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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

**CE+HD** COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**FYI**

**ICI** INSTITUTE *on*  
COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Ensuring that all children, youth, and adults with disabilities, and those receiving educational supports, are valued by and contribute to their communities of choice.

OCTOBER 2021

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## FEATURED STORIES



### ICI Moves to MIDB

The Institute on Community Integration has begun its move to the [Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain](#) (MIDB), ushering in a new era of collaboration

across the University of Minnesota designed to advance brain health in support of each person's journey as a valued community member throughout their lives.

ICI, which brings more than 35 years of disability research, advocacy, and education/training, joins researchers, clinicians, and specialists from the University's Medical School, M Health Fairview, and the College of Education and Human Development at the new 116,000-square-foot building, 2025 East River Parkway, Minneapolis.

"As an organization, we actually outgrew our space in Pattee Hall in the early 1990s, and the opportunity to now have fully accessible space that encourages collaboration with colleagues and that lets us welcome community partners is the culmination of our collective work over decades to make life better for people with disabilities through our research and its influence on changing policy and practice," said [Amy Hewitt](#), director of ICI.

Named in recognition of a gift from Minnesota Masonic Charities, MIDB officially opens Nov. 1, offering collaborative interdisciplinary research, early neurobehavioral and mental health assessment, innovative targeted interventions, informed policy-making, compassionate advocacy, and community engagement and education.

"Learning about the different ways our colleagues think, and the context they bring to their work, will help us break down barriers and make our work more relevant to the community," said Damian Fair, University of Minnesota Medical School Redleaf Endowed Co-Director, MIDB. "Once we begin digging into how we approach care for people with disabilities, we see some of the old labels pitting the medical and social models against each other are not accurate and that both approaches have already been coming together. The hope is that by breaking down walls and creating safe spaces to talk about different approaches, we'll improve all of the ways we work for families navigating the critical issue of brain health."

While ICI and the other occupants of the MIDB building will retain their existing names, organizational structures, and research interests, their proximity in the space is designed to foster new collaborations, share resources, and spur new research and service delivery approaches.

"Access is a hallmark of equity and inclusion, not only regarding access to space, but to resources, opportunities, information, and discoveries," said Michael

Rodriguez, CEHD dean. “ICI has long led the way in creating access, and through enhancing collaborations with the Medical School, we will expand that legacy with new energy in MIDB.”

MIDB will be composed of several independent research cores, including TeleOutreach, that will provide support and expertise in neurodevelopmental research, integrated data collection, and analytical and intervention services under one roof.

One collaboration already underway is the [MIDB TeleOutreach Center](#), directed by ICI’s [Jessica Simacek](#) and [Adele Dimian](#), associate director. The center was created under a philanthropic gift from the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation, providing research, training, and technical assistance through innovative and secure technology to address barriers to care for children, youth, families, and professionals. Under a new \$600,000, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, researchers from ICI and the Medical School’s Department of Pediatrics will conduct a large-scale, randomized control trial assessing intervention and diagnostic services delivered via the TeleOutreach Center to families awaiting formal autism spectrum disorder evaluation or intervention.

“The TeleOutreach Center is one of the early, exciting collaborations within MIDB,” said Simacek. “The physical space and technology are scaled up from what we have previously used to do this type of work, and it is already allowing us to welcome more trainees, fellows, students, community collaborators, and, ultimately, families, to be connected and engaged, regardless of where they are located.”

ICI’s Minnesota Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities ([MNLEND](#)) Program is another existing ICI program that already has fostered deep connections across more than 16 academic disciplines at the University, Hewitt said. Each academic year, a cohort of MNLEND fellows comes together under funding from the U.S. Maternal & Child Health Bureau to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make informed, committed action in the areas of neurodevelopmental and related disabilities.

Looking forward, Hewitt said, advances in the fields of both medical and social policy are critical to understand together.

“In the past we made assumptions about how clinicians, physicians, and bench

scientists think and act, but we don't really know," said Hewitt. "They have the same ultimate goal we do, which is that we want people with disabilities to have good lives. Today's clinical advances in holistic medicine are just one example of a whole new way of looking at our work. And if we don't really know what's going on at the clinical level, we can't change policies and practices."

