

West Virginia University

Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED)

CED
launches
mobile unit
"CEDrick"



CED Annual Report

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

The **mission** of the West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities (WVU CED) is to improve the lives of West Virginians with disabilities by supporting more diverse, inclusive communities. For 44 years, the CED has led efforts to provide better services to West Virginians with disabilities through training, research, sharing evidence-based information, and our services.

The CED has over 80 employees working in its locations in Morgantown, Charleston and other offices throughout West Virginia, allowing for statewide service coverage. During this fiscal year, the CED worked with 438 active partners to build a strong network.

According to the CDC **37%** **1 in 3** of adults living in West Virginia identify as having a disability.

2023 numbers at a glance

20 Programs **84** team members

435,818
people
received
services

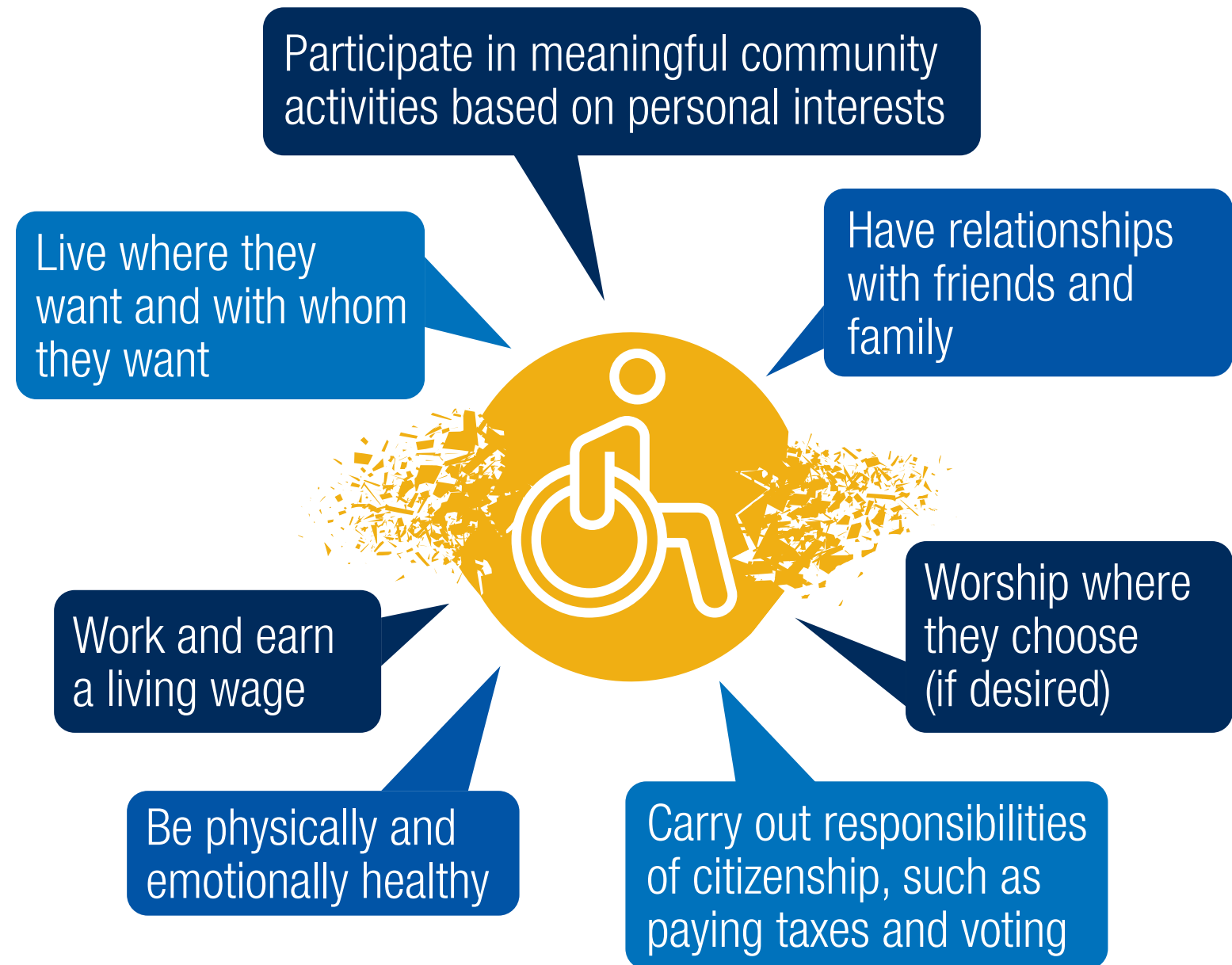
6,395 people received clinical services

15,331 people trained

61 research activities

113,347 disability-related resources were disseminated

The collective goal of disability service agencies like the WVU CED is to establish an inclusive experience for individuals with disabilities. To succeed, we must ensure individuals with disabilities are able to:



People with disabilities experience many barriers that impact how they live, participate and contribute within their communities. These assurances push us to provide services that empower individuals with disabilities, contribute to their skills, enhance their self-advocacy and increase awareness about how others can support their efforts.

BARRIERS:

Need:

WVU CED response:

Community integration



95% of providers experienced staffing shortages threatening the ability of people with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities. Disability training equips individuals and organizations with the tools to create more supportive environments, promote empathy and ensure that people with disabilities are treated with dignity and respect.

