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**BLACK IMPACT SUMMIT**  
SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

ATONIA GREEN WORLEY, SAMYUKTA MAHENDRA, BILL DAVIS &  
LEDERICK HORNE  
LEDERICK HORNE SPEAKS, LLC  
[www.lederick.com](http://www.lederick.com)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 6th, 2024, LeDerick Horne Speaks, LLC, in collaboration with the NJ Black I/DD Consortium and the Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies at Rutgers University, convened the

### ***“Black Impact Summit: Supporting Individuals with Disabilities”***

at Rutgers University’s Douglass campus. Funded by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD), this Summit was a pivotal gathering aimed at addressing and overcoming the barriers faced by Black New Jersey residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), as well as their families, in accessing comprehensive developmental disability support systems in the state.

The Summit gathered 64 participants, including statewide stakeholders and families, to identify challenges and develop actionable recommendations. The format of the Summit included breakout sessions and discussions focused on six key topics: Education, Employment, Mental Health/Social Services, Family/Self Advocacy, Housing, and Law Enforcement. Through these sessions, participants collaboratively generated strategies and recommendations to provide to NJCDD.

The purpose was to collaboratively address and find solutions for the barriers preventing access to necessary services. Reflecting on this strategic initiative, the Summit not only fostered a deeper understanding of existing challenges but also paved the way for substantial improvements in how services are delivered to this underserved segment of our community. The insights and recommendations from the Summit have been meticulously documented in this comprehensive report, aimed at ensuring Black NJ residents have access to the full range of disability-related supports and services available throughout the state.

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## KEY POINTS FROM THE SUMMIT AND OVERALL IMPACT

**Community Driven Solutions:** The Summit emphasized community engagement, featuring interactive sessions rather than traditional presentations, which allowed participants to voice their experiences and contribute actively to the discourse.

**Strategic Collaborations:** Building on existing efforts, the Summit leveraged partnerships and insights from ongoing projects to enrich the discussions and outcomes.

**Inclusion and Leadership:** A conscious effort was made to involve Black individuals with disabilities in key leadership roles, aligning with best practices that advocate for hiring from within the community served. Participants expressed positive feedback and a strong sense of community and empowerment.

*“The Summit was an historic event focused on change through conversation, participation, and collaborative impact.”*

*“It was important that we included the voices of I/DD families.”*



**[Figure 1: Black Impact Summit Video Link](#)**

*“The needs of the Black families with disability are immense and until our level of advocacy reaches their level of need, the resources will not be provided.”*

*“The connection of the Summit guests brought an awareness of resources.”*

From a review of the discussions and recommendations, there were several overarching themes that were consistently identified, across sectors, as areas that need more attention, improvement and consideration while addressing the needs of Black individuals with I/DD and their families.



## BACKGROUND AND FORMAT

This work comes out of the NJCDD 5-year strategic plan to address *Goal 1, objective 3: For each year through 2026, Black New Jersey residents with I/DD and their families will have increased access to information about NJCDD, its DD Act Partners, and all developmental disability systems, and how to access the full range of supports and services available through New Jersey's system of services and supports. The desired outcome of Activity 1.3.1 is that New Jersey's I/DD community has increased awareness of the barriers faced by Black NJ residents with I/DD and their families in accessing I/DD services, and of a statewide plan to address challenges.* [Appendix A](#)

The Black Impact Summit builds on two years of foundational grant work dedicated to "increasing access to information for Black NJ residents with I/DD and their families." This initiative aimed to identify and address gaps in knowledge and access to resources. This work included conducting interviews with Council members, their staff, families, advocates, and DD Act partners. Additionally, focus groups and structured interviews were held with the DD Council, service providers, Black students, and their families. These efforts aimed to determine their knowledge and preferences regarding transition services and informational resources. The efforts also supported the creation of videos and articles tailored for the Black community. An in-school and after-school programs for Black students with disabilities and their families, titled EPIC: Building a village of support and facilitation of PerformCare navigation programs to assist families with application processes were all designed and implemented successfully. And finally, quarterly meetings were facilitated for the **NJ Black I/DD Consortium**; members from the consortium were called upon to participate in the Summit. [Appendix B](#)

## STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE SUMMIT

### EVENT PLANNING AND EXECUTION

The Summit was meticulously planned to reflect the needs and preferences of the community, including the venue selection. The selected Summit site location was Rutgers University – Kathleen W. Ludwig Global Village Living Learning Center in New Brunswick, NJ. This venue was chosen for its location in the center of the state, conducive environment, and facilities that align with the event’s needs. The main conference room, lounge and three classrooms were utilized for the event. See [Appendix C](#) for *Event Agenda*

### ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

A robust registration process via the event management platform Eventbrite, facilitated detailed planning and accommodation of attendees' needs, enhancing the overall participation experience. The Eventbrite page was created to streamline registration and track registration progress. Guests were able to access detailed event information (parking options, guest speaker bios, and hotel accommodations) directly through the registration page. This process also included a few demographic questions to gather essential data about attendees. Any required accommodations and dietary restrictions noted during registration were addressed individually to ensure all guests’ needs were met. Additionally, a link for free parking was embedded within the registration system to simplify logistics for attendees. See [Appendix D](#) for *Event Attendees*

### CONTENT AND DISCUSSION

The event featured presentations by Tawara D. Goode and Rutgers University – Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies. Both presentations captured the essence of the Summit by directly targeting the critical issue of service deficiencies in the Black community. Their combined expertise, insights, and the statistical data they presented offered attendees a comprehensive understanding of the challenges. The choice of these presenters was driven by their depth of knowledge, and ability to provide actionable perspectives that resonated with the Summit's goals.

#### TAWARA D. GOODE

Director of the Georgetown University Center for Cultural Competence opened the session with a compelling presentation. Her expertise in cultural competency and her extensive experience in addressing disparities in marginalized communities, provided a deep dive into the challenges faced by individuals with I/DD, particularly within the Black community. Her presentation was instrumental in highlighting the gaps in services and offering data-driven insights into how cultural competence can improve service delivery and outcomes. [Appendix E: Tawara Goode Key Points](#)



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## RUTGERS UNIVERSITY – JOSEPH C. CORNWALL CENTER FOR METROPOLITAN STUDIES

Presenters **Amanda Jaeger and Pascale Mevs**, complemented Goode’s presentation by focusing on statistical data and research specifically targeted to New Jersey’s lack of services in marginalized communities. Their work provided a broader context to the discussion, bringing in a rich array of statistical evidence and analysis that underscored the urgency of addressing these service gaps in the state of NJ. [Appendix F: Cornwall Center Infographics](#)

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### SESSIONS

Following the welcome address and presentations, each guest was assigned one morning and one afternoon session based on their affiliation and professional acumen, with an option to switch upon request and available space. Two attendees requested reassignment. Assignments and starter questions were emailed to guests prior to the event. Each session had a moderator to facilitate discussions and keep guests on topic. The Summit staff collaborated with each moderator to develop a set of questions for the session participants. Facilitators were chosen based on their content expertise and cultural competency. Additionally, doctoral students served as notetakers in each session to capture all relevant information and recommendations. This focused approach ensured thorough discussions, allowing participants to explore nuances that might be missed in larger, less focused sessions. During the lunch discussion, guests had the option to participate in live video testimonials, where they were asked 1-3 questions about their Summit experience.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Despite being broad in scope, the six breakout session topics are the major issues facing the Black I/DD community and were chosen for an in-depth analysis to develop strategies and recommendations. By identifying the barriers, developing targeted strategies, and creating a collaborative professional learning community with I/DD families, the goal is to significantly improve access to resources and support for the Black IDD community, fostering a more inclusive and effective system of care. We created questions for each session to enhance and lead the conversation. One guest described the sessions as:

*“Presence, participation and representation.”*

See [Appendix G](#) for full list of questions for each session.

## SESSION 1: EDUCATION

This session aimed to explore strategies that could provide high-quality support for Black students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the least restrictive environments. Participants were asked to discuss methods to improve adult outcomes for these students, reviewed recent studies on their educational achievements in New Jersey, and identified necessary steps to increase the representation of Black educators and support staff. Additionally, the session considered changes to teacher preparation programs to enhance cultural awareness and promote inclusion for all Black students with disabilities.

### KEY DISCUSSIONS AND IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

- **Systemic and Policy Issues**
  - Advocated for person-centered approaches rather than system-centered ones, emphasizing the need for a shift in focus to better address individual needs.
  - Proposed changing "Inclusion" to "Rightful Presence" to reflect a more respectful and accurate approach, while addressing regionalization issues to ensure consistent support.
  - Suggested increasing Black role models to set a positive example for young Black students and inspire future generations.
  - **Barrier:** Highlighted the persistent poverty in Black communities and the lack of effective support for disabled students, including insufficient technology access in prisons.
  
- **Disparities and Needs in Black Communities**
  - Highlighted the pervasive poverty in Black communities, inadequate access to technology, and the underfunding for incarcerated individuals with disabilities, noting the lack of discussion around disabilities in these communities.

