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Ensuring that all people with disabilities have the opportunity to be participating members in their communities of choice

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FEATURE STORIES

ICI Trains First Cohort of Community-Based Rehabilitation Facilitators in Liberia



In December 2018, over 40 members of the first cohort of community-based rehabilitation (CBR) facilitators benefited from a series of trainings in CBR approaches and methods presented by ICI in three counties in Liberia. ICI staff member [Macdonald Metzger](#) and project consultant Mikala

Mukongolwa implemented the training in Margibi, Bomi, and Montserrado counties, December 10–14. Based on a request from the Special and Inclusive Education Department at the country's Ministry of Education, the team also held a training session with the staff of the department.

“ICI’s work in Liberia is a much-needed effort,” says Metzger. “Liberia needs all the help it can get. People with disabilities and their families are desperate for information and education. The community needs awareness and education to help with behavior and attitudinal change. Additionally, the national government needs technical assistance and support to help formulate policies that safeguard and improve the quality of lives of people with disabilities.”

The classroom training was followed by home visits to children with intellectual and developmental disabilities where trainees and parents watched Mukongolwa demonstrate practical CBR interventions, including support strategies to help children with hearing and speech, mobility, learning, and social interaction difficulties, as well as epileptic seizures and other conditions.

Mukongolwa (seated) is pictured guiding a 6-year-old boy with cerebral palsy, showing his aunt (caregiver) and teachers how to provide physical therapy to help him with balance, coordination, and free movement of his legs. Parents and family members learned about their children's disabilities and how they and CBR facilitators could support the children at home and in the community.

The World Health Organization and UNESCO recognize CBR as a model for community rehabilitation and provision of therapeutic supports to people with disabilities in remote and rural indigenous communities. "Supports in Liberia are centralized, obligating family caregivers to travel long distances — often on foot — to rural health centers," says Metzger. "But CBR builds local volunteer networks to support people with disabilities in their own communities. This means services and supports that improve their overall functioning and quality of life in things like mobility, special education, and employment. CBR promotes equal opportunity and the social inclusion of people with disabilities."

Metzger, who was born in Liberia, directs ICI's project, [Community-based Rehabilitation Approaches for Family Caregivers and People Who Support Adults and Children with Disabilities](#).

ICI Enhances Skills of Direct Support Workers in Minnesota

For the first half of 2019, ICI's [Research and Training Center on Community Living](#) (RTC-CL) will provide training to enhance the skills of Minnesota direct support workers who are employed through self-directed programs such as PCA Choice, Consumer-Directed Community Supports (CDCS), and the Community Support Grant (CSG) programs. Starting on January 29 in north Minneapolis, there will be 20 interactive sessions — 3.5 hours each — held in the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota through June. The trainings, supported by the Service Employees International Union and the Minnesota Department of Human Services, will provide practical tips to increase direct support workers' skills in self-directed, community-based services, and increase their well-being. Training and support for the direct support workforce has long been a priority for the RTC-CL. This project includes a newly-developed curriculum and an opportunity to connect with direct support workers around Minnesota. Attendance in a session can be applied towards a \$500 stipend.



"As support services become more individualized, direct support workers play a critical role in supporting quality, self-directed lives in the community," says trainer [Lynda Lahti Anderson](#). "But this means that direct support workers are increasingly working in isolation, and stress and burnout are industry problems. These sessions are introductions to supporting choice and self-direction for people receiving supports, and self-care practices for direct support workers."