[Jennifer Hall-Lande](#), who leads ICI's work in autism prevalence data and early intervention, serves on the MIDB executive council, along with Hewitt.

"I've been waiting my entire career for an opportunity like this to leverage the strengths of the social model of disability with the clinical side," she said.

"Disability is a natural part of the human continuum, and I bring that perspective to my clinical work. It's up to us to take this opportunity and learn from each other and grow and innovate."

Future collaborations leveraging the diverse expertise that will inhabit MIDB are still to be created, both Hewitt and Fair said.

"What struck me as we toured the building was how a family coming through the clinic door could potentially encounter our TIES resources for parents of a child with a more significant disability, and they may want to begin a path towards educating their child in a more inclusive setting in their local school, or have started on that path and need help," said [Kristin Liu](#), principal investigator for the [TIES Center](#), the national technical assistance center on inclusive policies and practices in K-8 schools.

[Sheryl Lazarus](#), director of the [National Center on Educational Outcomes](#) at ICI, said that team is also interested in future collaborations at MIDB.

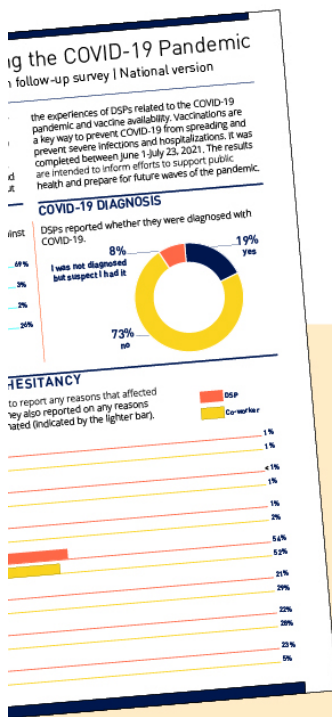
"The NCEO team looks forward to discussing the needs and characteristics of children with autism and other disabilities with clinicians and families as we strive to make assessments used for accountability and other purposes more accessible," Lazarus said.

In a December 2020 *CEHD Connect* article, former Dean Jean Quam predicted that MIDB would be one of the most exciting partnerships in the history of the college.

"It's unique that a college of education would partner with a medical school and that we would look for strengths that we have and the things we have in

common,” Quam said, adding that ICI’s history of interdisciplinary outreach would serve as a model for collaboration at the new institute.

“Viewing disability as a unique difference rather than a problem to be solved is a foundational aspect of ICI,” Hewitt said. “Our approach to supporting people with developmental and neurodevelopmental disabilities throughout their lives will inform the work of MIDB and create more inclusive communities for many years to come.”



## National Report: More than a Quarter of Workers Still Unvaccinated

September 21, 2021



### Worth a Shot: DSPs Urged to Act

More than a quarter of the professionals supporting people with disabilities remain unvaccinated against the coronavirus, a new study shows.

ICI, in partnership with the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP), surveyed 5,400 DSPs and frontline supervisors about their experiences supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The newly released [survey report](#) is a follow-up to an initial report issued in April 2020. They represent the largest-ever national study of the DSP workforce.

According to the report, 26% of DSPs were unvaccinated. Among those not vaccinated, 54% said they do not feel the vaccine is safe, 21% said they do not

believe in the worth of the vaccine, and 22% said they do not feel they need it.

Nearly 20% of DSPs reported being diagnosed with COVID-19, and 8% were not diagnosed but suspected they had it. Among employers, 93% did not require DSPs to be vaccinated.

Several studies have found that people with IDD are at [higher risk](#) of severe COVID-19 outcomes.

“People with IDD are at the greatest risk of any categorical group of becoming sick and dying from COVID-19,” said [Amy Hewitt](#), lead investigator of the study, conducted by ICI’s Research and Training Center on Community Living for Persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (RTC-CL) in partnership with NADSP. Hewitt is director of the RTC-CL, and of ICI. “As essential workers, DSPs have an obligation to keep themselves and the people they support healthy and safe, and they deserve wages and benefits commensurate with their skills and level of responsibility.”