- Emphasized the importance of Black representation in education to build trust, ensure effective support, and address the specific needs of Black students with disabilities.
- **Barrier:** Preconceived labels and biases affecting disabled children, the variability in special education regulations between states, and the insufficient training and understanding among educators regarding disabilities and cultural competency.
- **Challenges in Special Education and Disability Support**
  - Focused on early detection of disabilities, the need for collaboration with families, and the importance of universal autism screening to facilitate earlier intervention.
  - Discussed biases and labels placed on disabled children by teachers, which can negatively impact their educational experience, and pointed out variations in educational regulations between states, stressing the need for stronger parental advocacy.
  - **Barrier:** Underfunding and lack of access to necessary resources, inadequate representation and role models in education, diminished Black male representation statewide, poor transition services for young adults, and lack of support for parents navigating the system.
- **Cultural Competency and Representation**
  - Discussed the cultural mismatch and linguistic inequity in education, highlighting the need for multilingual accessibility, better support for social workers, and improved training on implementing behavior plans to meet the diverse needs of students.
  - **Barrier:** Hostility towards Black families, the lack of financial coverage for certain disabilities, and the overall cultural and linguistic gaps that hinder effective support.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

### 1. Policy and System Changes

- a. **Universal Autism Screening and Early Intervention:** Advocate for the implementation of universal autism screening and more comprehensive early intervention strategies, starting at an early age to identify and support children with developmental disabilities.
- b. **Policy Advocacy for Enhanced Funding:** Champion policy changes that increase funding and support for Black students with disabilities, particularly those who are also involved in the criminal justice system.
- c. **Diversity and Inclusion in Hiring:** Enforce and enhance policies that promote diversity and inclusion in the hiring and retention processes within educational institutions, focusing on building a workforce that reflects the community it serves.

### 2. Strengthen Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

- a. Fund an initiative focused on training school staff to develop and implement robust and compliant IEP and transition plans. This initiative should focus on specifically addressing the needs of Black students with I/DD. In addition to staff training, provide a training program for Black students and their family members so that they can effectively lead their IEP team of educators and relevant professionals.
- b. Fund a study to identify the current state of transition planning for Black students with disabilities throughout NJ.

- c. Fund an Initiative to provide additional case managers to support creation and implementation of higher quality transition plans for Black students, beginning as early as age 14 and no later than age 16.
- 3. Fund a Cultural and Linguistic Competence for Inclusive Schools Program**
- a. This program aims to address both cultural and linguistic competence while promoting more inclusive school environments for students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those with disabilities. The goal is to ensure that educators can effectively support students from different cultural backgrounds and those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) through the following actions:
    - i. **Cultural Competence Training:** Implement mandatory, ongoing cultural competence training for all educators, with a focus on racial affirmation and person-centered approaches. This training will equip educators to better understand and respect the cultural identities of Black students with I/DD and effectively address their unique challenges in the classroom.
    - ii. **Inclusive Education Practices:** Develop and implement collaborative training programs for general, special education teachers and school administrators. These programs will promote inclusive education practices that allow students with disabilities to participate in general education settings, with appropriate accommodations and modifications to meet their needs.
- 4. Increase representation and support for Black Educators.**
- a. **Targeted Recruitment Initiatives:** Launch initiatives to recruit and retain Black educators and support staff, particularly in special education. This could include partnerships with HBCUs, scholarships, sign-on bonuses, and paid professional development opportunities. Recruiting and nurturing local high school students that express an interest in pursuing a career in education is another ex
  - b. **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship and professional development programs for Black educators, offering networking opportunities and field experiences in diverse, inclusive settings.
- 5. Foster Community Engagement and Parental Support**
- a. **Parental Advocacy and Support Workshops:** Engage parents through workshops and resources that empower them to support their children’s education and navigate disability services effectively.
  - b. **School-Community Partnerships:** Establish connections between school staff and community-based organizations/non-profits that have a proven history of supporting Black individuals with disabilities, fostering a collaborative approach to meeting student needs.
- 6. Improve Support Services and Early Interventions**
- a. **School-Based Support Programs:** Implement mentorship, mental health, and counseling services within schools to support the emotional and social development of students with I/DD and behavioral issues.

- b. Restorative Justice in Schools:** Introduce restorative justice practices to address behavioral issues and conflicts, reducing reliance on exclusionary discipline and preventing the school-to-prison pipeline.
- c. Early Intervention Resource Guides:** Develop a culturally competent, comprehensive resource informational guide to be distributed to families by NJ Early Intervention providers during the onset of services.

**7. Address Resource Allocation and Accessibility**

- a. Community Resource Events:** Partner with local corporations and community organizations to organize resource events and provide information to the Black I/DD community, increasing awareness and access to services. Organizing community resource events at culturally relevant spaces is important for getting community buy in and engagement, (e.g. Hair salons, day care centers, urgent care, youth sporting events, and cultural celebrations).
- b. Comprehensive Resource Database:** Create an accessible, user-friendly database of disability related resources that is available across multiple platforms (all mobile and desktop devices). This ensures that families and educators can easily access the support they need in the state of NJ.

## SESSION 2: EMPLOYMENT

This session focused on exploring the key challenges Black individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities encounter in seeking and maintaining employment. Participants examined barriers in job placement and transition services, discussed strategies for successful recruitment and retention in inclusive workplaces, and shared examples of businesses implementing effective practices. Additionally, the session identified resources available to support advocacy, employment, and benefit maintenance, while also addressing ways to enhance the transition process and provide greater support for families preparing their children for the workforce.

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### KEY DISCUSSIONS AND IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

- **Job Placement and Accommodations**
  - Participants discussed the reluctance of employers to hire individuals with disabilities, often due to liability concerns, and noted that individuals with disabilities frequently lack the confidence to request necessary accommodations. These challenges directly impact the ability of Black individuals with I/DD to secure and retain employment.
  - The group highlighted concerns about how competitive integrated employment could lead to the loss of existing disability benefits, potentially discouraging job seekers with disabilities from pursuing employment opportunities.
- **Quality of Transition and Support Services**
  - Participants identified significant variability in the quality and availability of IEP and support services across states, with discrepancies often linked to district wealth and racial demographics.
  - The discussion pointed out that existing IEP and transition services are often insufficient, failing to engage students meaningfully in the transition process and adequately prepare them for employment.
  - **Barrier:** Inconsistent funding and resource allocation across districts exacerbate disparities in service quality, leading to gaps in skills training and ineffective transition planning, which hinders the employment prospects of Black individuals with I/DD.
- **Parental Burdens**
  - The group noted that parents face substantial demands on their time and resources, particularly in the early recognition and support of their child's disabilities.
  - Discussions also highlighted a widespread distrust of school systems among parents, coupled with a lack of proactive support, which complicates their efforts to navigate the employment landscape and prepare their children for the workforce.
  - **Barrier:** The employment high demands on parents, combined with lack of accessible information and distrust of school systems, hinder their ability to effectively advocate for their children's employment and support needs.
- **Related Socioeconomic Conditions**
  - Participants discussed how Inadequate transportation and limited access to quality educational resources, exacerbate the difficulties faced by families of individuals with disabilities in accessing employment opportunities and necessary support services.

- **Barrier:** Socioeconomic factors severely restrict employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, making it difficult for them to secure and maintain jobs.

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## RECOMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

1. **Policy recommendation:** Implement a state level policy, similar to maternity leave, that requires workplaces to provide paid leave when family members have to attend IEP, transition, employment related support and training meetings. This can be structured either as a passthrough/tax incentive from the federal government to the employers or a direct compensation to the family members.
2. **Community Outreach and Employment Support**
  - a. **Provide Employment and Support Information:** Develop and implement a community-based outreach program to disseminate information about employment opportunities and necessary accommodations for Black individuals with I/DD. This program should utilize community hubs such as faith-based organizations, healthcare providers, and social media to ensure wide-reaching access.
  - b. **Proactive Outreach by Service Providers:** Establish partnerships between disability service providers and local/state organizations to conduct proactive outreach to parents, ensuring that they are informed about transition services and employment resources available for their children with I/DD.
  - c. **Foster Employment Partnerships:** Create a network of partnerships with local businesses, state agencies, and community organizations to increase meaningful employment opportunities for Black individuals with I/DD. These partnerships should include commitments to inclusive hiring practices and retention support.
3. **Early and Continuous Transition Planning**
  - a. **Start Transition Planning Early:** Design and implement a transition planning initiative that begins at the time of diagnosis, offering early case management and clear pathways to employment for Black students with I/DD. This initiative should include parental education on IEP processes and consistent engagement throughout the transition to the workforce.
  - b. **Provide Regular Transition Sessions:** Facilitate in-person quarterly transition planning sessions in middle and high schools statewide, led by the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities or similar entities, to ensure that students with I/DD are adequately prepared for employment.
  - c. **Educate and Empower Parents:** Educate parents about their rights and the IEP process, empowering them to take a continuous and active role in advocating for their children's transition to employment. Provide support and resources to help parents navigate these processes and ensure their involvement is consistent and informed
4. **Expand Skills Training and Job Readiness Programs**
  - a. **Replicate Successful Transition Models:** Replicate and expand successful transition programs, such as Florida's "High School High Tech" model, to create structured pathways from education to employment. The proposed programs should demonstrate

effectiveness in preparing Black individuals with I/DD for the workforce and scaling these strategies in multiple regions.