Registration is limited to people hired through PCA Choice, CDCS, and CSG programs. For more information please visit z.umn.edu/Directworkertraining

Russian Visitors and ICI Share Insights on Including Youth with Disabilities

ICI hosted three visitors from Russia this month who were partnering with the Institute's [Global Resource Center for Inclusive Education](#) (GRC) to share knowledge and expertise on inclusion and community living practices for youth and young adults with disabilities in the U.S. and the Russian Federation. From January 5–13, 2019,

professionals from Ordinary Childhood (Vera Bitova, pictured third from left) and Life Route (Alena Legostaeva, fourth from left) and a parent advocate from the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk (Anna Markevich, second from right) spent nine days in Minnesota with the GRC's [Renáta Tichá](#) and [Brian Abery](#), visiting community-based organizations working toward the inclusion of youth and adults with disabilities. Ordinary Childhood and Life Route in Moscow are collaborating with GRC on a one-year project entitled [Community Participation and Employment as Strategies for Social Inclusion: A U.S.-Russia Dialogue](#), which is part of the U.S.-Russia Social Expertise Exchange program funded by a \$29,000 grant from the Eurasia Foundation.



The organizations they visited in January included PACER Center, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), The Arc Minnesota, Focus Beyond, Dependable (pictured), and Outcomes Inc. In addition, Russian participants presented information regarding their support systems and work in Russia to staff from MDE and ICI. The U.S.-Russian team was able to make meaningful comparisons between the two countries with respect to service provision, societal attitudes towards persons with disabilities, policy/legislation, and parental initiatives that led to the planning of future activities and changes that both teams will implement in their work.

“International collaborations such as this provide professionals with opportunities to expand their perspectives about disability, support services, and the critical role that the environmental context plays in facilitating the quality-of-life for people with disabilities,” states Tichá. Abery agrees, adding, “Crossing national and cultural boundaries assists not only professionals but parents and persons with disabilities alike to develop new ideas, adapt practices observed in one culture to others, and better use available resources to support persons with disabilities leading self-determined lives in the communities of their choice.”



Featured on [ICI's Facebook](#) on December 20, 2018

"Inclusion is no longer a 'nice-to-have' or a tick box initiative in Corporate Social Responsibility. An inclusive business must be inclusive of everyone." From Time.com: "How Businesses Can Lead a Revolution on Disability Inclusion."

NEW RELEASES



Community Living and Participation for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Editors: [Amy Hewitt](#) and [Kelly Nye-Lengerman](#)

This [textbook](#), published by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), contains contributions by over 20 staff from ICI's [Research and Training Center on Community Living](#), including a forward written by [Cliff Poetz](#). This book is an exploration of how to create the ideal conditions to facilitate community living and participation for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). It addresses the complex and ever-evolving dimensions related to both the place of community and the feeling of community, including living arrangements, work, other daytime activities, financial resources, relationships, personal interests, health and well-being, faith, opportunities for learning and personal growth, self-determination and informed decision making, and rights and responsibilities as a citizen. Each chapter includes advance organizers, discussion questions, a list of resources, and personal illustrations.

"It's only when all people, including those with IDD, are included, that a community can be strong and truly diverse," says co-editor Nye-Lengerman. "This book is a valuable resource for undergraduate and graduate students, support providers, and those working to make our communities inclusive for all people."

Journal Articles Published

"Supporting Employment Consultants in Their Work with Job Seekers: A Longitudinal Study." (2018).

By Alberto Migliore, John Butterworth, Oliver Lyons, [Kelly Nye-Lengerman](#), and Paul Foos.
Published in the [Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation](#), *49* (3), 273–286.

"Psychosocial Experiences of the Aging of Middle-aged People with Intellectual Disabilities in South Korea." (2018). By [Kyung Mee Kim](#), Yu-Ri Shin, and Sekwang Hwang. Published in the [International Journal of Developmental Disabilities](#).

EVENTS

Minnesota Self-Advocacy Conference

March 8–9, 2019
Mystic Lake Casino
Prior Lake, Minnesota



This [biennial conference](#) brings together 400–500 self-advocates and allies to make friends, learn about self-advocacy issues, and become connected to the larger self-advocacy movement. Co-sponsored by ICI's [Research and Training Center on Community Living](#), this year's conference features 40 workshops on disability rights, housing, getting out in the community, transportation and more. There will also be an awards banquet, DJ dance, art projects, photo booth, and door prizes. [Registration is open.](#)

Check & Connect Training

April 18–19, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center
St. Paul, Minnesota



