



NH Governor's Commission on Disability

Kelly A. Ayotte, Governor

Paul Van Blarigan, Chair

Charles J. Saia, Executive Director

February 24, 2025

Representative Dan McGuire, Chairman
Representatives of House Finance Committee
Division 1
107 North Main Street-Room 212
Concord, NH 03301

RE: Fiscal Years 2026/2027 Budget Hearing

Dear Chairman McGuire and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Governor's Commission on Disability's (GCD) budget for Fiscal Years 2026 & 2027.

As a primary provider of assistance regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related disability laws, the GCD serves as a resource on the mandates of this civil rights law for the benefit of individuals with disabilities.

I respectfully submit that the continued adequate funding of the GCD is essential to ensure that the mandates delegated to the Commission are effectively carried out. I suggest that the Governor's Recommended Budget adheres to the guidelines of an efficient and streamlined budget.

The GCD has a valuable and pivotal position in State Government. The GCD interacts and provides advice to the Governor, Legislature, State of NH agencies, and the public on topics such as employment, physical accessibility, service animals, and benefits as related to individuals with disabilities. It does not surprise us that the GCD's strong relationships with so many of our State agencies have grown. Whether it involves the ADA and employment, the ADA and service animals, the ADA and physical accessibility—there is a growing need for collaboration.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles J. Saia", is written over a faint blue circular stamp.

Charles J. Saia
Executive Director



NH Governor's Commission on Disability



GCD's Operating Budget for FY2026-FY2027

Presentation to New Hampshire
House Finance Committee
Division 1

February 24, 2025

The ADA is key to understanding the GCD.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law that ensures disability rights are civil rights.

The ADA put the force of law behind the thought that all have the right to opportunity—the opportunity to be independent, make choices, and have control over their lives.



The signing of the ADA
1990, President H. W. Bush

The Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD)

- The [Governor's Commission on Disability](#) is administratively within the Governor's office and is comprised of Commission Members, an Executive Director, and Agency staff.
- The GCD's Executive Director:
 - Acts as the secretary to the Commission and ensures operational efficiency and compliance with governing statutes and regulations.
 - Acts as a liaison between the Commission, the Governor's Office, the Executive Council, the public, the Agency office, and the State legislature.
 - Oversees agency staff and running the day-to-day operations of the Commission.



The Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD)

- The Commission Members and its Chair are appointed by the Governor.
- The Commission membership includes (up to 30) voting Commission Members comprised of:
 - Persons with a disability;
 - Family members or parents or guardians of persons with a disability;
 - Persons from the general public; and/or
 - Members of organizations who provide services for persons with a disability.
- The Commission currently has fifteen (15) governor-appointed [Commission Members](#).

The Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD)

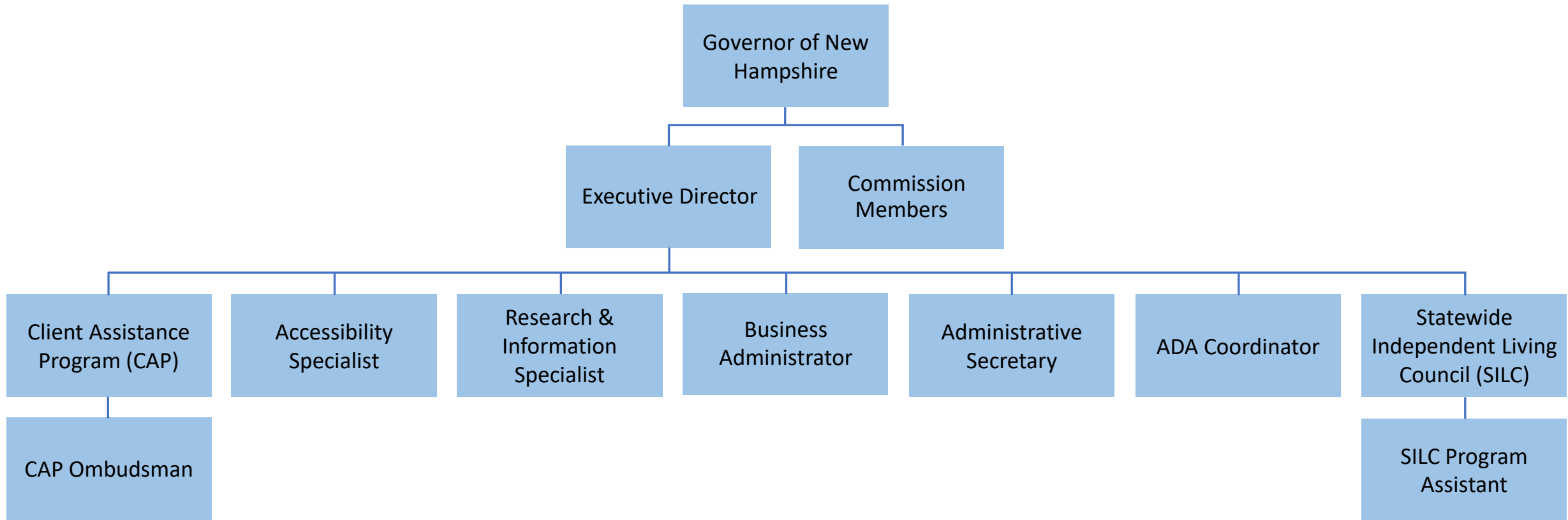
- The commission membership also includes six (6) non-voting Ex-Officio Members:
 - The Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services or designee;
 - The Administrator of the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, NH Education Department (NHED), or designee;
 - The Supervisor of Blind Services, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, NHED, or designee;
 - The Commissioner of Labor or designee;
 - The Commissioner of the Department of Employment Security, or designee; and
 - A member of the State Board of Education designated by the Governor.



The Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD)

- Pursuant to [RSA 275-C:10-18](#), the GCD has a statutory committee, known as the Architectural Barrier Free Design Committee (ABFDC), which adopts and enforces the code for barrier free design (the code).
- The ABFDC works closely with other NH state agencies and issues letters of opinion regarding compliance with the code when the agencies are entering into 3rd party leases for non-state-owned properties.

GCD Organizational Chart



GCD: The Core Functions

Education Collaboration Consultation

- Advises the Governor, State Agencies, the NH Legislature, and the public on the needs, rights, and interests of citizens with disabilities.
- Coordinates, educates, and trains on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Makes recommendations regarding the adequacy of state programs, plans, and budgets for services for persons with disabilities.
- Monitors and reports on bills of interest regarding persons with disabilities.

GCD: Programs...The NH ABLE Plan

Education Collaboration Consultation

- Pursuant to [RSA 195-K](#), the Executive Director of the GCD and the NH State Treasurer are the co-administrators of New Hampshire's Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Savings Program known as [The NH ABLE Plan](#).
- Accounts in the NH ABLE Plan allow individuals with a disability to save money, tax free, without jeopardizing needs-based benefits like Medicaid.
- The NH ABLE Plan and the prior plan known as STABLE NH have 1,925 accounts and total NH Assets of \$12.2 million.
- The NH ABLE Plan is implemented without any general funds.

GCD: Programs...Client Assistance Program

Education Collaboration Consultation

- Implements and operates the federally funded Client Assistance Program (CAP), designed to facilitate concerns that arise between persons with disabilities and vocational rehabilitation.
- CAP, on a case-by-case basis, also educates and advocates on Title I of the ADA which pertains to employment.
- The FY2026 and FY2027 Budget anticipates a minimum federal grant award of \$131,917 per year through the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Education.

GCD: Programs...Statewide Independent Living Council

Education Collaboration Consultation

- The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is an independent cross-disability council, which provides leadership and advocacy in support of the independent living philosophy.
- Under contract with the New Hampshire Education Department (NHED), the GCD is scheduled to receive up to \$90,000 for FY2025 to house the SILC Program including the SILC Program Assistant and SILC related expenses.
- The GCD anticipates that a new contract with NHED for FY2026 and FY2027 will mirror prior contracts and funding years.

GCD: Programs...Telecommunications Equipment

Education Collaboration Consultation

- Pursuant to [RSA 275-C:20](#), the GCD administers the Telecommunications Equipment Assistance Program (TEAP) to distribute telecommunication devices to persons with specific impairments impacting telephone use.
- The program is funded in the annual amount not to exceed \$96,000 by the Public Utilities Commission's (PUC) telecommunications relay service trust fund. Up to \$92,250 is awarded annually for a two-year contract to a successful bidder.
- The GCD files an [annual report](#) which shall include the number of persons assisted, all sources of funding, and the total amount disbursed.

GCD: Programs...NFB Newsline

Education Collaboration Consultation

- The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) Newsline is a free audio news service that allows any blind, visually impaired, or print disabled person access to a variety of media and information.
- The service offers access to more than 500 publications, emergency weather alerts, job listings, and more.
- Pursuant to [RSA 275-C:8-a](#), the GCD receives an annual appropriation of \$31,5000 to fund NFB Newsline from the Public Utilities Commission's (PUC) telecommunications relay service trust fund.