- i. “High School High Tech” program in Florida – school-based, employment training enterprise to recreate a real-world working experience (e.g., school-based coffee shop selling to teachers). School also had partnerships with tech school or employment to get these students placed. With a Transition Site specialist who would help ensure individual gets the accommodations they need and weekly counseling, individuals felt empowered with knowledge and resources to go to employer knowing what they need for success.

## 5. Address Socioeconomic Barriers to Employment

- a. **Targeted Support for Economically Disadvantaged Families:** Provide targeted support to economically disadvantaged families, ensuring that they can access transportation, job readiness resources, and employment opportunities for their children with I/DD. Initiative should detail partnerships with transportation services and financial support mechanisms.
- b. **Increase Access to Technology:** Increase access to technology and digital literacy training for Black individuals with I/DD and their families. Initiative should outline how to provide affordable access to laptops, internet services, and job placement platforms, with an emphasis on digital literacy as a key component of job readiness.



## SESSION 3: MENTAL HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Participants in this session focused on identifying strategies and resources to support the **mental health needs** of Black residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). They discussed the importance of **healthcare worker training** to **eliminate biases**, as well as the challenges Black families face in accessing both social and medical support services. The session also emphasized the need for resources specifically tailored to **dual diagnoses**, ensuring that individuals with I/DD and co-occurring mental health conditions receive appropriate care. Additionally, participants explored **advocacy strategies for underserved communities** and discussed the development of a **comprehensive resource guide** that connects families with **mental health, social, and medical supports**.

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### KEY DISCUSSIONS AND IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

- Participants shared a list of resources that they were aware of that currently offer support; these are listed at the end of this section.
- **Mental Health and Healthcare Bias**
  - **Mental Health vs. Behavioral Health:** There is a need for services that differentiate between mental health and behavioral health support for individuals with I/DD, as current systems primarily focus on behavior management.
  - **Cultural Competency and Bias in Healthcare:** Healthcare professionals require targeted training that addresses cultural and racial biases, using frameworks like Critical Race Theory that emphasizes intersectionality to better serve Black individuals with I/DD.
  - **Barriers:**
    - **Healthcare Bias:** Racial and economic biases in healthcare affect the diagnosis and treatment of Black individuals with I/DD, leading to misdiagnoses or inadequate care.
    - **Inadequate Training:** The current training for healthcare providers does not fully address the intersection of race, disability, and culture, leaving healthcare professionals unprepared to meet the specific needs of Black residents with I/DD.
- **Resource Guides and Accessibility**
  - **Existing Resource Guides:** Organizations like the Division of Disability Services and Aging and Disability Resource Center have the potential produce valuable resource guides.
  - **Community Awareness and Engagement:** Online resource guides exist, but there is a need for improved dissemination through trusted community networks. Word-of-mouth communication and partnerships with community leaders are essential for increasing awareness and utilization of these services.
  - **Barrier:**
    - **Poor Dissemination of Resources:** Resource guides are available but are not effectively communicated or promoted to Black families with I/DD, reducing their overall impact and accessibility.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

### 1. Address Systemic Issues and Advocate for Policy Changes

- a. **Engage Policy Makers for Inclusive Reforms:** Initiatives should include strategies to work with policy makers, such as the Governor’s Aide and the NJ Division of Civil Rights, to push for policy reforms that address the specific needs of Black individuals with I/DD, including equitable access to mental health services, improved healthcare training, and strategies to reduce bias. Proposals should provide examples of systemic barriers and detail how these policy reforms will target those barriers.

### 2. Increase Awareness and Access to Resources

- a. **Community Outreach Programs:** Develop and implement a community-based outreach initiative to raise awareness about resources available for Black families with I/DD. Proposals should demonstrate partnerships with local organizations, such as the Black Impact Summit, and utilize community leaders and grassroots organizations to ensure effective dissemination of information.
- b. **Develop and Distribute Comprehensive Resource Guides:** Push for the creation and distribution of a comprehensive resource guide by the Division of Disability Services or similar organizations. The guide should be available in various formats, including print and digital, to ensure accessibility to diverse populations. It should be distributed through healthcare providers, schools, and local organizations to reach underserved communities.

### 3. Improve Healthcare Training and Address Bias

- a. **Targeted Training Programs for Healthcare Providers :** Proposals should integrate Critical Race Theory focusing on intersectionality, and cultural competency into healthcare training curricula. Training programs should include practical, exposure-based learning modules where future healthcare providers engage with real-world communities to learn about cultural values, with follow-up assessments to measure the effectiveness of the training.
- b. **Reverse Engagement Initiatives:** Implement "reverse engagement" programs in which healthcare providers shadow individuals from the community to gain a deeper understanding of cultural values and norms. These programs should be designed for long-term engagement, ensuring that providers fully grasp the lived experiences of those in the community.

### 4. Expand Mental Health Services and Advocacy

- a. **Educational Programs for Families:** Develop educational programs that help families understand the importance of mental health and how various diagnoses manifest in individuals with I/DD. This includes advocating for increased funding and resource allocation toward mental health services that specifically cater to the needs of this community, addressing gaps in mental health support. Initiatives should include collaborations with advocacy groups to provide families with resources and support for mental health management, encouraging long-term engagement between practitioners and communities.

### 5. Strengthen Resource Connections and Community Support

- a. **Leverage Local Organizations for Resource Connections:** Utilize existing community organizations, such as Family Success Centers, to connect Black families with needed services, even if these services are not tailored specifically for I/DD. By

using trusted local organizations, families can gain better access to relevant resources and supports.

- b. **Build Cross-Sector Partnerships:** Establish partnerships between healthcare providers, local organizations, and resource agencies to improve service delivery for Black families with I/DD. Initiatives should identify specific gaps in service, such as access to mental health services or transportation, and demonstrate how these partnerships will address these needs effectively.
- **Available Resources for Black Residents with I/DD**
  - **Family Support Organization (FSO):** A grassroots network that helps families share experiences and access both local and global resources.
  - **Care Management Organization (CMO):** Provides direct support and in-home services, covered by Medicaid, with presumptive eligibility ensuring access regardless of income or immigration status.
  - **NJ Early Intervention System:** Offers developmental evaluation referrals under Part C Medicare, with Children’s Specialized Hospital providing developmental screenings and support.
  - **Family Success Centers (FSC):** Although not specifically tailored for I/DD, these centers offer general support and partner with mental health organizations to assist families.
  - **Governor’s Aide and NJ Division of Civil Rights:** Provides advocacy support and reporting mechanisms for addressing issues related to care and treatment.
  - **Barrier: Lack of Awareness:** Many Black families with I/DD are unaware of the availability of these resources, which limits their access to crucial services.

## SESSION 4: FAMILY/SELF ADVOCACY

This session sought to enhance connections with Black family members and self-advocates across the state. Participants discussed strategies to **bolster community support and advocacy** for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). One focus was on identifying ways to **alleviate the financial burdens** faced by Black families when seeking disability diagnoses, ensuring access to financial relief and resources. Participants also explored methods to **improve information dissemination** about available programs and services within Black communities. Additionally, they emphasized the need for **culturally and linguistically responsive supports**, sharing best practices for addressing the unique needs of Black self-advocates and their families. The session concluded by discussing **engagement with school transition coordinators, administrators, and educators** to enhance collaboration, improve service delivery, and develop self-advocacy programs for Black youth and adults with I/DD.

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### KEY DISCUSSIONS AND IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

- **Advocacy Enhancement**
  - **Restructuring perceptions of disability:** Participants discussed the need to shift from a deficit-focused view of disability to one of celebration, which can lead to more inclusive community support.
  - **Community support and trained workers:** The importance of strengthening informal and faith-based community support was highlighted, along with the need for more community health workers trained in disability services to provide better assistance.
  - **Barrier:** There is a **lack of visibility and inclusion** of disability-related programs in local events and institutions, limiting opportunities for advocacy and community support.
- **Financial Relief**
  - **Medicaid coverage challenges and solutions:** Participants discussed the limitations of Medicaid coverage and reimbursement rates and explored potential solutions such as integrating services with insurance providers and creating community-based third spaces for sharing information.
  - **Benefits counseling:** The group emphasized the critical role of benefits counseling and vocational rehabilitation services in helping families navigate the financial burdens associated with disability.
  - **Barrier:** Many families face **high out-of-pocket costs** due to Medicaid limitations, as well as a **lack of information** about available benefits and support services, which deepens the financial burden.
- **Information Dissemination**
  - **Awareness and community-based support:** Participants discussed how financial stress and lack of awareness among Black I/DD families limit access to available programs. They stressed the need for organized community events and peer-to-peer support networks to improve information dissemination.
  - **Barrier:** There is a **lack of communication** about support programs and services, which prevents families from accessing the help they need.
- **Culturally Responsive Services**

