

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN DISABILITIES

CED

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

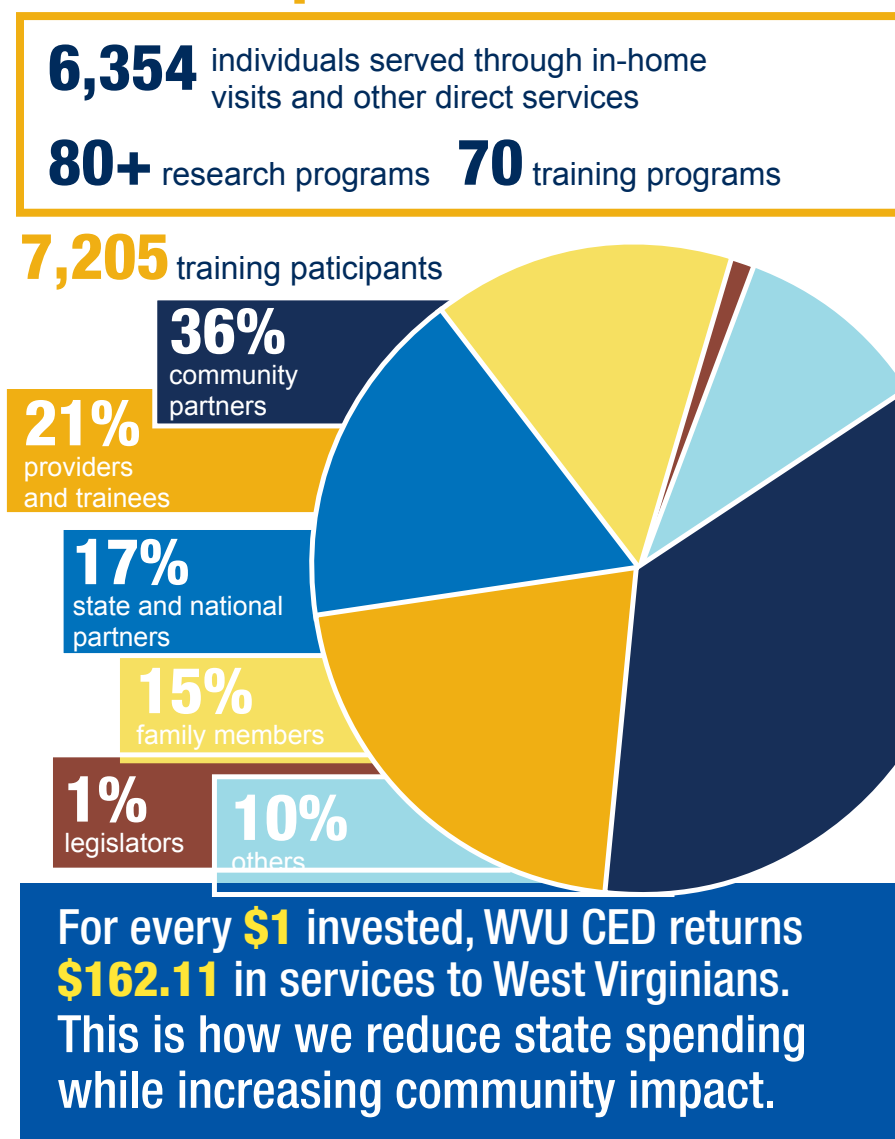


July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

During the 2024–25 performance period, the WVU Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) delivered a comprehensive portfolio of direct services, training, research, and dissemination activities supporting individuals with disabilities across West Virginia and surrounding states. Activities emphasized healthcare access, employment, transitions, and health and wellness across the lifespan.

CED experts engaged in more than 80 research programs designed to continue developing innovative techniques, devices, and programming for the state. Collectively, these efforts demonstrate strong stewardship of public resources and measurable statewide impact.

Overall Impact



WVU CED = Real Return on Investment

\$10.2 million

in economic activity generated

\$6.5 million

in indirect labor income to WV

103 jobs

created and supported

Statewide Reach

The WVU CED maintained a strong statewide presence, delivering services in all 55 West Virginia counties. Programs were intentionally designed to reach rural and underserved communities where access to disability-informed services is often limited. Through partnerships with local agencies, schools, healthcare systems, and community organizations, the WVU CED ensured that services were responsive to regional needs. This broad geographic reach strengthened equity and consistency in disability supports across the state.

Dissemination and Reach

22,799 products disseminated
2.36 million people reached
1,630 clinical service products distributed

Safety through awareness and understanding

First responders across the country are learning how to interact safely and effectively with drivers on the autism spectrum thanks to innovative training led by Country Roads instructor Steve Slack and national partners. With extensive experience working with individuals with autism, Steve trains police officers, firefighters, and EMTs in de-escalation techniques, clear communication strategies, and recognizing sensory or behavioral cues.

Programs like this reduce stress for both responders and individuals with autism, build community trust, and demonstrate how targeted training can save lives. Supporting this work ensures that all West Virginians, including those with autism, can navigate public spaces safely while giving first responders the tools they need to respond with skill and confidence.