Hewitt noted that the direct support workforce has been overlooked and in crisis for years, with high turnover and vacancy rates, low wages, and lack of access to affordable benefits. More than half of DSPs receive government funded assistance such as housing, energy, food, and healthcare. The pandemic made staffing even more difficult, increasing stress, expectations, and risk on those who remain in their positions. The report also highlights work and wage disparities for Black/African American workers. And it documents DSPs’ reports of significant depression, behavior issues, and loneliness among the people with disabilities they support.

Read the full report at [z.umn.edu/dsp-covid19](https://z.umn.edu/dsp-covid19).



## ICI Leads Transition Work

The Institute on Community Integration will lead a Project of National Significance from the Administration on Community Living designed to increase independence of Minnesota's youth and create pathways to post-secondary education and employment.

Under the five-year, \$1.4 million award, the Institute will collaborate with Minnesota's Departments of Employment and Economic Security, Education, and Human Services; three local education agencies; several community-based employment and self-advocacy organizations; the Minnesota Inclusive Higher Education Consortium, and Utah State University.

The project—[\*A Community-Based Collaborative Transition Model for Minnesota Youth with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(IDD\)\*](#)—will use a number of collaborative approaches to engage diverse community stakeholders. The team will develop a tiered framework for youth with disabilities transitioning from high school to careers, higher education, and independent community living. The person-centered, inclusive, culturally responsive framework will be designed to address the economic and educational needs of Minnesota communities. The framework will be piloted in three transition programs, in the Minneapolis, Stearns-Benton, and Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan public school districts.

“Interest in this work from state, educational, and community agencies was quite

high and exceeded our expectations,” said [Renáta Tichá](#), principal investigator of the project. “The work will support the self-determination and empowerment of youth with IDD to pursue their life goals.”

Worker shortages in many areas of the economy, along with an increasing portion of jobs requiring post-secondary education, bring urgency to the project, said [Brian Abery](#), co-principal investigator.

“This project provides us with the opportunity to replace one-size-fits-all transition services with an individualized, person-centered approach that increases the quality of life of young Minnesota adults with IDD.”



## October is Disability Employment Awareness Month

Five evenings each week, Rodney Sutherland takes a taxi to his job cleaning administrative offices and breakrooms for drivers at the Duluth Transit Authority. He likes chatting with the drivers and office workers, and he really likes going out to eat with friends with the money he earns.

“My favorite taxi driver is Erica,” said Sutherland, who was born with Down syndrome and has some visual impairments. “I like being independent, and getting

to work on my own.”

As employers struggle to fill vacant jobs and increasingly consider diversity and inclusion in their hiring practices, the theme for this year’s National Disability Employment Awareness Month is “[America’s Recovery: Powered by Inclusion](#).” The observance honors the contributions of people with disabilities in the American workplace.

When Sutherland was a young child, his father worked at the DTA and often brought Sutherland to the transit center to enjoy the bustling atmosphere. Once he became an employee, he had to learn not only about janitorial work, but also about how to get along socially in the office. Even hiring a taxi—and alerting drivers when they take him to the wrong facility—are accomplishments that some of his family members never dreamed he’d achieve. After starting at just a few hours a week, Sutherland now works 20 hours and was named Employee of the Month earlier this year.

“Rodney’s professionalism has gone through the roof since he started this job in February,” said Casey Lozon, career and life coach manager at Udac, Inc., a disability service organization that is working to place people with disabilities in jobs in their communities.

For more than a decade after high school, Sutherland worked in the mailing and shredding room at Udac under Labor Department rules allowing contract work performed by people with disabilities to pay below the minimum wage. The goal was to provide jobs and training in a safe environment for people with disabilities, who could then use the experience as a stepping stone to paid employment in the community. In recent years, however, disability advocates have been calling for an end to subminimum wages, arguing that the work was not leading to good jobs.

But switching to competitive employment involves highly individualized training and lots of staff time. In Sutherland’s case, that meant learning proper cleaning procedures and how to take a taxi by himself, as well as soft skills, such as knocking first before entering offices and respecting when co-workers need to focus and can’t socialize. Once that investment is made, however, it keeps paying off.

“We started treating Rodney as a professional. Instead of him telling his career coach the things that he needed, we worked on having him communicate directly with the employer about supplies that he needs or vacation requests,” said Ann

Dahl, Udac's operations director. "Doing that eventually changed his view of what this job is all about, and he realized he needed to up his game. We gave him training and task lists, but then we backed off and let him do the job."