- **Mistrust and stigma:** Participants explored the deep mistrust that Black families have toward the education system and the political forces and family stigma that further complicate access to disability services.
- **Barrier:** The **stigma surrounding disability** and **distrust in the education system** contribute to a reluctance among families to engage with available services.
- **Educational and Administrative Engagement**
  - **Urban and charter school challenges:** Participants noted challenges with outsourcing special education services, pay disparities, and limited availability of resources for students with disabilities in urban and charter schools.
  - **Racial bias and service integration:** The discussion highlighted issues of racial bias and underrepresentation in special education, along with the need for better integration of special education services and sufficient counseling support.
  - **Barrier:** There is an **inadequate level of support and resources** in urban and charter schools, and the **racial bias** present in educational settings creates additional barriers for Black students with disabilities.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

1. **Policy Recommendation : Integrate disability services** with insurance providers and Medicaid to reduce financial burdens for Black families. This should include the creation of “**Disability Certified**” **third spaces**, such as community centers or libraries, where families can easily access accurate information and receive assistance in applying for services and benefits.
2. **Advocacy Enhancement through Community Partnerships and Self-Advocacy Training**
  - a. **Partner with local organizations** such as **NAACP** and **Pinelands Preservation** to increase informal community support networks for Black families with I/DD. This collaboration should focus on launching outreach initiatives and training community health workers to guide families in navigating disability services.
  - b. **Develop self-advocacy training programs** for Black families and individuals with I/DD. The training should provide tools to help them understand their rights, navigate complex disability services, and advocate effectively for their needs within educational and medical systems. Create safe spaces for individuals and families to report biases, abuse and disparities in services.
3. **Financial Relief and Access to Disability Services**
  - a. **Establish comprehensive benefits counseling programs** that provide guidance on Medicaid, insurance, and vocational services. These programs should focus on educating families about their financial options and helping them navigate the application processes for both disability services and vocational rehabilitation.
4. **Information Dissemination through Community Events and Peer Networks**
  - a. **Organize intentional in-person community events** designed to increase awareness about available programs and services for Black families with I/DD. Collaborate with local organizations, including **NAACP** and **Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)**, to host these events in trusted community spaces. Events should provide families with accessible, multilingual information and direct connections to disability services.

- b. **Enhance peer-to-peer support networks** by strengthening state-wide parent advocacy programs such as the **SPAN**. These networks should enable families to share experiences and resources, fostering strong, supportive communities that empower parents to advocate for their children's needs.
  - c. **Develop partnerships with healthcare providers and digital platforms** to disseminate information. Use these platforms to reach Black families in underserved communities, ensuring that information about disability services is readily available and accessible to all, regardless of technological access or language barriers.
- 5. Culturally Responsive Services and Stigma Reduction**
- a. **Develop outreach programs** that build trust with Black families and educate them about their rights within the education system. These programs should focus on culturally responsive services, helping families understand the disability services available to them, particularly in relation to school transitions and IEP development.
  - b. **Address the stigma surrounding disability** in Black communities by engaging in political advocacy and community outreach. This initiative should involve working with political leaders and local organizations to promote disability as part of community empowerment, reducing the shame or stigma often associated with seeking disability support.
- 6. Systemic Advocacy in Education**
- a. **Implement training programs** for educators to address racial bias and improve representation within special education services. This project should focus on creating professional development programming that emphasizes cultural competency and anti-bias training, ensuring that Black students with I/DD are supported in inclusive, understanding environments.
  - b. **Advocate for equitable pay and resources** for special education professionals to improve service quality. The initiative should outline how it will work with both traditional and charter school systems to ensure that special education professionals receive fair compensation, and the resources needed to provide high-quality services.
  - c. **Ensure that special education services** are well-integrated, by working with organizations like **New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE)**, and adequately funded in both traditional and charter schools. The project should focus on integrating special education services into mainstream classrooms, ensuring that Black students with I/DD receive the same level of support and resources as their peers.

*Note: Robert Jackson was one of the facilitators of this session. As a Black man with I/DD and a member of the NJ Black I/DD Consortium, his contributions and insight are greatly valued. [Appendix H](#) is a list of resources that Robert has shared with the Authors to be included in this report.*



## SESSION 5: HOUSING

This session aimed to explore strategies to overcome the barriers that Black residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities face in accessing and maintaining housing, while addressing cultural competency, estate planning, and housing-related discrimination. Discussions included strategies to improve cultural competency among system providers, estate planning, community-based living, and accessing necessary resources. Participants also explored ways to enhance safety, build informal community support networks, and eliminate discrimination in housing access.

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### KEY DISCUSSIONS AND IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

- **Housing Challenges and Resource Constraints:**
  - High housing costs, long waitlists, and limited availability of vouchers (e.g., Section 8) make affordable housing inaccessible for Black residents with I/DD.
  - RCAs selling housing to other municipalities against regulations reduces local housing availability and further limits access to affordable options.
  - Resource constraints and the impact of moving on Medicaid services make it difficult for individuals with I/DD to maintain stable housing and healthcare.
  - **Barrier:** Violations of housing regulations and market-driven costs restrict access to stable housing, creating longer wait times and fewer local options.
  - **Barrier:** Limited housing resources and the disruption of Medicaid services when moving create gaps in care and housing stability.
- **Eligibility Issues:**
  - Section 811 Supportive Housing requires employment/income verification, which excludes many individuals without stable income.
  - New Jersey's narrow definition of homelessness excludes individuals living in cars or unstable conditions, preventing them from receiving housing assistance.
  - **Barrier:** Restrictive eligibility requirements and homelessness definitions prevent many Black residents with I/DD from accessing supportive housing.
- **Systemic Challenges in Information Access and Cultural Competency:**
  - The complexity of the state benefit system, coupled with fragmented communication and resources, makes it difficult for Black families with I/DD to access housing services.
  - Cultural insensitivity among service providers creates distrust and disengagement from families, compounding difficulties in navigating the system.
  - **Barrier:** Fragmented benefit systems, lack of clear communication, and poor cultural competency make it difficult for families to access essential housing resources.
  - **Barrier:** Cultural insensitivity and displacement reduce families' trust and engagement, leaving them without adequate support in navigating the housing system.
- **Estate Planning and Community-Based Living:**
  - Social workers often lack knowledge about estate planning and provide inconsistent information on transition planning, leaving families unsure of their options.

- **Barrier:** Inconsistent guidance from social workers and conflicting information prevents families from making informed long-term decisions about housing and estate planning.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

*Note: These recommendations are a combination of participant suggestions and additional suggestions provided by the session facilitators. See [Appendix I: Housing Session Recommendations by VIA NJ/PA](#) for original text.*

### 1. Policy Recommendation:

- a. **Statewide Funding:** Allocate dedicated funding from the DDD budget to fully support the Housing Navigator role, making these services accessible to Black families with I/DD.
- b. **Widespread Awareness Campaign:** Launch a comprehensive awareness campaign to promote the availability of Housing Navigators, targeting families, service providers, and community organizations to ensure that more individuals and families are informed about and can utilize these services.

### 2. Inclusive Representation and Cultural Competency:

- a. Ensure individuals with lived disability experience are included and prioritized in all system events and decision-making processes, alongside family members and professionals.
- b. Amplify their voices by providing resources for accommodations, accessible communication, and ensuring their contributions are meaningful and central to the process.
- c. Mandate ongoing cultural competency training for all professionals in disability services, including case managers, social workers, and school staff, focusing on racial equity and the unique needs of Black families with I/DD.

### 3. Systemic Coordination and Resource Navigation:

- a. Advocate for the state to adopt and prioritize best practices, such as the Housing Navigator role, while funding demonstration projects that integrate housing, Medicaid, and other support services into a streamlined system. Provide families with a designated case manager to help navigate these services efficiently.
- b. Develop a centralized online platform that consolidates housing benefits, Medicaid, and other programs into a single resource for Black families with I/DD. This platform should be user-friendly, accessible in multiple languages, and updated quarterly to ensure accurate information.

### 4. Financial and Regulatory Education for Families:

- a. Offer forums and workshops to help families understand the financial and regulatory framework of disability services, ensuring they are equipped to advocate for change within existing systems.
- b. Provide educational resources in accessible formats, including plain language and multiple languages, to ensure all families can navigate the system and maintain benefits.

### 5. Early Estate Planning and Long-Term Support:

- a. Implement early estate planning support for families, starting when individuals with I/DD reach age 14. Provide biannual workshops on long-term care, housing



transitions, and financial planning, with follow-up support and annual reviews of estate plans.

**6. Demonstration Projects for Housing and Community Living:**

- a. Fund demonstration projects that allow individuals with I/DD to explore housing options based on personal preferences, family circumstances, and economic needs. Enable the use of public funding for smart home technology, home modifications, and remote support systems that promote independent living.

**7. Support for Families During Transition:**

- a. Advocate for the funding of Support Brokerage and Support Coordination services from birth, allowing families to familiarize themselves with available services during the school transition phase. Ensure each school has a parent liaison to provide disability resources and guidance to families.

## SESSION 6: LEGAL/ LAW ENFORCEMENT

This session focused on discussing ways to improve relationships between law enforcement and the Black I/DD community. Participants examined the necessary training for law enforcement to better interact with individuals with I/DD, explored statewide methods and priorities, and reviewed programs supporting Black NJ residents with I/DD in the criminal justice system. In line with the objective of addressing mistrust, participants delved into the root causes of mistrust in law enforcement within the Black community. Additionally, discussions centered on strategies to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline affecting Black male special education students, while evaluating how services are delivered to the Black I/DD population during incarceration.