The CED staff provide expertise related to disability services, resources and programming to t workforce capacity and community integration.

- The Positive Behavior Support program offers a monthly “Solution Forum” where professionals from across the state can talk through difficult cases and situations with their team.
- The Traumatic Brain Injury program trains educators to help students successfully return to learning after a concussion.
- The CED offered a five session online ECHO training series “Transforming Care for Individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities: Institutionalization, Transitional Living Options, and Care Team Support Systems”. This series intended to provide education and resources to individuals, families and healthcare professionals to address gaps in services and explore strategies to reduce the rate of institutionalizations in West Virginia.

Equal opportunity and self-sufficiency



Despite the existence of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), individuals with disabilities can legally be paid less than the federal minimum wage under Section 14 of the FLSA. As a result, many individuals with disabilities earn significantly less than the standard minimum wage, with some earning as little as a few cents per hour. This wage disparity highlights ongoing challenges in achieving fair compensation for disabled workers.

Individuals also face numerous employment challenges such as limited access to education and training, lack of transportation, and the need for workplace accommodations. In West Virginia, the employment gap between individuals with and without disabilities is particularly wide, with disabled workers earning significantly less and experiencing higher rates of poverty.

- CED Employment Services are available to help West Virginians with disabilities find jobs. The team works one-on-one with individuals to help them prepare for employment and find the right job.
- Services include employment counseling, skill assessments, career exploration/interests, resume writing, interview preparation and mock interviews, assistance with job-seeking and applications, and information on disabilities in the workplace and Equal Opportunity.

Equal rights and political participation



Accessible polling places and trainings are crucial for encouraging individuals to participate in elections. Providing features such as ramps, accessible voting machines and clear signage enable voters with disabilities to cast their ballots privately and independently. Additionally educating individuals about their voting rights, how to navigate the voting process and how to request necessary accommodations. These trainings can also build confidence and encourage greater civic participation.

- The West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) is working to improve access to voting for individuals with disabilities in our state. WVATS educates voters and polling locations about the ways to address barriers to make sure that everyone can vote.
- Self-advocacy efforts in programs across the CED and its partners have also worked to educate individuals with disabilities on the voting process, their rights, and how to research policies and candidates to make educated voting decisions.

Quality and affordable health care



Individuals often face significant barriers to accessing quality and affordable mental health care. Higher costs for specialized services, limited availability of professionals trained to address the unique needs of disabled individuals, and inadequate insurance coverage are some of the barriers. Stigma and discrimination can further hinder access to necessary care. In many cases, individuals with disabilities may require more frequent and intensive mental health services, which can be financially burdensome. Improving access to quality and affordable mental health care can better support the overall well-being and quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

- CED Mental Health Services support individuals with disabilities and their families to increase their well-being, exercise choices and seek resources to support their mental health.
- Consultation and training are provided to various agencies and health professionals on how to best meet the unique needs of clients with disabilities and support their self-determination.
- Another initiative launched this year to support parents and caregivers who have a child with a new autism diagnosis or who are on the waitlist for autism evaluations.

HIGHLIGHTS

CEDrick provides Center services throughout the state, including needed neurodevelopmental programs and family support.



WIPA program helps mother become first time homebuyer

A Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) beneficiary who had not worked since her injury was offered a full-time position. As a single mom, she needed to know how her and her child's benefits might be affected by employment. She receives both SSDI and SSI benefits, Medicare and Medicaid, along with some state benefits and housing assistance. The Certified Work Incentives Counselor reviewed how her benefits would be affected by her income and explained Medicaid for disabled and employed individuals.



As an update, the mother is now working and recently moved into her first house using the First-Time Homebuyers program. She was also introduced to WVABLE, which allowed her to open a savings account that is not limited by SSI and Medicaid programs.

CED partners with WVU Medicine launched the Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Follow-Up Clinic. This clinic establishes early detection services covering medical, developmental, behavioral and social supports in the first five years.



“Navigating Medical Transitions from Pediatric to Adulthood” mini-documentary. This video addresses common barriers and potential solutions toward a smooth transition from pediatric to adult providers.

“It has been such a pleasure to engage with this team. I didn't feel judged or feel like my child was being judged. They genuinely were invested in trying to find ways to help with the issues that I brought forth to them.”

– Positive Behavior Support (PBS) client



The WVU Country Roads program celebrates a record number of graduates at May Commencement. Our alumni have moved on to establish majors and/or join the workforce with stronger skills while making ~\$2,187 more than they made prior to entering the program.



The West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities (WVU CED) is a federally designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). We are part of a national network of similar centers across the country and serve as a resource to the community in the areas of education, research and service as it relates to the needs of people with disabilities. As a unit within West Virginia University, we also provide multiple services and training programs for students and professionals to make an impact through education, healthcare, leadership and advocacy.

For a comprehensive list of services available at the CED, visit cedwvu.org.

The CED is also an academic department within the School of Medicine, Professional Programs offering the Department of Disability Studies coursework. Students from a variety of majors can earn an undergraduate minor or graduate certificate in Disability Studies.

Information sources and citations are available upon request. All printed materials are available in alternate formats upon request. WVU is an EEO/Affirmative Action Employer – Minority/Female/Disability/Veteran.