

UMID Spring Advisory Board Meeting Minutes



The University of Memphis Institute on Disability (UMID) recently held its Spring 2025 Advisory Board Meeting. The first session highlighted UMID's core pillars: (1) Training, (2) Service, and (3) Research. During the second session, board members engaged in a Community of Practice exercise focused on key issues affecting the disability community in Memphis and Shelby County. Topics included Community Engagement and Communication, Legislation and Policy, Service Access and Education, Student Support and Representation, Transportation and Regional Access, Resource Coordination, and Strategic Influence.

The purpose of the discussion was to identify opportunities where UMID and its partners can have a meaningful impact, enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities through improved access to resources, independent living supports, and pathways to positive employment outcomes. Moving forward, UMID leadership and community partners collaborate to analyze each priority area and develop targeted strategies to drive systemic change and promote inclusion throughout the Mid-South. The minutes below detail the discussions.

Session One

Pillar 1: TigerLIFE 2025-2026

- Expected Graduates: 20 in May 2025
- TigerLIFE Students participating in the University of Memphis Commencement Ceremony. May 10th, 2025. Will "Walk" for the 3rd time in UM history.

- UMID Employment Transition Fair 2025 at the University of Memphis, March 27th. Community employers, community workforce agencies, and Memphis–Shelby Schools participated, with around 250 attendees.
- On-Campus Housing 2025 “Summer Pilot” – Two Students have been accepted to participate.
- Ice Cream Social May 17th, see the flyer
- Save the Date: UMID IHE & Community Resources Fair 2025 will be held at the University of Memphis in October (the Date is TBD).

Pillar 2: Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP)

Pre-ETS Transition Services

- By the end of May, we have served over 165 students monthly.
- Summer Camps 2025, servicing over 40 students ages 14-22.
- College Campus Transition Program (CCTP) collaboration with UMID and MSCS.

Assessment Unit

- All TigerLIFE students will be assessed. New incoming students will be evaluated before the conclusion of the first semester.

UMID Job Placement Unit

- Successful placement sites have included Kroger, Dollar General, Nutritional Food Services, The Hampton Inn, and Thy Enterprises

Pillar 3: Research

- Project FIRST Training Modules
- Milestones 2025
 - Evaluation
 - Institutionalization
 - Dissemination
 - Progress Report.

Summary: Strategic Plan for 2025. LIFE Ball – September 13th, 2025. Fall Transition fair – October 2nd (TBD), 2025. Discussion. Strategic Planning.

Session Two

Theme: Community of Practice for individuals with special needs in the Mid-South.

Problem: How can a stable community of practice on disability issues for the Mid-South be created?

Community Engagement and Communication

- We support establishing a **community of practices** to foster collaboration and shared learning.
- Increased marketing and outreach are needed to raise awareness about the services available within the community.
- A **disconnect exists between students' needs and families' understanding of consent and available support**, highlighting the need for more transparent communication.

- **Spanish translation** and **non-verbal communication considerations** are essential to ensure accessibility for all individuals.
- A person's **first language or method of communication** may not involve spoken words; this must be respected in all outreach efforts.

Legislation and Policy

- Legislation mandates that **each county must deliver information about available services**. Advocacy is needed to ensure compliance and accountability.
- We must **advocate for legislation** that supports consistent information dissemination and equitable access to services.
- To support these initiatives, the state must be involved to ensure sustainability.

Service Access and Education

- Educators must be trained to become active participants in the community of practice.
- **An onboarding process** should be further developed to ensure **informed communication and service consent are appropriately delivered**.
- Create relationships with school principals to educate families and students about the resources.
- We propose including the **Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services) permission form at the point of secondary school registration**.
- **Service advocacy** must be a continued priority.

Student Support and Representation

- Consider **presenting** increased visibility of community resources and available programs at the IEP meeting.
- Develop **seminars to showcase the accomplishments of graduates**, highlighting success stories.
- Further develop the **onboarding process**, allowing thoughtful and accessible service intake.

Employment Awareness and Support

- We must shift the narrative around the capabilities of individuals with disabilities, moving beyond traditional roles (e.g., janitorial) to demonstrate **the full spectrum of employment potential**.
- Develop training and **awareness campaigns to educate potential employers** about the abilities and contributions of adults with disabilities.
- Produce an **informational video** to help train employers to support and engage disabled adults in the workforce.

- Increase **community and employer awareness** to boost confidence and willingness to hire adults with disabilities.
- Invite **Human Resources representatives** to attend training events to understand transition programming better.
- Improve communication, creative advertisement, and media marketing.

Transportation and Regional Access

- **Transportation remains a critical barrier**, particularly for areas outside Memphis. Services must be expanded, and regional transportation options should be considered—possibly through grant funding.
- MATA+ provides **limited services**, challenging present services, and current perceptions are often negative.
- Further collaboration with MATA is essential.

Resource Coordination

- Establish a centralized **HUB through a** single access point for all available resources and services, collaborating with essential community resources in agencies.
- Create a **collaborative space** for providers, organizations, and employers to connect and coordinate efforts effectively.

Strategic Influence

- Identify and connect with **key decision-makers who have the authority to say "yes"** and drive systemic change.