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### KEY DISCUSSIONS AND IDENTIFIED BARRIERS

- **Training and Representation Issues**
  - Law enforcement's **insufficient training** on interacting with individuals with I/DD often leads to **harmful outcomes**, especially in high-pressure situations. This lack of training is compounded by the **underrepresentation of minority groups** within law enforcement agencies, which deepens the divide between officers and the communities they serve, particularly Black families with I/DD.
- **Root Cause of Mistrust**
  - Participants discussed how the **media's portrayal** of negative incidents involving law enforcement, especially those involving **racism and prejudice**, contributes to the **mistrust** between the Black community and police. The **lack of accountability** for officers involved in biased incidents was also highlighted as a key factor that perpetuates this mistrust within the Black I/DD community.
- **Pipeline Biases**
  - **Implicit biases** within the legal system significantly impact **split-second decisions** made by law enforcement, disproportionately affecting Black individuals with I/DD. Participants emphasized that these biases often lead to **unequal treatment**, especially during interactions where **quick judgments** are required.
- **School-to-Prison Pipeline**
  - The correlation between **special education backgrounds** and **higher incarceration rates** for Black males was a major point of discussion. Participants noted the **lack of sufficient data collection** and **intervention strategies** that limits efforts to address these disparities. **Institutional biases** within the legal and prison systems further marginalize individuals with I/DD, making it harder for them to access appropriate support.
- **Special Needs Identification**
  - The potential benefits and concerns regarding including I/DD information on driver's licenses and **special needs registries** were explored. While such measures could help officers interact more effectively with individuals with I/DD, participants raised concerns about **privacy** and the **risk of stigmatization**, which might lead to further discrimination.
- **Community Engagement Programs**
  - Programs like "National Night Out" and "Coffee with Cops" were discussed as attempts to build trust between law enforcement and the community. However,

their **effectiveness** is often limited by a failure to address the **deeper systemic issues** that impact the Black I/DD community. **Direct, meaningful interaction** between law enforcement and individuals with I/DD was stressed as crucial for improving understanding.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

### 1. **Policy Recommendation: Address School-to-Prison Pipeline and Improve Data Collection on I/DD in the Correctional System.**

- a. Mandate the development of a comprehensive, statewide data collection initiative that gathers empirical data on individuals with I/DD in the criminal justice system. This system should track the number of individuals entering the system, their diagnoses, treatment received, and outcomes; **beginning with a mandatory screening for I/DD**. A mandate to screen current incarcerated population for I/DD should also be included. The data collected will inform policy reforms, focusing on reducing disparities in how individuals with I/DD are treated within the correctional system. Additionally, the policy should include an independent review mechanism to identify and address **institutional biases** and **discrepancies in treatment** of incarcerated Black individuals with I/DD.



*This policy recommendation was also emphasized during the Education session and was echoed during the end of day reflections.*

### 2. **Training Improvements**

- a. **Develop and implement mandatory annual training modules** for all officers focused on interacting with individuals with I/DD, using role-playing scenarios and behavioral cue recognition.
- b. **Expand training to include quarterly workshops on implicit bias**, focusing on recognizing and mitigating biases in interactions with the I/DD community. Proposals should include how success will be measured, and post training follow up to ensure continuity.

### 2. **Increase Diversity and Representation**

- a. **Advocate for more diverse hiring practices** by conducting targeted recruitment drives in underrepresented communities and **propose state-level policies that provide financial incentives** for law enforcement agencies that meet diversity quotas.

### 3. **Community Engagement Initiatives**

- a. **Organize biannual community engagement events** like "Coffee with Cops" and "National Night Out" and **create quarterly meet-and-greet programs** specifically designed for law enforcement and families of individuals with I/DD.

### 4. **Special Needs Identification Strategies**

- a. **Conduct a statewide survey and focus groups** to explore the benefits and drawbacks of including I/DD status on driver's licenses and special needs registries. **Ensure any identification system includes opt-in options** for individuals and safeguards to prevent misuse of personal information.

- i. The target audience of this particular focus group should solely be Black individuals with I/DD and their families to ensure that this community is an active part of any new ID system that would impact them.

**5. Address School-to-Prison Pipeline**

- a. **Support initiatives like the Justice Evolved Youth Immerser and CASA** by securing state funding and expanding advocacy and early intervention programs.
- b. **Advocate for the expansion of Mental Health Diversion programs**, pushing for legislation and securing funding in **3 additional counties**.
- c. **Enhance de-escalation tactics and programs** like the NJ Attorney General's Arrive Together program.

**6. Develop Advocacy Training Templates**

- a. **Create advocacy training templates** based on successful models like diabetes awareness training, with a goal of training **at least 80% of officers annually**.
- b. **Implement mandatory exposure-based training** for officers, aiming to train **all officers within two years**.

## CONCLUSION AND LOOKING FORWARD

The **Black Impact Summit** exemplified a powerful, community-centered approach to addressing the long-standing barriers faced by Black New Jersey residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Through thoughtful engagement, such as providing materials beforehand, serving culturally relevant food, and creating an open, welcoming atmosphere for dialogue, the Summit fostered honest conversations about key areas like education, employment, housing, mental health/social work, family/self advocacy, and law enforcement. These discussions highlighted crucial systemic challenges and generated actionable recommendations that now serve as a roadmap for addressing inequities and improving service access for this underserved community.

Key recommendations include the development of a centralized resource hub to consolidate information across sectors, the implementation of systemic cultural competency training, and the creation of data collection systems to track service delivery outcomes. These proposals, alongside others, underscore the need for systemic reform and ongoing community collaboration to bring about lasting change.

This report is intended to serve as a guiding document for NJCDD and other stakeholders to understand and implement best practices for engaging with the Black I/DD community effectively.

## OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. **Develop a Centralized Resource Hub with Integrated Services**

Create a state-wide, accessible platform that consolidates information on all available support services across sectors like education, employment, mental health/social services, housing, and law enforcement. This platform should integrate AI for real-time updates and provide multi-language support. Additionally, the platform should promote cross-sector collaboration, ensuring that families can access services seamlessly across different systems.

### 2. **Implement Systemic Cultural Competency and Representation Training**

Launch a statewide initiative that mandates annual cultural competency and anti-bias training for all public-facing professionals, including teachers, healthcare providers, social workers, and law enforcement. The training should also focus on increasing diversity and representation within these professions. Success should be measured through feedback surveys and community input.

### 3. **Promote Community and Family Engagement Programs**

Partner with local organizations such as NAACP, faith-based groups, and parent advocacy networks to develop community outreach and family engagement programs. These initiatives should provide families with self-advocacy training, education on their rights, and access to peer-to-peer support networks. The programs should be community-driven and aim to foster long-term support systems.

### 4. **Establish Data Collection and Accountability Systems**

Develop comprehensive, statewide data collection systems across all sectors to track services provided to Black families with I/DD. Use this data to evaluate service effectiveness, identify

gaps, and inform policy decisions. Include metrics for tracking diversity, service access, and long-term outcomes. Establish accountability frameworks that ensure agencies are held responsible for improving service delivery.

5. **Advocate for Systemic Policy Reforms and Funding Increases**

Collaborate with policymakers to advocate for equitable reforms in healthcare, education, housing, and law enforcement that address systemic barriers for Black individuals with I/DD. These reforms should focus on increasing funding, reducing disparities, and ensuring that services are accessible and culturally competent. Additionally, promote collaboration between agencies and community organizations to streamline service delivery and ensure that reforms are properly implemented.

6. **Expand Training and Professional Development Initiatives**

Create mandatory training and professional development programs for educators, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and social workers that emphasize I/DD-specific needs, cultural competency, and anti-bias practices. Incorporate exposure-based learning and real-world case studies to ensure empathy and understanding. Establish regular evaluations to ensure the effectiveness of these training programs.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR ENGAGING WITH THE BLACK COMMUNITY

The following best practices are designed to facilitate meaningful and effective engagement with the Black community, particularly when working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. These practices emphasize the importance of trust-building, cultural responsiveness, and person-centered interactions, recognizing the diversity within the Black community.

1. **Recognize that Black Communities Are Not a Monolith**

Acknowledge the diversity within Black communities, which includes varying linguistic, cultural, and historical backgrounds. Tailor engagement approaches to respect and reflect the unique experiences and needs of different communities within the Black population.

2. **Linguistic and Cultural Competency with Adequate Funding**

Ensure that engagement efforts prioritize linguistic support by making materials available in multiple languages and providing translators where needed. Additionally, allocate specific budgetary resources for linguistic and cultural support when accepting proposals for RFPs to work with this population.

3. **Create a Welcoming and Person-Centered Atmosphere**

Foster a sense of belonging by creating a welcoming, relaxed environment. Serve culturally relevant food and offer hospitality that reflects the community's values.

4. **Provide Information and Session Materials in Advance**

Share materials well in advance to allow participants time to prepare their thoughts and equip them with information to engage meaningfully in conversation.

