

Michigan Report for the VOR Annual Meeting
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The COVID pandemic has been so disruptive over the last three years, that even if it is officially over, its effects will linger longer for people with severe and profound I/DD than for others. Many programs and services were discontinued. Some were able to open again cautiously, considering the vulnerability of people who are medically fragile or who still could not follow the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of illness.

The provision of services was stymied by staff shortages and a failure to significantly improve the working conditions for direct care workers. In Michigan, the wages of Direct Support Professionals were increased for two years, but with no further increases this year. The system of care feels like it is on the verge of collapse without a cure or realistic plan to fix the problem. The hardest hit by this are families taking care of severely disabled family members at home, some of whom received no help or relief for a year or more. [See "[Michigan's unpaid, overworked caregivers reaching a breaking point](#)" by Hayley Harding and Sarah Rahal, 9/17/22, BridgeMI.com.]

Michigan had a major shift politically with the 2022 midterm elections. It had been one of the worst gerrymandered states in the country, but the voters approved a 2018 ballot measure to switch to an independent redistricting commission based on the 2020 census. Even with a slight edge predicted for Republicans, Democrats won control of both houses of the legislature for the first time in 40 years as well as winning most state-wide elections. This was due to expanded voting rights and issues on the ballot that attracted unprecedented numbers of voters.

With the Federal Home and Community Based Settings rule going into full effect, the state has not put limits on the size of settings, giving people with disabilities more choice in services and residential settings, at least theoretically. Advocacy groups still pine for restrictions on congregate programs and services that people with severe I/DD are more likely to need.

As in other states, after the state closed most larger facilities, for some children there is nowhere for them to go. This is described in an article from the Detroit Free Press: "[Michigan has nowhere to send vulnerable kids as placement crisis builds](#) - Michigan's judges forced to send children out of the state as residential treatment options dry up" by Jennifer Brookland, 10/6/22. "On any given week, about 100 children are awaiting placement in Michigan. Some wait for months." The article goes on to describe some of the horrific situations that children and families find themselves in.

See also The DD News Blog at <https://theddnewsblog.blogspot.com/> .