Like many other service providers across the country, Udac had begun transitioning away from group contract work. After the pandemic forced an abrupt closure of its facility in early 2020, the transition became a hard stop, said Karen Herman, executive director at Udac.

"After conversations with the board of directors and with legislators, we concluded that 14c [the regulatory code allowing subminimum wages for people with disabilities] was not our future," said Herman. "We closed programs and we started to rebuild. We are committed to the creation of community-based services and an organization that is a model for the future."

As part of that rebuilding, Herman connected with ICI Director [Amy Hewitt](#) and [Danielle Mahoehney](#), an ICI education program specialist with expertise in workforce development. Along with Don Lavin, a consultant in competitive integrated employment, the team provided support, planning, and guidance as Udac rebuilt its staff, gearing services to focus on finding and advancing careers, not just jobs, for people with disabilities.

"I don't think we could have done this as well or with as much confidence without the support ICI provides," Herman said. "Of course, no organization can make this kind of rapid change successfully without buy-in from the employees making it happen every day, so we brought back key members of our former team and invited them to help us fundamentally transform how we approach working with clients. The team's excitement and dedication to this process is a testament to their belief in the work we are doing."

Udac also transformed its senior program, emphasizing activities out in the community that go beyond tourist outings.

"Our senior program was very well respected and did great work, but when we asked ourselves, 'If we were aging in the community and didn't have Udac, what would we be doing?' we realized we needed to be engaging more with other seniors and community programs, and so we've begun interacting with senior centers much more."

For its competitive employment placements, Udac now has a roster of employers

who are embracing workers with disabilities as part of their organizations. Among them: Aramark, Culver's, EasyLiving Services, General Cleaning Corp., Grandma's Restaurant, Loll Designs, Roufs Property Maintenance, Sammy's Pizza and Deli Lakeside, Superior Nets, and Super One Foods Lakeside.

"Udac's organizational transformation has expanded its competitive, integrated employment services and they've had some great success stories in the past few months," said Mahoehny. "Change can be very difficult, but the staff is dedicated to making meaningful work happen for people with disabilities."

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## SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT



Featured on [ICI's Facebook](#) page in October 2021

"I love it when a person with a disability appears in a commercial simply as a member of society." John Paizis, founder of Performing Arts Studio West, shares how he built a studio for performers with disabilities and what he thinks of Hollywood's latest diversity moves.

Image: Caley Versfelt, an actress with a disability, sitting in a film director's chair.

## NEW RELEASES



## Policy Research Brief: Predictors of Annual Turnover Among Direct Support Professionals

Editor: [Quinn A Oteman](#)

Designer: [Connie J Burkhart](#)

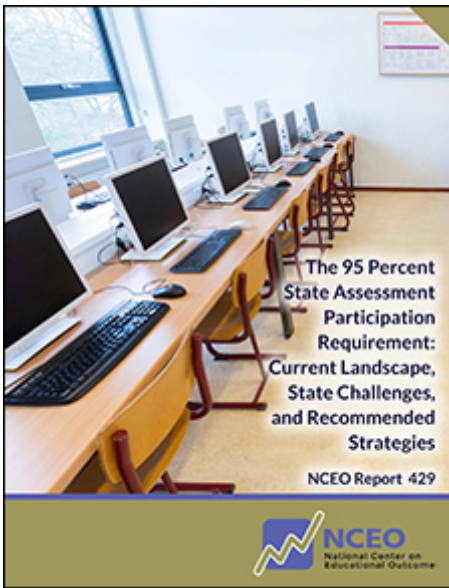
[This brief](#) contains findings from a recent study that was a first of its kind to look at both organizational- and state-level factors related to

turnover among direct support professionals (DSP), using data from the National Core Indicators (NCI) Staff Stability Survey. The study showed that factors associated with higher annual turnover are not limited to the organizations that employ DSPs, but also include state-level policies and factors that may be beyond the organization's control.

Organizational factors, such as offering higher hourly wages and health insurance benefits, were significant predictors of lower annual DSP turnover. State-level factors that predicted lower annual DSP turnover included a higher proportion of people in a given state receiving services in individual settings and very small group homes, plus higher per-capita Medicaid spending.

