



2019 Annual Report



The mission of NCLD is to improve the lives of the 1 in 5 children and adults nationwide with learning and attention issues — by empowering parents and young adults, transforming schools, and advocating for equal rights and opportunities. We're working to create a society in which every individual possesses the academic, social, and emotional skills needed to succeed in school, at work, and in life. In 2019, NCLD focused on influencing policy; empowering young adults with learning and attention issues; and providing resources to help educators, policy makers, parents, and students enhance their understanding of learning and attention issues.





Influencing Policy

Forward Together

In partnership with Understood.org, NCLD released [Forward Together: Helping Educators Unlock the Power of Students Who Learn Differently](#), a comprehensive report that takes a close look at how educators in general education classrooms are prepared to serve students with learning and attention issues. The report is based on research that included a survey of 1,350 teachers, 13 focus groups with teachers, a review of 150 academic articles, and a review of teacher certification requirements across all 50 states. NCLD also identified a set of specific critical teacher mindsets and evidence-based practices that can improve outcomes and learning, not only for students with learning and attention issues, but for all students. Along with the report, NCLD created a suite of resources and recommendations for actors at every level — families, educators, superintendents, and policymakers — including [Forward Together: A School Leader's Guide to Creating Inclusive Schools](#).

Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities

NCLD created [a suite of resources](#) to help improve evaluations of students with learning disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In partnership with 11 other national advocacy organizations, we developed [Eligibility for Special Education Under a Specific Learning Disability Classification](#) — a resource that lays out eight principles to guide a quality evaluation process — and supporting resources to help states and districts improve policies and practices to ensure students with learning disabilities are effectively evaluated. In addition, we partnered with leading experts and researchers in the field to develop white papers on the following topics: (1) [Evaluation for Specific Learning Disabilities: Allowable Methods of Identification & Their Implications](#); (2) [What a Specific Learning Disability Is Not: Examining Exclusionary Factors](#); and (3) [Data-Based Problem Solving: Effective Implementation of MTSS, RTI, and PBIS](#).



The Respond, Innovate, Succeed and Empower (RISE) Act

In 2019, the [Respond, Innovate, Succeed and Empower \(RISE\) Act](#) was introduced by a bi-partisan group of legislators in both the House and the Senate. NCLD led advocacy efforts related to the RISE Act and worked closely with all of the original co-sponsors, including Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Representative Larry Bucshon (R-IN), Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH), and Senator Todd Young (R-IN).

RISE is an essential piece of legislation that, if passed, would eliminate two obstacles facing students with disabilities as they pursue higher education: (1) it would allow students with disabilities to submit their IEP, 504 plan, or prior evaluation as documentation of their disability when seeking accommodations in college, thereby avoiding the need for a costly new evaluation to show that they still have their disability; and (2) it would allow additional funding for a technical assistance center that provides students and families with information on disability services in college and offers training to college faculty on best practices to support students with disabilities. To date, NCLD has mobilized thousands of parents and students to contact members of Congress in support of this important legislation, and we will continue to advocate for its passage.

EMPOWERING YOUNG ADULTS

Young Adult Leadership Council

2019 was a banner year for the Young Adult Initiatives team at NCLD. Our amazing Young Adult Leadership Council doubled in size, welcoming the second class of new young adult leaders eager to harness their voices to advocate for the 1 in 5 with learning and attention issues. In the spring of 2019, we partnered with another LD empowerment organization, Eye to Eye, to host our largest Hill Day event ever, bringing together more than 40 young adults from across the country to speak with Members of Congress about the importance of protecting the rights of students with disabilities.

Our young advocates met with members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, including civil rights icon Congressman John Lewis, who inspired our group with stories and lessons from his many years of activism and leadership. The time spent with the late Congressman Lewis will forever be remembered by our young leaders as they continue to develop their passion for disability activism.





Varsity Blues

Also in 2019, our young adults spoke on a critical issue of testing accommodations in light of a national scandal known as “Varsity Blues,” which involved wealthy and influential parents hiring a service to help them illegally obtain testing accommodations (such as extra time and permission to take the test in a separate private location) to enable them to cheat on the SAT and ACT. Our young adult leaders challenged the narratives coming from this scandal that sought to diminish the importance of testing accommodations for students with LD and to characterize these accommodations — and therefore disability needs — as a form of cheating. Members of NCLD’s Young

Adult Leadership Council spoke out about how they need and use accommodations to help them demonstrate their abilities. The leadership displayed by our young leaders helped counteract the harmful narratives created by this scandal, which threatened the necessary accommodations that students with disabilities receive.



The 2019 Anne Ford and Allegra Ford Thomas Scholarship Recipients

Every year, NCLD awards scholarships to students with learning disabilities to support their pursuit of post-secondary education and career advancement goals. [The Anne Ford Scholarship](#) is a four-year scholarship granted to a graduating high school senior with LD and/or ADHD who will be enrolled in a full-time bachelor's degree program. [The Allegra Ford Thomas Scholarship](#) is a two-year scholarship granted to a graduating high school senior who will enroll in a two-year community college, a vocational or technical training program, or a specialized program for students with LD and/or ADHD.

2019 Anne Ford Scholarship Recipient

Tyler Washington



Tyler started her school years as a kid who was "hard to understand" because of articulation delays, but speech therapy was successful at addressing this issue. What didn't go away was her unexplained struggle to keep up

in academics. Everyone agreed that her grades did not reflect her knowledge, and despite lots of tutoring, she kept falling further behind in academics. After testing, she said *"I was thrilled to hear I had dyslexia!"* And her mom agreed. *"After her diagnosis, the change was dramatic... she came alive, as a student and as a leader."*

In her college essay, Tyler wrote about having dyslexia, and her selection of the University of Connecticut for college was based on UConn's strong engineering major and its well-established program of support for students with disabilities.