[Check & Connect](#)'s two-day Comprehensive Implementation Training provides participants with a thorough overview of Check & Connect and its background; how to prepare their site for implementing Check & Connect; and the information, competencies, and skills needed to be an effective Check & Connect mentor. Limited to 30 participants, this training is designed for education administrators, lead staff (decision-making stakeholders), their site coordinator(s), and assigned Check & Connect mentors. Check & Connect is an intervention used with K–12 students who show warning signs of disengagement with school and who are at risk of dropping out. At the core

of Check & Connect is a trusting relationship between the student and a caring, trained mentor who both advocates for and challenges the student to keep education salient. [Registration is open.](#)

STAFF UPDATES

Jennifer Hall-Lande and **Maren Christenson**: On December 3–5, [Hall-Lande](#) and Christenson attended the national Early Childhood Personnel Committee (ECPC) Leadership Institute meetings in Connecticut, having been recently invited to serve on the Minnesota ECPC. The national committee works to build workforce capacity in the field of early childhood education and early childhood special education programs; the group will continue their work together in 2019. Hall-Lande was also awarded a 2018–2019 CEHD Professional and Administrative Council (CPAC) Professional Development Grant. She will use this grant to develop additional clinical skills and clinic-related projects.



Tom Donaghy and **Renáta Tichá**: On December 26, [Donaghy](#) and [Tichá](#) co-edited the 2018 issue of the *Journal of the International Association of Special Education*, 18(1). Journal editor Tichá, who co-directs ICI's [Global Resource Center for Inclusive Education](#), selected, reviewed, and edited the articles for content. As managing editor, Donaghy edited the selected articles and laid out the journal.

Lynda Lahti Anderson: On January 9, [Anderson](#) earned her PhD in Rehabilitative Sciences from the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine in the Medical School at the University of Minnesota. Her dissertation was, "Doing, Being and Belonging: A Photo Elicitation on the Meaning of Well-being of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities." She used a descriptive qualitative research approach to ask 10 adults with intellectual disabilities what makes them feel happy and healthy. Study participants took photographs to answer the question and described the pictures they took to her. Anderson's study results will help refine the content of the [Partnerships in Wellness](#) curriculum that she developed at ICI.

ALUMNI UPDATE



Jason Torres Altman: Torres Altman co-owns Minneapolis-based TerraLuna Collaborative. "I currently work as an evaluation consultant for programming aimed at K–12 public school students, or their educators," he says. Torres Altman now lives in New Orleans where he also serves smaller nonprofit organizations as a grant writer. But before all that, from 2004 to 2006, he worked as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) for ICI's [National Center on Educational Outcomes](#) (NCEO). It was quite a job change for the then-graduate student.

“I would have ended up continuing to work as a collegiate track and field coach if not for this opportunity, which though fun, was in totality never as meaningful as even my first day at ICI. As far as the influence on my career, it certainly crystalized my trajectory as I've never deviated too far from the course that [Martha \[Thurlow\]](#), [Sheryl \[Lazarus\]](#), and [the late] Sandy [Thompson] set in motion for me as a youngster just beginning graduate school. Throughout those GRA years, I built the skills, confidence, and connections that a person would need to advocate for persons with disabilities for an entire career.

“To this day, I still serve in that same ecosystem, most specifically as an evaluation consultant for local, regional, state, and multi-state programs promoting better outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities, in the K–12 public school system. For example, one of our clients is undertaking a statewide initiative to promote schoolwide inclusion not only among special educators, but also general educators, administrators, and other support staff.

“I definitely want to thank ICI for providing me and others like me with an amazing opportunity to try to do some good in the world as a dual advocate/professional working in research and policy. It certainly changed my professional and personal life. I want to thank NCEO for allowing me the space, time, peers, and collaborative opportunities to learn my Microsoft Excel chops, find my written voice, and to realize so much more of my potential as a creative and strategic thinker. I have a long ways to go, but I have to credit NCEO for getting me most of the way to where I am now. The rest is on me!”

This email was sent to all ICI staff by Institute on Community Integration, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN, 55455, USA. The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

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