GCD: Programs...New England ADA Center

Education Collaboration Consultation

- The GCD is under contract with the New England ADA Center (NE ADA) to act as its State Affiliate in NH to provide technical assistance, trainings and webinars, and outreach relative to the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).
- The GCD is scheduled to receive \$16,075.00 for FY2025 and \$4,025.00 for a portion of FY2026.
- Although the GCD is unable to determine funding for the remainder of FY2026 and FY2027, by way of reference, the GCD received \$16,000.00 for FY2024 and \$18,667.00 for FY2023.

GCD: The Core Functions

Education Collaboration Consultation

- Strategic use of social media has served as a cost-effective means to educate a wide audience on issues regarding the ADA. By defining audiences and issues, and using GCD's data from the internal data log, social media has proven to be effective.
- In addition, social media is a practical, no-cost option for collaboration and support of a range of State of New Hampshire agencies, advocacy groups, and those with special interest in issues surrounding disability.

The GCD is NH's ADA Resource

- National Association of Governor Commissions on Disability
- National ABLE Alliance
- Northeast Client Assistance Program (CAP) Work Group
- Commission on Deafness & Hearing Loss
- Legislative Commission on PTSD & Traumatic Brain Injury
- State Rehabilitation Council
- Statewide Coordinating Council for Community Transportation
- Statewide Independent Living Council
- Statewide Trail Advisory Committee
- Joint Committee on Code Enforcement
- Building Code Review Board
- Ethics Advisory Committee
- Medical Care Advisory Council
- Public Water Access Advisory Board

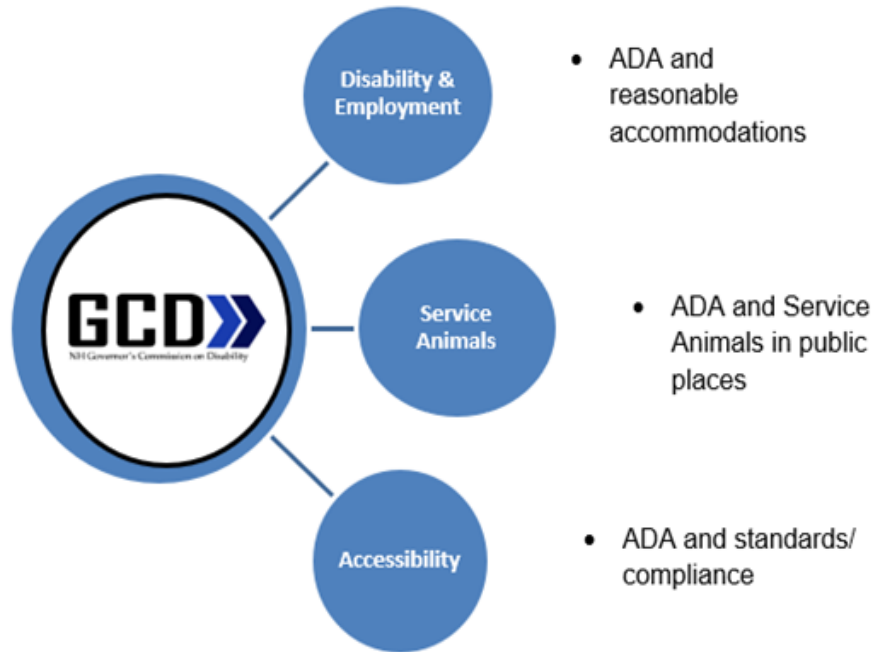
GCD Facts: Work Interconnectivity (3 examples)

Accessibility Specialist – Before a lease on a state building is signed, it is reviewed by the Accessibility Specialist for ADA compliance using a checklist based on 2010 Standards. Site visits are part of the process as is working with Admin Services. Recommendations and suggestions are made, and the matter is brought before the GCD Architectural Barrier-Free Design Committee.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Ombudsman – With disability & employment such an important topic, it is understandable that the Client Assistance Program Ombudsman handles the most difficult of cases which may involve mental health issues or recovery in the workplace issues. It is not uncommon to work with Vocational Rehabilitation, Dept of Education, Bureau of Developmental Services, Granite State Independent Living and others. What is reasonable accommodation in the workplace? That's the kind of question the Employment Specialist may be involved with.

Research & Information Specialist – The GCD handled approximately 500 public inquiries in 2024, and this includes those that have been directed to our office by the Governor's Constituent Services Department. The GCD and the Governor's Constituent Services Department have a long history of assisting one another in order to provide the best customer service to resolve difficult issues around the ADA.

