

## Purpose

The AUCD Board of Directors established five Councils that are made up of experts in the field to help address emerging trends and issues and facilitate communication across the AUCD network. The Council on Leadership in Advocacy, also known as COLA, is one of the councils and is made up of individuals with disabilities and family members within the AUCD network. The mission of COLA is to advise and assist the AUCD network as they strive to enhance the quality of life for themselves and their families. This can be seen as they highlight best practices and help facilitate advocates with disabilities working together with member, state and national organizations.

## How COLA Relates to AUCD Work

The COLA fulfills its purpose as it strengthens the AUCD network by fostering leadership opportunities for current and new leaders. These new leaders include educators and professionals and are located in centers across the national network. The technical assistance and collaboration opportunities within the AUCD network are enhanced by the feedback and expertise of the COLA members.

COLA helps AUCD and network members be more effective by:

- Making sure the voices of people with disabilities are heard
- Helping people with disabilities become leaders within the network
- Building partnerships with other AUCD Councils and network members
- Modeling the inclusion of people with disability
- Encouraging the leadership of people with disabilities
- Recruiting youth with disabilities for leadership opportunities
- Fostering the preparation of members for involvement on committees and leadership roles
- Serve as a model and resource for others desiring to infuse the participation people with disabilities and family members into program planning, research, and evaluation

## Membership

COLA members come from across the AUCD Network which includes UCEDDs, LENDs, and IDDRCs. COLA members can also be involved in Community Advisory Councils at University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs). Members are people with disabilities or family members. Multiple people from each center can join COLA. Full Council membership consists of one voting representative from a member program that is endorsed by the Director of the program. The Council continues to strive to meet its long-term goal of full membership.

The Council leadership structure includes several internal committees and two co-chairs. 1998 By-Laws stipulate that one co-chair must be an individual with a disability, and the other be the family member of an individual with a disability. The three-year, staggered co-chair positions carry with them a slot on AUCD's Board of Directors. Other leadership positions include Council Liaisons (MCC, CORE, CEDC, NTDC) and Regional Representatives (Eastern, Central, Western). The Regional Representative are nominated and approved by the Steering Committee and will coordinate with every

UCEDD, LEND, and IDDRC in their region to best ensure that they receive information and have every opportunity to actively participate in the Council's activities. Appointed at the request of the Chair with the approval of the Steering Committees, the Council liaison is responsible for reporting Council information and concerns to their Council, as well as reporting back to COLA.

### **Update your profile in the AUCD Network Directory!**

Update your profile in the [Directory](#) to reflect your membership in the Multicultural Council today! The online Directory is used to identify network members with particular areas of expertise. For this purpose, network members are encouraged to complete the sections on Professional Areas of Interest and Expertise and Vita or Bio, as well as upload a photo, and indicate your Council membership.

### **Communication**

COLA news and updates are shared via the COLA listserv. The listserv is for members-only and hosted by AUCD. Members must be affiliated with a UCEDD/LEND/IDDRC. Subscription requests and postings are moderated by AUCD staff. COLA holds four Full Council meetings a year (February, May, August, November). There is an Executive Committee that meets when needed and a Steering Committee that meets monthly on the other months during the year. The Executive committee consists of the two co-chairs, secretary, and past co-chair (also on a staggered term). The Steering Committee also includes the Regional Representatives, Council Liaisons and Emerging Leader.