5. **Build Trust through Collaboration with Community Leaders**

Collaborate with trusted community figures, such as leaders from the NJ Black I/DD Consortium, NAACP, and faith-based groups, to foster informal, conversation-based engagements.

6. **Allow Time for Reflection and Open Dialogue**

Prioritize sufficient time for open discussions where participants can share their thoughts and concerns in a casual, reflective manner. Avoid rushing through to show they are being heard rather than simply spoken to.

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The recommendations outlined are ambitious and require multi-year investments, with several projects requiring funding well over a million dollars to address the scale of the issues. Too often, funding falls short of the level needed to address the intensity and depth of the problems facing the Black I/DD community. To ensure that real change is achieved, it is essential that this Summit becomes a recurring and regional event, creating continuous opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and accountability. By maintaining these connections and building on the work started here, we can ensure that the voices of Black individuals with I/DD and their families shape policies and services, leading to a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable system for all.

As we move forward, it is critical that stakeholders across New Jersey commit to these recommendations, prioritize inclusive, culturally responsive practices, and ensure the long-term success of these initiatives. Together, we can transform the system into one that truly supports equity, inclusion, and opportunity for all.

*“Today (The Summit) was the foundation. How do we determine whether or not we have made the type of progress that we need? We need to have future events to make sure we are on task to accomplish what we set out to do.” **Bill Davis***

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: NJCDD GOALS

### **NJCDD Goals and Objectives Related to Diversity/Equity/Inclusion and Supporting the Black Community**

#### **Goal 1: (Advocacy)**

All New Jersey residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their family members, from an early age and throughout the lifespan, will have increased access to information in order to learn and strengthen the advocacy and leadership skills they need to be self-directed, manage supports and services, and engage as active citizens with control and choice over their own lives.

Objectives:

- For each year through 2026, the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) will increase civic engagement and self-direction on the part of individuals with I/DD. The NJCDD will provide support and technical assistance to a statewide self-advocacy organization, provide leadership training opportunities, promote emerging leaders with I/DD as trainers and speakers, and support and expand participation of individuals with I/DD in culturally diverse, cross-disability leadership coalitions.
- For each year through 2026, NJCDD, in collaboration with Disability Rights New Jersey and The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities (DD Act Partners), will provide training and mentoring to at least 20 individuals with I/DD and their families representative of New Jersey's diverse populations and geographical regions, and will support projects to develop advanced leadership skills and networking opportunities for at least 2 individuals with I/DD, their families, and direct support professionals through mentorships, internships, and apprenticeships in careers related to public policy and disability advocacy, with an emphasis on serving historically-underserved populations, including individuals who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, have limited English proficiency, and/or identify as LGBTQ+.
- For each year through 2026, Black New Jersey residents with I/DD and their families will have increased access to information about NJCDD, its DD Act Partners, and all developmental disability systems, and how to access the full range of supports and services available through New Jersey's system of services and supports. (Targeted Disparity #1)

#### **GOAL 2: (Systems Change)**

All New Jersey residents with I/DD, their families, and stakeholders will have increased ability to improve the design and delivery of the services intended to support and benefit them.

Objectives:

- For each year through 2026, NJCDD will facilitate government and community partnerships, and improve interagency coordination through collaborations and coalitions



designed to reduce barriers to service access and delivery, with an emphasis on reducing inequities experienced by historically underserved populations, including individuals who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, have limited English proficiency, and/or identify as LGBTQ+.

**GOAL 3: (Capacity-Building)**

All New Jersey residents with I/DD and their families will have increased information and support they need to access the services and supports they need to live, work, and learn in the community with independence.

Objectives:

- Beginning in 2022, NJCDD will support projects and engage in outreach designed to ensure increased levels of diversity, equity, cultural competency, and linguistic responsiveness in all aspects of the work carried out by the Council, and its staff.
- By 2026, and in collaboration with educators and stakeholders, NJCDD will support projects using best practices designed to eliminate the inappropriate use of seclusion, restraint, suspension and expulsion for Black and Hispanic students with disabilities, in targeted areas (schools and districts with high rates of seclusion, restraint, suspension, expulsion, and/or high rates of referral to law enforcement). (Targeted Disparity #2)

[Background and Format](#)

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### EPIC : BUILDING A VILLAGE OF SUPPORT

This program was designed to increase access to information about supports and services for New Jersey Black students (ages 14-25) with I/DD and their families. Participants first took part in interviews to help the program staff understand barriers to accessing information, enabling students and their families to become self-determined and advocate for needed services. The staff also collected data through focus groups, surveys, and interviews with district stakeholders (teachers, school staff, community members) to brainstorm more effective methods of empowering Black communities with information.

Throughout the program, 10-15 students and their families engaged in innovative strategies to share information from the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, its DD Act Partners, and local service providers. This information was delivered using person-centered planning, culturally relevant and appropriate for Black students transitioning from school to adult life. Information from organizations such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) and the New Jersey Department of Developmental Disabilities was shared to facilitate positive working relationships among students, families, and providers. Activities, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), addressed access to information across state and local systems, covering employment, housing, education, transportation, and mental health.

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### THE NEW JERSEY BLACK I/DD CONSORTIUM

The New Jersey Black I/DD Consortium, formed in 2022, included members from organizations, school districts, and local advocates to guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of strategies to access information that maximized academic, employment, and quality life outcomes for Black NJ residents with I/DD and their families. The Consortium met on a quarterly basis. The NJCDD, its DD Act Partners, and staff from the state DD system were invited to share information and seek support from the Consortium's member organizations and their extended professional networks. The Consortium expanded awareness of NJCDD to broad groups of new stakeholders, including outreach to individuals, organizations, and other appropriate entities as measured by growth in NJCDD's outreach list, social media engagement, and participation in NJCDD's programs. Throughout the project, the Consortium members provided feedback on reports and deliverables to ensure that recommendations were feasible to support the increase of access to information for Black NJ residents with I/DD and their families. NJ Black I/DD Consortium members included the New Brunswick Chapter of the NAACP, NJ Association of Black Social Workers, NJ Association of Black Psychologists, and various other members.

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### PERFORMCARE NAVIGATION PROGRAM

Data gathered, during Year 1, from consortium meetings, input from participants in the EPIC program, as well as feedback from several families with students with I/DD, indicated that that a direct support program in the form of PerformCare navigation was needed. This planned project

serves the need that was identified during Y1 of the grant project. This program is an additional method of increasing information to Black NJ residents with I/DD.

Through engaging with community partners and families this past year, we were able to determine that one of the barriers to accessing supports and information for Black NJ residents is the complexity of navigating through the PerformCare application. Therefore, this program is designed to increase access to the resources and information PerformCare provides to Black NJ residents with I/DD. The costs for this project are based on estimates provided by service providers and other community organizations that have engaged these service providers for their own work.

The goal of this program is to make the PerformCare services more accessible to families by providing them with an application navigation and language supports. The goal will be to conduct 8-12 sessions over the course of Y2 of this grant with 6-10 families attending each session. At full participation, we estimate that we would reach 48-120 Black NJ residents. First quarter will be spent developing the program to an operational level by contacting service providers, creating schedules, developing information to disseminate, and planning sessions. Information sessions will be held to share details of programming with potential participants.

#### [Background and Format](#)

## APPENDIX C: EVENT AGENDA

**SESSIONS:** Guests were divided into two 90-minute breakout sessions.

**TOPICS:** Six discussion topics set for the sessions: Education, Employment, Health/Social Services, Family/Self Services, Housing, and Legal/Law Enforcement.

**SCHEDULE:** Six sessions in total (three in the morning, three in the afternoon).

<b>8:30am</b>	<b>Registration and Breakfast:</b> The event program was provided to attendees with the event program, acknowledgments, and resources Breakfast catered by the Food Architect, local vendor affiliated with Rutgers University.
9:00am	Introduction and Keynote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tawara Goode, Director, Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence (1 hour)</li><li>• Amanda Jaeger &amp; Pascale Mevs - Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies Report (15-30 mins)</li></ul>
10:30am	<b>Breakout Session 1</b> (90 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education</li><li>• Employment Services / Workforce</li><li>• Health/Social Services</li></ul>
<b>12:00pm</b>	Lunch - catered by Delta's Restaurant, New Brunswick / Testimonials
<b>1:00pm</b>	<b>Breakout Session 2</b> (90 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family and Self Advocacy</li><li>• Housing</li><li>• Law Enforcement and Legal Services</li></ul>
<b>2:30pm</b>	Closing Remarks / Poem/ Networking

[Event Planning and Execution](#)

## APPENDIX D: EVENT ATTENDEES

The Summit was attended by professionals from organizations/agencies statewide that serve the intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) communities. Families and individuals with I/DD from Future Foundation Academy in Piscataway were also invited and attended. This is a list of the community partners who attended the event:

Access to Community	Office of the Ombudsman
Advocacy In Action	PerformCare New Jersey
Autism NJ	Piscataway Public Schools
CASA of Somerset, Hunterdon & Warren Counties	Plainfield Public Schools
Center for Independent Living	Rowan University
Community Baptist Church of Somerset	Rutgers University
Disability Rights New Jersey	Salvation & Social Justice
EPIC: Building A Village of Support	The ARC of New Jersey
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network	The Boggs Center
Family Support Organization of Essex County	Untapped Potential NJ
Future Foundations Academy	Values Into Action
Infinity Empowerment Services	My Superpower is Autism
The Compassionate Exchange Inc	NAACP
Latino Action Network Foundation	Institute for Social Justice
Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies	
Nassan's Place	
Newark Public Schools	
New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities	
New Jersey Department of Education	
New Jersey Office of Legislative Services	
New Jersey Superior Court	
NJ Black I/DD Consortium Members	
NJ Children's System of Care – Dept of Children & Families	
NJ Department of Corrections	
NJ Department of Labor & Workforce Development	
NJ Division of Developmental Disability	
NJ-STEP	

### **Additional Staff:**

**Eddie Prescott:** Venue manager, technical support

**Breania Smith:** Administrative Assistant

**Justin Woo and Leah Peticolas:** Photographer/videographer/editor

**Trish Nguyen, Mateen Abbasi, and Daniel Friedman:** Notetakers

[Engagement and Participation](#)

Key takeaways FROM TAWARA GOODE include:

### **Income Disparity**

- Gaps in income have returned to “Net Neutral” with a \$35,000 disparity compared to non-Black peers.