GCD Facts: Internal Data from Public Inquiries



- The GCD is citizen-centric. Inquiries come to the GCD's attention in a variety of ways and the information is internally logged. In addition to ensuring a rapid response, based on data provided, the GCD can get a picture of top ADA issues or concerns. The data is a tool to drive the GCD to strategically use its time and educational resources.
- Information on this chart is simplified for presentation purposes. For example, Accessibility Issues include accessible parking, building accessibility and more. Employment & Disability inquiries range from disability employment accommodations to assistance with removing obstacles to finding a job. Service Dog questions range from what are the differences between an emotional support animal and a service animal, to what questions may be asked of a handler of a service animal.

GCD: By the **Numbers**...Gov's Recommended Budget

- We respectfully submit that the continued adequate funding of the Governor's Commission on Disability is essential to ensure that the mandates delegated to the GCD are effectively carried out.
- We suggest that the Governor's Recommended Budget in each year of the biennium is in line with the FY2024 actual expenses and the FY2025 Adjusted Authorized Budget.
- The GCD developed an efficient and streamlined budget.

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITY - General Funds

Class	FY2024 General Funds Actual	FY2025 General Funds Adjusted Authorized	FY2026 General Funds Governor's Recommended Budget	FY2027 General Funds Governor's Recommended Budget
APPROPRIATION				
010-Personal Services-Perm. Classified	207,548	220,947	233,232	240,425
011-Personal Services-Unclassified	91,868	97,225	98,518	98,519
020-Current Expenses	2,895	4,115	3,500	3,500
022-Rents-Leases Other Than State	672	900	1,542	1,542
026-Organizational Dues	-	200	100	100
027-Transfers To DoIT	11,140	13,093	12,156	13,050
028-Transfers to Plant & Prop	389	1,349	1,038	1,055
030-Equipment New/Replacement	1,092	2,000	100	100
037-Technology - Hardware	1,482	-	-	-
038-Technology - Software	415	400	500	500
039-Telecommunications	3,923	3,670	4,280	4,280
040-Indirect Costs	1,403	5,612	-	-
049-Transfer to Other State Agencies	25,743	22,158	30,338	30,856
050-Personal Service-Temp/Appointed	-	35,851	37,000	38,000
060-Benefits	145,956	184,989	177,449	186,772
062-Workers Compensation	4,921	1,095	922	980
065-Board Expenses	5,846	6,000	6,600	6,600
066-Employee training	-	1	1	1
070-In-State Travel Reimbursement	679	2,500	1,500	1,500
080-Out-Of State Travel	-	1	1	1
211-Property and Casualty Insurance	-	1	1	1
230-Interpreter Services	6,463	10,000	9,000	9,000
TOTAL APPROPRIATION	512,434	612,107	617,778	636,782
FUNDING				
00S-State Share (General Fund)	513,915	612,107	617,778	636,782
TOTAL FUNDING	513,915	612,107	617,778	636,782

Increases:

Class 010 - Increase due to raises (step progressions) and increased longevity payments (3 employees will hit longevity milestones).

Class 022 - Increase due to new multifunction device (copier) lease and updated shared expense allocation.

Class 039 - Phone line fee for fax will double per Telecomm Planning Guide and email sent to Telecomm to confirm.

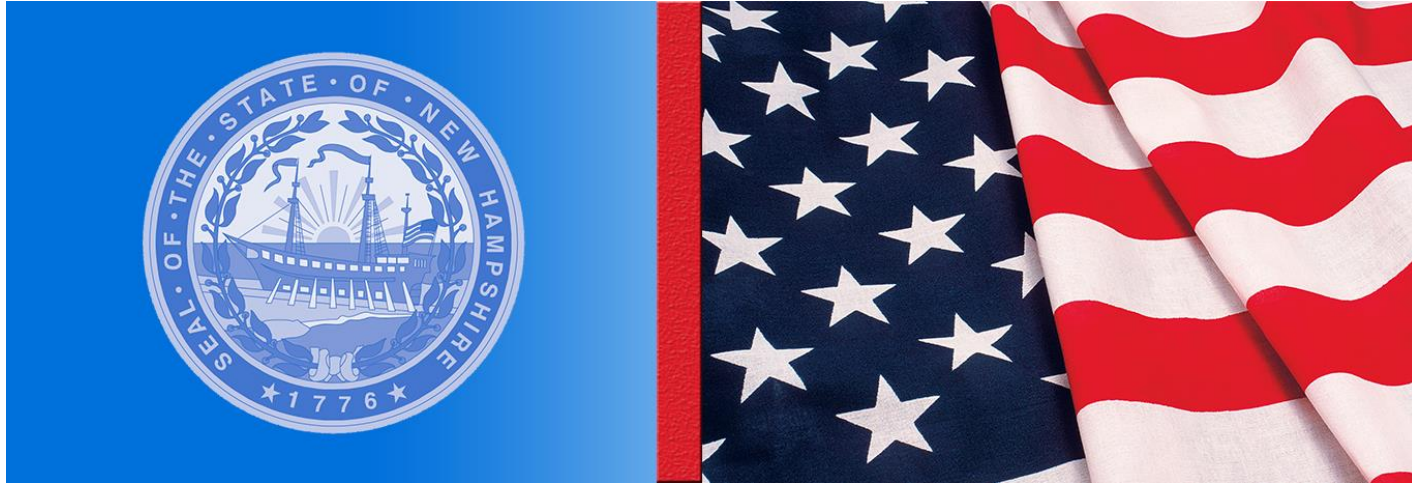
Class 049 - Includes HRSU, EAP, and rent to DOP. In previous biennium, the budget DID NOT include HRSU. Increase due to addition of HRSU and higher rental costs.