High turnover among DSP is a well-documented and increasingly critical issue. Provider organizations cannot solve the problem themselves. Solutions and interventions must include strategies at both the organizational- and state-level. This brief is part of a series published by ICI.

## NCEO Report 429: The 95 Percent State Assessment Participation Requirement: Current



# Landscape, State Challenges, and Recommended Strategies

Authors: Tiffany Katanyoutanant, Sylvia Kwon, Markie McNeilly, Bryan Hemberg, [Martha L Thurlow](#), [Sheryl Lazarus](#), [Andrew R Hinkle](#), and [Kristin K Liu](#)

[This report](#) provides an overview of federal statutory language on student participation in state summative assessments used for accountability as well as the participation requirements for states requesting waivers from

the 1% threshold on participation in the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS). It also includes a review of why it is important that students participate in testing, the reasons why some states have found it challenging to meet the 95% participation rate, and the extent to which states have met federal testing participation requirements. Part of a series published by ICI's National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO).



## NCEO Newsletter: October 2021 issue

[This issue](#) highlights the news of NCEO's continued funding. Also announced is NCEO's new website. It is easier to navigate and very user-friendly. Featured is NCEO's new accommodations toolkit which provides easy to use research summaries and policy analyses for select accommodations. This issue also summarizes a report on the 95% state assessment participation requirement, and provides an overview of a brief that contains

frequently asked questions on testing children with disabilities during the 2021–22 school year. Part of a series published by NCEO.

## School Leader Series Briefs



[These briefs](#) for school leaders focus on the inclusion of students with disabilities—including English learners with disabilities and students with significant cognitive disabilities—in assessment, and the academic instruction that preceded it. School leaders play a key role in creating and sustaining schools that meet the needs of all learners, including students with disabilities. A whole-school approach, where there is shared responsibility for supporting the learning and success of all students, creates a positive collaborative organization that leads to better outcomes. Published by NCEO and the

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

## ■ The Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)



CHECK &  
CONNECT

*Online  
Support  
Modules*



## Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) Module

Check & Connect published its sixth [online support module](#) on the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI). This self-paced online learning module focuses on how to use data from the SEI to enhance student engagement. After completing the module, learners will be able to recognize the purpose and uses of the SEI, interpret average total and subdomain scores of the SEI, and use data from the SEI to individualize interventions for students. Published by ICI's Check & Connect program.

Other learning modules can be found on the [Check & Connect Online Resources page](#).

## Journal Article Published

[Simacek, J.](#), Wattanawongwan, S., [Reichle, J.](#), Hyppa-Martin, J., Pierson, L., & [Dimian, A. F.](#) (2021). [Supporting aided augmentative and alternative communication interventions for individuals with complex communication needs via telepractice: A tutorial](#). *Perspectives of the American Speech-Language-Hearing-Association*.

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## EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

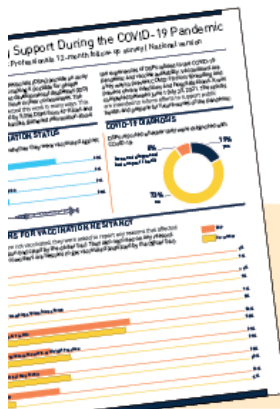


## 2021 Minnesota Gathering Goes Virtual

**October 27–28**

The Minnesota Gathering for Person-Centered Practices is an annual two-day event for individuals with disabilities and their family members, advocates, business partners, educational and community-based organizations who are interested in person-centered practices and positive behavioral supports. This year The Gathering is online only. The purpose of the event is to create connections,

dialog, share successes and learn together how we continue moving Minnesota in the direction of a being a person-centered place for people with disabilities to live. The Gathering celebrates its fifth year and honors how Minnesota has advanced person-centered practices. [The registration deadline is October 25.](#)



## National Report: More than a Quarter of Workers Still Unvaccinated

September 21, 2021



## Webinar: The Direct Support Workforce and COVID-19: What We Know and What We Need to Do

**November 10**

**11 a.m. Eastern Time**

Join ICI's [Megan Sanders](#) as she summarizes the results of a 12-month follow-up survey on the direct support workforce and their experiences supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This webinar is hosted by [DirectCourse](#).