In addition to running a website about African American hair fashion and care, Tyler enjoys martial arts, soccer, photography, and doing jigsaw puzzles, cryptograms and mazes.

2019 Allegra Ford Thomas Scholarship Recipient

Caitlyn Meyers



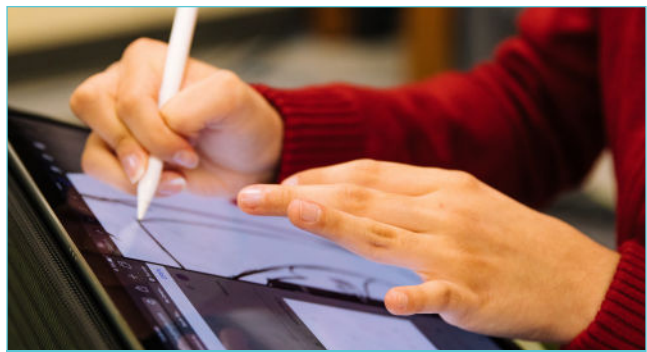
When reflecting upon Caitlyn's early years, people described her as "a kid whose brain was ahead of her body." A precocious, early talker, Caitlyn struggled to organize her thoughts and share her knowledge — characteristics that continued to define her

journey throughout her school years. She spent countless hours every summer reviewing skills at home, determined "not to be defeated" by forgetting what she learned when school resumed in September.

Caitlyn's interests are a perfect reflection of her exuberant personality. She loves nature (studying floriculture and collecting moss), restores old furniture ("because old objects have history and tell a hidden story") and is fascinated by bugs and "the smallest elements in nature that make up our world." Caitlyn's short-term goal is to pursue college study in Visual Arts, with aspirations to be a documentary filmmaker.



RESEARCH TO IMPROVE PRACTICES TO SUPPORT ALL LEARNERS



21-st Century Learning

To succeed in today's society, students — with and without disabilities — need effective critical-thinking, problem solving, self-advocacy, collaboration, and communication skills. NCLD led a national effort to raise awareness of the need for a focus on students with disabilities in these 21st-century skills and to build a foundation for policy conversations around this topic. As part of this effort, we worked with educators [to identify practices](#) to engage students with disabilities in 21st-century learning, and we worked with [national leaders to identify policies](#) that help develop conditions that enable inclusive 21st-century learning to flourish. We worked with numerous current and past state teachers of the year to create videos, including [We Want In!](#), highlighting what 21st-century skills are and why the inclusion of students with disabilities is so important in our modern education system.

Education Technology

The use of technology in education has become increasingly widespread in the nation's schools. Unfortunately, education technology is often not conceived, developed, purchased, used, or evaluated with the needs of all learners in mind. Recognizing this reality, NCLD led a collaborative of 12 national organizations in devising [a report on inclusive procurement](#) and worked with these organizations to develop collateral co-branded publications around [local decision-maker actions and state and federal decision-maker actions](#) to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are sufficiently addressed in ed tech visioning, development, procurement, use, and evaluation.

Higher Education Self-Advocacy

Students with disabilities often face a difficult transition to higher education, losing the support of their dedicated IEP teams, special educators, and case managers, as well as the direct support provided by their families. In making successful transitions to higher education, students with disabilities need to be supported in developing and deploying self-advocacy skills. Recognizing this reality, NCLD worked with leading national higher education policy and advocacy organizations to develop actions that [postsecondary faculty and postsecondary leaders](#) can take to facilitate opportunities for self-advocacy for students with disabilities as they pursue higher education.



THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

2019 Financial Report

Total Revenue

\$3,192,210

Total Expenses

\$2,901,420

Net Assets

Beginning of the Period

\$6,770,216

Net Assets

End of the Period

\$7,061,006

Breakdown of Program Services Expenses

Policy and Advocacy

\$1,164,591 (40.1%)

Innovation

\$600,911 (20.7%)

Young Adult Program

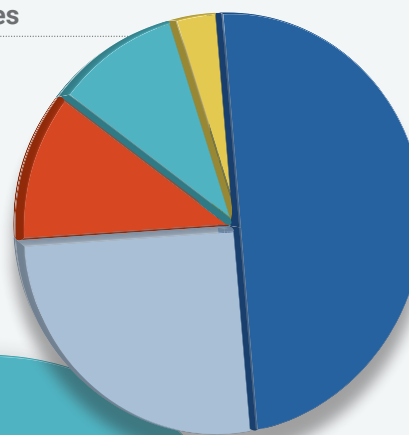
\$251,312 (8.7%)

Mobilization

\$226,475 (7.8%)

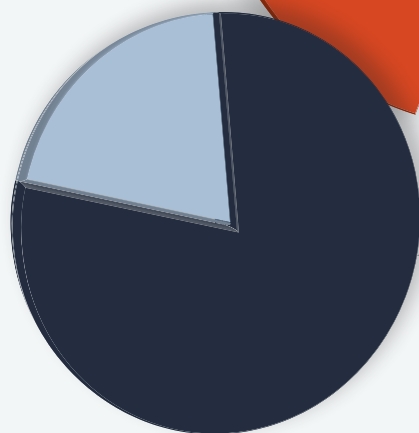
LD Resources and Research

83,157 (2.9%)



Support Services
\$574,974 (19.8%)

Program Services
\$2,326,446 (80.2%)



Breakdown of Support Services Expenses

Management and General

\$443,731 (15.3%)

Fundraising

\$131,243 (4.5%)

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