Safety Impact by the Numbers

- ✓ 15 training and outreach events
- ✓ 505 first responders trained statewide
- ✓ 32 additional trainings co-led by people with disabilities
- ✓ Training audiences include law enforcement, EMS, firefighters, dispatch, and social service providers
- ✓ 800 communication boards distributed
- ✓ 700 visor cards distributed

Strengthening West Virginia's Disability Workforces

The CED expanded disability workforce development through its Disability Studies (DISB) curriculum and interdisciplinary academic partnerships. During the reporting year, students from multiple colleges completed coursework and earned credentials that embedded disability awareness into future careers in healthcare, education, social services, and public policy. Outreach to academic advisors and faculty increased awareness of disability studies as a critical workforce preparation tool. These efforts contribute to a pipeline of professionals better equipped to serve West Virginians with disabilities.

Former trainee receives international service award

Former WV Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) trainee **Mustafa Rfat, MSW, MPA**, received the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) **International Service Award** at the annual AUCD Awards Ceremony on November 13, 2025. The award recognizes outstanding contributions that further programs or policies designed to create more inclusive communities for people with disabilities and their families throughout the world.

“

My time as a WV LEND trainee was foundational; it was where I first learned to see disability not only through a clinical or academic lens, but through a justice and equity lens,” said Rfat.

“The mentorship and community I found at the WVU CED continue to guide my work today as I advocate for inclusive systems that center the dignity and rights of people with disabilities around the world.

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Former WV LEND trainee Mustafa Rfat, MSW, MPA.

The CED strengthened disability employment systems through technical assistance and partnerships with state and local workforce entities. Services supported individuals with disabilities in accessing employment supports, assistive technology, and job accommodations. Collaboration with partners such as the West Virginia Assistive Technology System (WVATS) enhanced workplace accessibility and productivity. This work addressed persistent employment disparities for West Virginians with disabilities. Disability employment is one of four areas of emphasis for the WVU CED.

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These services included:

- ✓ job interest assessment
- ✓ interview training
- ✓ resume building
- ✓ job connections

In 2025, ACRE-certified employment specialists worked closely with the WVATS team to provide ADA building structures compliance training and support, offer social media educational tips, and attend community events to share requested information to more than 1,000 employers and potential employees. This new program served 30 individuals directly in the last quarter of 2025.

Employment Partner Highlight

The WVATS team visited the Jack & the Bean Coffee Co. in Kenova, WV in June 2025 to evaluate their business and recommend assistive technology (AT) that could support their employees. Jack & the Bean is a 501 c3 non-profit coffee shop that employs individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Each barista is paired with a job coach to build their skills via hands-on training. WVATS worked with owner Melanie, whose son Jack is an employee and the inspiration for the coffee shop, to recommend specific AT that can help baristas with visual and verbal communication in the workplace.



WVATS team members with Jack & the Bean Coffee Co. staff.

Building Skills Across Generations Through Flexible Training

The CED continued to grow flexible, competency-based micro-credentials and digital badges focused on disability awareness and inclusive practice. These credentials were accessible to students, faculty, staff, and community professionals, allowing participants to build targeted skills without traditional course barriers. Content addressed practical topics such as disability-informed care, communication, and cultural competence. The program expanded workforce readiness while promoting consistent standards of inclusion across systems.

Training and Workforce Readiness in 2025:

- 114 individuals** started at least one course in the WVU CED Ally training series, with **35** completing all trainings.
- 67 students and medical residents** completed the Patient Care for Patients with Disabilities in Rural Primary Care micro-credential in the first 6 months.
- 27 students** completed at least one disability micro-credential badge.
- 25 faculty** from WVU and elsewhere completed at least one disability micro-credential badge.
- 7 Country Roads students** completed micro-credentials during their time in the program.



Advancing Comprehensive Care

The WVU CED is advancing comprehensive care by strengthening both provider capacity and family-centered systems. Through flexible training models and research-informed navigation supports, the CED is improving how care is delivered, accessed, and experienced across the lifespan.

Families as partners in education

Project DOCC (Delivery of Chronic Care) engaged families of children with disabilities as paid educators for health professional students. During the year, the CED expanded interdisciplinary simulation-based training that emphasized communication, respect, and family-centered care. WVU Health Sciences students gained direct insight into real-world family experiences navigating healthcare systems. This approach improved provider readiness and strengthened trust between families and healthcare professionals.



Dr. Richard Shorter visits the home of Robin Hatcher to provide in-home medical care to her daughter Haylee, who has complex health care needs.

- 10 virtual Project DOCC workshops** led by families reached **688 Health Sciences students**
- 312 students participated** in simulations
- 70 family stipends** supported family involvement to enable family-led roles in training programs
- 62 students** completed new Not Your Standard Patient training

Community inclusion

The WVU CED is a statewide leader in promoting adaptive health and well-being programs that support individuals of all ages and abilities. Through adaptive physical activity, inclusive recreation, and creative movement, the CED helps children, adults, and older adults improve strength, balance, coordination, social engagement, and overall health.

These programs are particularly important in West Virginia, where access to inclusive health and wellness opportunities is limited and innovative community-based solutions can reduce health disparities. By investing in adaptive health programming, legislators can help ensure that West Virginians of all abilities have the opportunity to lead active, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

Adaptive Dance

Dr. Krestin Radonovich's adaptive dance initiative is helping children with disabilities across West Virginia move, express themselves, and thrive. After surveying families and training local dance instructors in adaptive techniques, the program piloted an inclusive dance class enrolling 27 youth ages 6-12.



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.