### **Definition of “Black”**

- Utilizes linguistic groupings to define Black communities in NJ.
- Not all individuals identified as “Black” are native English speakers.
- Disability categories within these communities are underrepresented.

### **Emerging Trends**

- Department of Homeland Security’s (DoHS) focus on “Self-identifying labels” reflecting race as a social construct.
- The distinction between “cultural competence” and “cultural humility” affects practices in social work and psychology.
- These frameworks impact organizational levels and lead to cultural competency issues.

### **Legal Mandates and Community Engagement**

- Legal mandates guide community engagement efforts, which sometimes result in mere “lip service.”
- The concept of “cultural brokering” aims to produce change by bridging multicultural Black groups.

[Tawara D. Goode](#)

## APPENDIX F: CORNWALL CENTER DATA

At the summit, The Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies at Rutgers University–Newark presented research on the experiences and life outcomes of Black individuals with disabilities in New Jersey, with a focus on those with intellectual disabilities. Using publicly available data, the center analyzed key areas such as classification rates, demographic distribution, educational placement, exclusionary discipline, graduation and college enrollment rates, workforce outcomes, justice system involvement, housing, and family well-being. The data was disaggregated by county and school district, with a focus on 5 to 10-year trends. The study was conducted through an equity lens, providing comparisons within the population, as well as with other racial/ethnic groups and the general population

[Link to One Page Infographic Sheets on the six sessions](#)

[Rutgers University – Joseph C. Cornwall Center for Metropolitan Studies](#)

**MORNING**

**1. Education**

- What suggestions do you have to ensure Black male students with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive high quality support, in the least restrictive environment, within our school system?
- Studies show that the overwhelming majority of incarcerated people have a diagnosed disability or show signs of having some kind of disability. What steps can be taken by our school system to ensure that Black students with disabilities have better outcomes as adults?
- Can you provide any recent studies that examine the outcomes for Black special education students in New Jersey? Are there any resources and/or services that you recommend who support Black students with disabilities and their families?
- What steps need to be implemented to increase the number of Black educators, child study team members, support staff, and service providers within New Jersey's schools?
- What changes should be made to the teacher preparation programs at our colleges and universities to ensure that our educators are given the skills and cultural awareness to empower all Black students with disabilities?

**2. Employment**

- What are the biggest barriers Black people with intellectual and developmental disabilities face when seeking employment today? - How has the employment landscape for people with disabilities changed in recent years?
- What are some successful strategies companies have used to recruit and retain Black employees with disabilities? How can organizations ensure their hiring processes are inclusive and accessible?
- Can you share examples of businesses that have successfully integrated inclusive employment practices and the impact it has had on Black employees with I/DD?
- What resources are available for both employers and employees to support the employment of Black people with I/DD? How can mentorship and support networks be developed for employees with disabilities?
- What advice would you give to Black family members who are just beginning to navigate the employment landscape for their children with disabilities? What information should we share with families to best prepare their children for the workforce?

**3. (Mental) Health & Social Services**

- Are there state, county, or local resources you would recommend for Black residents with I/DD to support their mental health needs?
- What can be done to train healthcare workers so that a disability diagnosis is not done with racial or economic bias?



- What are some challenges/barriers that Black families face as they seek social support and medical assistance for their family members with I/DD? What ideas do you have to address these challenges/barriers?
- What resources would you recommend for Black families with loved ones who have a dual diagnosis of I/DD and mental health needs?
- What are specific ways Black families can advocate for mental and medical health supports in underserved communities?
- Can you recommend a resource guide that can connect Black families to social services, mental health, and medical healthcare supports? If one is not available, how can we make sure the creation of this guide is a priority? What organization(s) should be invested in this project?

## **AFTERNOON**

### **1. Family/ Self-Advocacy**

- What can be done to connect with more Black family members and self-advocates from all over the state?
- What can be done to alleviate the financial strain on Black families of getting a disability diagnosis?
- Black family members and self-advocates often do not know about the programs that are available to help them. What can be done to share information about programs?
- *What are some of the best supports and services which are culturally and linguistically responsive to the Black self-advocates and their families?*
- Schools are an important, touch point to connect with Black self-advocates and family members. What can we do to connect with more transition coordinators, school administrators, and educators so that they can be of greater support for Black students with I/DD and their families.
- We need more programs that teach self-advocacy skills to Black youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. What suggestions do you have to teach more self-advocacy skills to Black youth and adults?

### **2. Housing**

- What are the biggest barriers to accessing information about housing within the Black community? How can system providers help overcome them?
- In what areas do system providers lack cultural competency when discussing or navigating housing with the people accepting their support? How can we improve that?
- What are the barriers, if any, that Black residents with I/DD experience with maintaining housing? What supports would be helpful for overcoming them? (Thinking about this in the context of gentrification, landlords forcing out rent-stabilized tenants, etc.)
- How do we start thinking about estate planning and community-based living earlier in a person's life - before caregivers and self-advocates are aging or retired?
- Share resources/programs/services that do a great job supporting Black self-advocates and families with I/DD to find and obtain housing?

- What can be done to help Black self-advocates and families to feel safer in the communities they live in? (provide context from the project).
- What can be done to help Black self-advocates and families build a strong informal support network? (provide context from project).
- What can be done to eliminate discrimination in accessing housing for Black self-advocates and families?

### **3. Law Enforcement/ Legal Services**

- Given the long-standing mistrust of law enforcement in the black community, what steps can be taken to improve relations between law enforcement and the black I/DD community?
- What level of training do law enforcement need to respond to the black I/DD community? Are these methods statewide? What is the priority?
- What programs do you know of that supports black NJ residents with I/DD when they enter the criminal justice system?
- There is a high correlation of black male former special education students who are incarcerated. An October 2023 publication entitled "Disability Studies Faculty Focus on Special Ed to Prison Pipeline," written by Carrie Stetler (Rutgers-Newark's Dept of Urban Education and Disability Studies) highlight disparities among black children classified as special education, especially in the urban areas, which subsequently lead to hyper-surveillance, under resourced, segregated environments and interaction with law enforcement. The first interaction with law enforcement maybe the school environment. What steps can be taken in school to disrupt the school to prison pipeline?
- How well are services being delivered to the black I/DD population during incarceration?

### [BREAKOUT SESSIONS](#)

**Transcripts and session notes from note takers can be viewed via the shared links below:**

[Education and Self/Family Advocacy](#)

[Mental Health and Law Enforcement](#)

[Housing and Employment](#)

## APPENDIX H: ROBERT JACKSON'S RESOURCE LIST

### Books

Disable your Disability by Tony Jacobsen	by Susan Yellin and Christina Cacioppo Bertsch
In A Different Key by John Donovan	Why some positive thinkers get powerful results by Norman Vincent Peale
Success without a college degree by John T. Murphy	Enthusiasm makes the difference by Norman Vincent Peale
Promoting Self-Determination in Students with Developmental Disabilities by Michael Wehmeyer	Power of Positive Living by Norman Vincent Peale
You Happier by Daniel Amen	Power of Positive Thinking by Norman Vincent Peale
Soul Detox by Craig Groeshel	Read to succeed by Stan Skrabut
No Such Thing as Can't	Pain, Passion and Purpose by Brad Butler II
Autistics on Autism by Kerry Magro	The Power of Different by Gail Saltz M. D ( I have not read this book yet)
Wonder by R. J. Palacio	I'll Push You by Patrick Gray (I have not read this book yet)
Untold Narratives: African Americans who received special education services and succeeded beyond expectations by Shawn Anthony Robinson	Disability and the Gospel: How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace by Michael Beates ( I have not finished book)
The School of Greatness by Lewis Howes	Front of the class ( I have not read book yet)
The Energy Bus by Jon Gordon	The Unteachables: Disability Rights and the Invention of Black Special Education by Keith A Mayes.
Written off by Hasan Davis	Black AF History: The un whitewashed American story by Michael Harriot
Still Standing by Dwight Owens	Poverty By America by Matthew Desmond
Life After High School: A Guide for students with disabilities and their families	

