiative over the past six decades, including the passage of the ADA, IDEA, early intervention, inclusive education, transition to employment, assistive technology, physical & digital accessibility, and home and community-based services.
- **A Bridge Between the University & Community:** UCEDDs serve as a bridge between academic research and community practice, uniquely positioned to translate evidence into real-world solutions and policy recommendations.
- **UCEDD Core Functions:** UCEDDs operate under four federally mandated core functions:
  - **Interdisciplinary pre-service preparation and continuing education:** Training the next generation of disability professionals and leaders.

- **Research and evaluation:** Conducting applied and policy research that shapes best practices and informs local, state, and national policy.
- **Information dissemination:** Sharing evidence-based resources with families, professionals, and policymakers.
- **Community services:** Providing direct services, technical assistance, and model demonstrations that address local and national needs.
- **Essential and Non-Redundant:** The work of UCEDDs is not duplicated elsewhere in the DD network. Their university affiliation enables access to academic expertise, research infrastructure, which helps drive innovation and ensure that services and supports are evidence-based.
- **UCEDDs Are Good for State and Local Economies:** UCEDDs leverage their “core” federal funding to secure additional grants and contracts, multiplying the impact of federal investment and expanding their reach in each state and territory. Many UCEDDs ROI and impact on their state and local economies is 15-20x the amount of federal funding they receive. UCEDDs support **community integration, self-determination, and independence** for people with disabilities, which leads to reduced reliance on costly institutional care and strengthens local economies.
- **Workforce development:** UCEDDs play a key role in preparing the next generation of disability professionals, supporting the state’s workforce and service infrastructure.
- **Policy leadership:** UCEDDs are often called upon by state legislatures and agencies for expertise on disability policy in the areas of education, healthcare, early intervention, assistive technology, accessibility, workforce development, and more.
- **Risk of Restructuring:** Moving UCEDDs under other programs (e.g., Independent Living), or block granting their funding through other state agencies would undermine their efficiency & effectiveness, disrupt long-standing partnerships, and diminish their ability to respond flexibly to state and community needs.
- **National Impact:** There are currently 68 UCEDDs across the U.S., ensuring every state and territory benefits from evidence-based practices and local capacity-building. UCEDDs are vital partners in each state and territory’s disability support system.

## The USU Institute for Disability Research, Policy & Practice (IDRPP): Utah’s UCEDD

- **Statewide and National Leader:** For over 53 years, USU IDRPP has led research, training, and innovation that directly improves education, healthcare, employment, and community living for people with disabilities in Utah and beyond. The IDRPP has grown to be one of the largest UCEDD programs in the U.S. and is recognized as a leading disability research, training, technical assistance, and service provider.
- **IDRPP Impact in 2024-2025:**
  - **Total Projects:** 274
  - **Total Personnel:** 236
  - **Total # of states & territories served by IDRPP programs:** 34
  - **Total # of Utah children & adults with disabilities served by IDRPP programs:** 3,158
  - **Total # of Pre-Service Student trainees:** 64
  - **Total # of Continuing Education participants:** 14,891
  - **Total number of people served by IDRPP Community Training and Technical Assistance programs:** 379,336

- **Total number of Research and Evaluation studies:** 82
- **Exceptional Return on Investment (ROI):** With less than \$650,000 in core federal funding, IDRPP brings over \$27 million annually to Utah and Utah State University—delivering nearly \$41 to Utah for every federal dollar invested.
- **Comprehensive Reach:** IDRPP programs span early intervention, assistive technology, digital accessibility, autism support, workforce development, mental health, supported employment, community living, special education, child development, nutrition and more. IDRPP programs are recognized as national models and reach every corner of the state.
- **Critical to Utah’s Disability Infrastructure:** Eliminating or restructuring UCEDDs like IDRPP would jeopardize decades of progress, reduce access to vital services, and weaken Utah’s capacity to address the needs of people with disabilities and their families in the future.

## Conclusion

UCEDDs are essential, university-based centers that deliver measurable outcomes in training, research, and services. Their broad reach, proven results, and unique university-community partnerships make them a cornerstone of the national disability services system, with impacts that extend to millions of individuals, families, and professionals each year. Eliminating or restructuring UCEDDs would undermine decades of progress and diminish the capacity to address the evolving needs of people with disabilities in Utah and nationwide.