Approximately 5,400 direct support professionals (DSPs) and frontline supervisors from across the country completed this survey. The initial survey in April 2020 and a six-month follow-up survey were each completed by approximately 9,000 respondents, making this the largest study ever conducted on the direct support workforce. Surveys were conducted by ICI and the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals. [Registration is open.](#)

## 2022 Virtual Check & Connect Conference: Attend, Engage, Invest!

**February 23–24, 2022**

**11:30 am–3:00 pm Central Time**

The conference aims to support the needs of the Check & Connect implementation community. Topics include promoting mentor development, deepening the understanding of student engagement, strengthening program implementation, sharing successful strategies, and lessons learned.

The keynote speakers will be Drs. Adam Sáenz and Jean Rhodes. Sáenz, a psychologist and the CEO of Applied EQ Group, will speak about the power of relationships. Rhodes is the Frank L. Boyden Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and the lead researcher for the *Chronicle for Evidence-Based Mentoring*. She will share her findings and conclusions on the future of mentoring. [Registration is open.](#)



**CHECK &  
CONNECT**

## Seeking Participants with Disabilities for Research Study of New HCBS Outcome Measures

Getting services at home or in the community is important for people with disabilities and their providers. ICI's Research and Training Center on HCBS Outcome Measurement (RTC-OM) has developed measures on how well Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) help people with disabilities live the lives they want. [RTC-OM researchers want to talk to people with disabilities \(via Zoom or in person\) to make sure these measures provide information that improves services in ways that matter \(e.g., social connectedness, meaningful activities\).](#) Participants must be 18 years or older, have a disability and receive services or supports for it, provide participation consent or assent (if not their own legal guardian), and be willing to take part in a 60–90 minute interview. Participants will be interviewed three times over a year period. Each participant will receive a \$10 gift card.



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If you think some of the people you support might be interested or have questions about this work, please contact [Matt Roberts](#).

## Seeking Service Provider Organizations for Research Studies

### Technology

RTC-CL is seeking interested provider organizations that serve adults with IDD to take part in a study to evaluate the use of smart living technologies (e.g., motion sensors, communication technologies, assistive technologies) on outcomes of adults with IDD.

The study aims to find out what types of technologies are now being used to support people with IDD and how they improve the well-being, independence, self-determination, and social connectedness of adults with IDD.

The study would provide your organization with an opportunity to learn more about how smart living technologies support the people your organization serves. All study activities have moved online because of the pandemic.

Interested? Contact [Brian Abery](#).



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## STAFF UPDATES

**Muna Khalif.** [Khalif](#) has been elected a board member of the Association for Positive Behavior Support (APBS). She is a founding member of the Equity Committee at APBS, and has supported the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Ad Hoc and Public Awareness and Dissemination committees. Khalif's three-year term on the APBS board begins in April 2022.



**Amy Hewitt.** On September 13, [Hewitt](#) presented, "Providing Direct Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic: National Survey Review," at the 2021 National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) National Conference. The recorded session is available to view at <https://vimeo.com/609953282>. On October 13, Hewitt spoke on, "From Data to Solutions: Implications of the 2020 DSP Workforce Survey," at ANCOR's 2021 Policy Summit.

**Chet Tschetter and Julie Kramme.** On September 15, [Tschetter](#) and [Kramme](#) presented, "Always Fresh, Always Relevant: *Frontline Initiative*," at the 2021 NADSP National Conference. The recorded session is available to view at <https://vimeo.com/610823078>.

**Jessica Simacek, Tim Moore, Seunghee Lee, Adele Dimian, and Rachel Freeman.** On September 16, [Simacek](#), [Moore](#), [Lee](#), [Dimian](#), and [Freeman](#) registered a meta-analysis on interventions for supporting children and young people who engage in self-injury with the Open Science Foundation.



**Jerry Smith** and **Amy Hewitt**. On September 23, [Smith](#) (pictured) facilitated a panel discussion following a screening of the ICI film *Invaluable: The Unrecognized Profession of Direct Support*, hosted by Prince George's Provider Council in Maryland. On September 28, Smith, [Hewitt](#), and Joe Macbeth (President and CEO of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals) presented results from the Direct Support Workforce and COVID-19 National Report at the virtual Arc Convention.