### **Documentaries/Movies on Disability**

Best Kept Secret by Samantha Buck and Janet Mino  
The Needs by Jermaine Smith  
In a different Key  
Who Cares about Kelsey  
Off The Rails  
Intelligent Lives  
Special Ed  
Neurotypical

Front of the Class  
Radio  
The story of Luke  
The road within  
The Ringer  
No Letting Go  
Born This Way  
Raising Renee  
Peanut Butter Falcon

### **Uplifting Songs**

I can be - Yaakov Shwekey  
Fighter- Yaakov Shwekey  
Cry No More- Yaakov Shwekey  
I am Alive- Yaakov Shwekey  
Nothing in your life- Abie Rothenberg  
We All Belong -8th Day  
That's My song- Yoni Z  
Lucky- Jason Mraz  
Today's the day- Ari Goldwag  
Stronger Closer- 8th Day  
Change the World- 8th Day

The Wonder of Life- Yaakov Shwekey  
This Life 8th Day  
Smile- 8th Day  
Finally Here- Ari Goldwag  
Higher Ground- Ari Goldwag  
Hold On- Yaakov Shwekey  
We are a miracle- Yaakov Shwekey  
Perfect World- Yaakov Shwekey  
It could be you- Yaakov Shwekey  
Living in the Moment- Jason Mraz  
One Day- Maccabeats  
Home - Maccabeats

### **Biblical Resources**

United Church of God: <http://www.ucg.org>.

Life, Hope, Truth: <https://lifehopeandtruth.com/>

Tomorrows World: <https://www.tomorrowworld.org/>

### **Defining Special Populations:**

Individuals with disabilities; • English learners; • Homeless individuals; disadvantaged families; • Youth in foster care; • Individuals preparing for non-traditional fields; • Single parents; • Youth with a parent in active military duty; and • Migrant students. • Out-of-workforce individuals;

NJ Office of Career Readiness: <https://www.nj.gov/education/cte/contact/>

### **[Session 4: Family/Self Advocacy](#)**

**Housing Recommendations/Considerations from Values into Action**

**Ensure people with living disability experience and expertise are included in all system events and opportunities, just as family members and professionals are prioritized, invited and represented.**

- This may mean allowing for increased resources for accommodation to ensure appropriate technology, support, accessibility and flexibility in communications and methodologies.
  - The system should expect that people themselves, in addition to enjoying the engagement of their family members, will participate in ways that are meaningful to them, and for a frequency and duration that meets their preferences and needs.
  - Their voices must not just be included, they must be amplified and considered first and foremost
- **Offer additional forums for people and their families to better understand the current financial and regulatory framework the state and provider systems are mandated to work within.**
  - Advocating for system change takes time, and practices must align with existing policies and regulations to maintain the public funding that enables services and supports, now.
  - Provide information in various formats that are easily accessible and understood by all stakeholders, i.e., different languages, plain language etc.
- **Advocate that the state system adopts, or at the very least considers prioritizing the best practices evidenced by the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities grant funded projects.**
  - Specifically, the Housing Navigator role, while technically available to people and their families, is not readily utilized as there is no current mechanism to pay for those supports.
  - Consider demonstration projects that enable navigation of the system, coordination among various agencies and greater accountability for use of funding to meet desired outcomes
  - Revising governmental forms including assessments to better reflect cultural norms
  - State systems must ensure adequate representation in their offices, and be coordinated in their efforts to reach black communities
  - Fund future Black Impact Summits
- **The NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities should enable people access to all roles available to advance the Home and Community Based Services, as originally intended and expressed in the Settings Rule.**
  - The Housing Navigator role is largely unknown. Sharing this information widely as well as funding it through the DDD budget would help working

- families and those traditionally excluded from discussions/planning/advocacy, to be better informed and supported.
- This would also take the responsibility of this research and work away from a family member and assign to a professional who would be more familiar with accessing resources and information.
  - **Consider funding demonstration projects that allow people to safely explore options that include the person's needs and preferences, the family's current situation, including economic priorities as housing as a topic does not exist in a vacuum outside of the person's support system.**
    - People can use their public funding to: develop a housing plan integrated with their support plan; use community and system resources to locate and obtain housing of their own choosing; use supports to identify who, if anyone, they would like to live with, and then to design or redesign their staffing support system to align with new living arrangements.
    - Allow for the use of public funding to access smart home technology, remote support and home modifications not otherwise covered so that the significance of the person's support needs is no longer an obstacle to them authentically choosing where and with whom they will live.
    - Systems must be streamlined for people and their families to best access, understand and utilize
  - **Include the Charting the LifeCourse Tools for both short-, mid- and long-term planning, emphasizing a key component of the framework being change and transition.**
    - Decisions made today for the benefit of the person and family's current needs may not be the ones necessary for longer term sustainability.
    - Providers must work to build trust in their expertise and commitment so that people and families trust this type of planning is natural, and that change is inevitable and expected.
    - The pressure to make decisions now that are binding therefrom can create anxiousness and a scarcity mentality that does not promote trust, collaboration, resilience and ultimately better outcomes.
    - Supporting the family is key!
  - **Remain open to the experiences of others in other geographic locations, i.e. other states.**
    - There is much to learn, and much to be shared about lived experiences, new knowledge, skill development, implications of technology, etc. in places other than New Jersey.
    - Consideration of people's lived experiences and evidence about the lack of housing options and opportunities outside of specific neighborhoods -this is not overt so is challenging to address but the economic and racial inequalities and inequities must be confronted and overcome
    - Sustainability is key and there are invaluable lessons to be learned from people everywhere in control of their housing and supports

- **Advocate for systems change that will enable pre and school aged youth and their families to learn about disability services and the system while they are in the school transition phase by funding the Support Brokerage and Support Coordination services from birth.**
  - This would ensure time for people to learn and familiarize themselves with the services available to them as well as enable access to supportive services at an early age.
  - Doing so also recognizes the challenges Black and Brown people face more so than Caucasian people in terms of time available to plan, consider, invite and sustain a support system for themselves and/or their family member.
  - Parent liaison in each school would help ensure information is available and accessible to families
  - Ensuring information is shared such as an organizational directory and events 'DDD Resource Day' are held in schools/districts

[Session 5: Housing](#)

## APPENDIX J: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

**LeDerick Horne, [Director]** is the founder of LeDerick Horne Speaks, LLC. This for-profit company is the corporate face for Horne’s work as a writer, speaker, consultant, and disability rights advocate. Horne’s work draws from his own experience as an African American man with a learning disability who successfully transitioned from special education to earning a B.A. in mathematics from New Jersey City University. Horne began his advocacy work as a consultant for the NJ State Department of Education’s “Dare to Dream Student Leadership Conferences.” Among other work, Horne has recently provided organizational support and facilitated virtual workshops for the state of Delaware and Oklahoma for youth and young adults with visual impairments, Autism, and I/DD. Horne’s work focuses on equity, disability identity, and the utilization of evidence-based practices which support self-determination and positive post-secondary outcomes.

**Bill Davis, [Co-Director]** experience as a long-standing member of New Jersey’s Black community, as an Adjunct Instructor in Africana Studies, and as a retired member of the Boggs Center’s staff, will enable fluid collaboration with an array of organizations to amplify outreach to key stakeholders. Davis has extensive experience working with school staff, students, and families. During his tenure at the Boggs Center, he was a statewide Positive Behavior Support trainer in schools. The goals of the intervention were to reduce the number of students referred to special education and suspended from schools. Other relevant experience includes working with pre-college students and families in various communities in New Jersey. Davis is an active member of various community organizations including the NAACP, People’s Organization for Progress, and the New Jersey Black Issues Convention among others. His extensive work with various institutions and organizations enables him to facilitate the needed community partnerships. Horne and Davis’s collaboration on this project allows for a culturally responsive approach to aid the NJCDD to build capacity and address needs within the Black community.

**Atonia Green Worley [Event Coordinator]** is a dedicated caregiver and lifelong resident of New Jersey. She is the mother of a 25-year-old son diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and has devoted nearly 23 years to improving outcomes for individuals and families affected by ASD. In 2005, Atonia and six families founded Garden Academy in West Orange to address the lack of high-quality educational services for those with ASD. Currently, she is the founder and operator of Xceptional Services LLC, continuing her mission to provide exceptional services to I/DD organizations and our most vulnerable New Jerseyans. Atonia also served as a Court Officer for the State of New Jersey for almost 30 years, retiring in March 2022. She has been married for 27 years and has four children.

**Samyukta Mahendra** holds a master’s degree in Sustainability Science and Leadership and is the Operations Manager for LeDerick Horne Speaks, LLC. She oversees all aspects of company operations, including contracts, finance, and project coordination. Drawing on her graduate studies and project management expertise, Samyukta collaborated with other authors to compile the comprehensive summit report



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Alex Brosseau - Housing  
Damon Farms - Law Enforcement  
Dr. Alex Gray - Education  
Robert Jackson - Family/Self Advocacy  
Jerisa Maseko - Employment  
Octavia Nash - Mental Health / Social Services

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