Class 065 - Travel reimbursement for board members increase every year because the IRS mileage rate increases.

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITY - All Funds

Class	FY2024 Actual		FY2025 Adjusted Auth		FY2026 Governor's Rec Budget		FY2027 Governor's Rec Budget	
	General Funds	All Funds	General Funds	All Funds	General Funds	All Funds	General Funds	All Funds
APPROPRIATION								
010-Personal Services-Perm. Classi	207,548	299,009	220,947	308,796	233,232	323,916	240,425	331,128
011-Personal Services-Unclassified	91,868	104,712	97,225	106,841	98,518	108,262	98,519	108,263
020-Current Expenses	4,376	8,849	4,115	11,865	3,500	9,875	3,500	9,870
022-Rents-Leases Other Than State	672	2,112	900	2,340	1,542	2,112	1,542	2,112
026-Organizational Dues	-	396	200	1,150	100	1,050	100	1,050
027-Transfers To Oit	11,140	13,874	13,093	17,588	12,156	15,871	13,050	17,055
028-Transfers to Plant & Prop	389	522	1,349	1,776	1,038	1,448	1,055	1,458
030-Equipment New/Replacement	1,092	6,826	2,000	3,000	100	200	100	200
037-Technology - Hardware	1,482	3,095	-	2,000	-	2,100	-	2,100
038-Technology - Software	415	565	400	800	500	1,100	500	1,100
039-Telecommunications	3,923	5,677	3,670	7,035	4,280	6,210	4,280	6,210
040-Indirect Costs	1,403	4,047	5,612	8,600	-	4,212	-	4,232
041-Audit Fund Set Aside	-	-	-	171	-	151	-	151
042-Additional Fringe Benefits	-	8,425	-	9,435	-	10,454	-	10,529
046-Consultants	-	-	-	9,000	-	9,000	-	9,000
049-Transfer to Other State Agenci	25,743	40,503	22,158	35,676	30,338	41,678	30,856	42,388
050-Personal Service-Temp/Appointe	-	31,036	35,851	101,802	37,000	93,000	38,000	95,000
060-Benefits	145,956	189,672	184,989	227,234	177,449	220,729	186,772	231,456
062-Workers Compensation	4,921	4,921	1,095	1,595	922	1,313	980	1,389
065-Board Expenses	5,846	7,763	6,000	12,000	6,600	12,600	6,600	12,600
066-Employee training	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1
070-In-State Travel Reimbursement	679	912	2,500	4,500	1,500	3,000	1,500	3,000
080-Out-Of State Travel	-	-	1	3,001	1	2,501	1	2,501
211-Property and Casualty Insuranc	-	-	1	2	1	2	1	2
230-Interpreter Services	6,463	8,314	10,000	16,600	9,000	14,871	9,000	13,225
571-Pass Thru Grants	-	77,660	-	123,750	-	123,750	-	123,750
TOTAL APPROPRIATION	513,915	818,890	612,107	1,016,558	617,778	1,009,406	636,782	1,029,770
FUNDING								
00S-State Share (General Fund)	513,915	513,915	612,107	612,107	617,778	617,778	636,782	636,782
000-Federal Funds (CAP)	-	139,065	-	185,899	-	174,153	-	175,518
001-Transfer from Other Agencies *	-	70,429	-	91,052	-	89,975	-	89,970
005-Private Local Funds (NEADA)	-	16,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
009-Agency Income (PUC)	-	79,481	-	127,500	-	127,500	-	127,500
TOTAL FUNDING	513,915	818,890	612,107	1,016,558	617,778	1,009,406	636,782	1,029,770

* NH Education Department (SILC)



The GCD is NH's ADA resource.
Thank you for the opportunity
to share who the GCD is and what we do.



www.disability.nh.gov
603.271.2773