**Janet Stewart**. On September 24, [Stewart](#) presented, “Making *Impact*: Covering Disability, Workforce, and Disasters for ICI,” to the Association of Liberian Journalists in the Americas’ National Convention. In a media workshop, she gave a brief overview of ICI publications, delving into the making of two recent issues of *Impact*, which focused on the Self-Advocacy Movement and crisis management for people with disabilities.



**Rachel Freeman**. [Freeman](#) is consulting on a PBS Delphi Study for the Australian Government’s National Disability Insurance Scheme’s (NDIS) Quality and Safeguards Commission as part of the development of a national curriculum framework to support practitioners and others working with those who engage in challenging behaviors.



**National Center on Educational Outcomes**. On October 1, ICI’s [National Center on Educational Outcomes](#) (NCEO) was funded for another five years by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education.

The total award amount is \$8.5 million over the five-year period. [Sheryl Lazarus](#) is NCEO's principal investigator.

**Jan Šiška.** On October 6, ICI welcomed Šiška, a Fulbright-Masaryk scholar from Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. Under the guidance of Renáta Tichá, he will spend 10 months at ICI, researching inclusive education, transition, and community living of young adults and adults with disabilities.



**Renáta Tichá and Brian Abery.** On October 7, [Tichá](#) (PI) and [Abery](#) (Co-PI) began work on “Developing Regenerative Societies Through Inclusion and Diversity: A U.S.-Singapore Project to Support Youth with Disabilities and Their Families in Transition from School to the Community.” This 14-month project is funded by the U.S. Department of State via the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Singapore.

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## ALUMNI UPDATE

### Kathryn Anderson

Kathryn Anderson ([MNLEND](#), 2016–18), the first dental student to complete ICI's MNLEND fellowship, is now a practicing dentist in the Minneapolis area, predominantly serving patients with complex care needs.

Anderson joined Apple Tree Dental's Mounds View location in 2019 after completing a hospital dentistry residency at University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Recently, she also began seeing patients at Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare Dental Clinic in St. Paul.

About 80 percent of Anderson's practice is devoted to children and adults with physical, cognitive, and developmental disabilities who often require sedation, anesthesia, or alternative treatment approaches.

“It’s rewarding to be involved with this type of practice because there is such a need for this work,” Anderson said. “I enjoy figuring out how best to serve each patient, and finding clinics that are able to accommodate the need for extra time and resources has been critical to my work.”



Completing the MNLEND fellowship during dental school at University of Minnesota helped Anderson hone the interpersonal skills she needed to succeed in helping patients, she said.

“I’ve always been observant and an outside-the-box thinker, but the fellowship gave me the communication skills to help patients feel included in their care, and to work with family members and support staff,” she said. “Sometimes, families come in after years of difficulty in finding a provider who can meet their needs, and there are some preconceived notions. My job is to take a step back and assess the whole person and what their needs are today and not let past experiences dictate where we go.”

In certain situations, for example, sedation can be avoided with distraction techniques or modifications to treatment.

“It’s important to have that flexibility and be able to meet patients where they are,” she said.

During her MNLEND experience, Anderson worked on a community project to create flyers and brochures that helped smooth the transition from pediatric to adult dentistry for patients with neurodevelopmental disabilities. She also has volunteered frequently for Special Smiles, which provides free dental screenings and information to Special Olympics athletes.

“I was really proud that after I presented about my LEND fellowship, two more dental students were selected for MNLEND,” she said. “That trickle-down effect is

what we need in dentistry, and LEND is a huge part of that. Creating change is one thing, but sustaining it is another and LEND is a great launchpad.”

Anderson is also now the mother of two daughters, Zoa and Bea. Bea, who recently turned 1, is sporting two baby teeth.

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This email was sent to ICI staff by Institute on Community Integration, 1-337 MIDB, 2025 East River Parkway, Minneapolis, MN, 55414, USA. The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

[mass email privacy statement](#)

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The University of Minnesota stands on *Miní Sóta Makhóche*, the rightful homelands of the *Dakhóta Oyáte*. ICI recognizes that the U.S. did not uphold its end of these land treaties. It is the current and continued displacement of the *Dakhóta Oyáte* that allows the University to remain today. At ICI, we affirm our commitment to address systemic racism, ableism and all other inequalities and forms of oppression to ensure inclusive communities.