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**Subject:** A Message from NIDILRR Director John Tschida

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**January 19, 2017**

## **A Message from NIDILRR Director John Tschida**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As my service as Director of the [National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research](#) (NIDILRR) comes to a close, I wanted to thank you for your support and engagement in our work. NIDILRR's mission, to generate new knowledge and promote its effective use to help people with disabilities fully participate in the community, is both unique and important. It's also very closely aligned with the ACL mission. It has been a privilege to lead NIDILRR these past three years.

During my tenure, we have honored our history in funding legacy investments, like the spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, and burn model systems programs. While originally founded to establish high quality clinical interventions, the longitudinal databases that have resulted now include community-based elements as well. This allows researchers to better understand the health and social experiences of people living with these conditions over time. Research findings from these programs also reinforce that optimal community living outcomes for people with disabilities depend on good rehabilitation outcomes.

We have also recognized that the world is changing, and have funded projects to better understand new health service delivery models and their effects on people with disabilities, as well as emerging transportation technologies (such as driverless vehicles) to ensure that those with disabilities will find them accessible. We also have closely aligned with our ACL partners in other Centers, especially in the areas of knowledge translation and defining quality for long term services and supports. These opportunities for cross-Center collaboration continue to grow.

We have also been focused on the future, and today will publish our draft long range plan. Mandated by statute to define potential priorities every five years, the plan is focused on maximizing community living and participation outcomes. It reflects key priorities for ACL broadly: the importance of person-centered planning, better understanding the intersection of aging and disability, and using technology to improve access and function.

Similarly, in my role as chair of the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) a draft government-wide plan for disability, independent living, and rehabilitation research has been prepared, and is now being vetted by member agencies. This will help coordinate and leverage research investments across

agencies on behalf of people with disabilities.

We also generated knowledge about employment outcomes and barriers, including studying interventions and developing a model of return on investment for state vocational rehabilitation programs. With employment as an opportunity for people with disabilities to gain more economic freedom and choice, this is a crucial area for enhancing community living.

Finally, we have expanded our efforts for knowledge translation or the process of ensuring that new knowledge and products gained during research and development ultimately improves the lives of people with disabilities and furthers their participation in society. Through grants to develop and share information, we have disseminated new disability and rehabilitation knowledge broadly so that it can be applied to benefit the daily lives of individuals with disabilities.

These efforts, along with NIDILRR's overall research grant portfolio, have resulted in more than 1,200 products during the last five years—including peer-reviewed publications, intervention protocols, software, and databases.

None of this would have been possible without the tremendous talent and expertise of the NIDILRR staff. This high-performing team should be proud of all they do and have done on behalf of Americans with disabilities. I also want to thank all the ACL staff for embracing the possibilities that NIDILRR brings to a strong program, service, and policy organization. You have been great teachers. Together we have done great things. I look forward to watching ACL continue to mature as a growing agency, and one that is critically important to the disability and aging communities.

I look forward to maintaining the many personal and professional relationships I've developed during my tenure. Please do stay in touch via email at [jttschida@msn.com](mailto:jttschida@msn.com).

With deep respect,

John Tschida

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