Who We Are

In the U.S. close to 6 million individuals have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Over 40 million people experience limitations affecting one or more areas of their lives. Still others are at-risk as a consequence of neglect and limited opportunity during childhood.

Through collaborative research, training, and outreach, the Institute on Community Integration (ICI) improves policies and practices to ensure that all children, youth, and adults with disabilities are valued by, and contribute to, their communities of choice. As a member of the Association of University Centers on Disability, we serve as a resource for all people in areas of education, research, and service relative to the needs of people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities and those at-risk. We work with service providers, policymakers, educators, advocacy and self-advocacy organizations, researchers, families, and individuals with disabilities around the world to provide state-of-the-art information and practices that support the community inclusion of people with disabilities.

At ICI, we conduct this work through five program areas that cover the lifespan (see graphic below). The 65-plus projects and six affiliated centers within those areas are led by renowned experts who have helped shape a history of significant advancement in the disability field. At ICI, we envision new ways in which to connect policymakers, professionals in a wide range of fields, and individuals with disabilities and their families to our work through skilled technical assistance, innovative communication approaches, and accessible online strategies that broaden our partnerships with agencies and individuals at every level.

We are driven by a mission that all people with disabilities have the opportunity to be participating members in their communities of choice. ICI works in partnership with collaborators from around the world to keep in touch with the needs of individuals, families, and communities, and to build capacity for agencies and programs to provide quality services and supports.
EARLY INTERVENTION + ASD

Working to provide rich training programs for University of Minnesota students and community leaders; robust autism spectrum disorder (ASD) research in underserved communities; tracking rates and trends in ASD prevalence; education about the importance of early identification and intervention; knowledge for parents about early developmental milestones; and data on transition, community living, and employment outcomes of individuals with ASD.

“Research tells us that early diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and early intervention can change a child’s developmental trajectory and increase positive life outcomes for children and families. The MN Act Early team supports the development of a strong network of parent community leaders in culturally and linguistically diverse communities of Minnesota to enact this positive change through parent education and outreach about ASD.”

Jennifer Hall-Lande, Principal Investigator, MN Act Early Project

“Being a former MN LEND Fellow has tremendously influenced my work. Through my experience with MN LEND, I established a robust network of relevant autism stakeholders from all kinds of disciplines in the Twin Cities and Minnesota. In my current position with the State, I have continued my relationship with this community network, especially autism treatment centers who graciously opened their doors for my trainings.”

Miriam Egal, Former MN LEND Fellow

Learn more: z.umn.edu/ici-early-intervention-asd
EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT + INTERVENTION

Working to provide leadership in designing and building educational assessment and accountability systems that monitor results for all students, including students with disabilities and English learners (ELs); developing and implementing classroom-based formative assessment processes and intervention systems that provide feedback used to adjust instruction to improve student learning; and delivering training, technical assistance, program development, and evaluation to promote effective implementation of inclusive education practices.

“Building international communities of learning that support the inclusive education of students with disabilities and special needs will go a long way towards supporting life-long inclusion and a higher quality of life for these individuals.”

Brian Abery, Co-Director, Global Resource Center on Inclusive Education

“The TIES Center, our National Technical Assistance Center on Inclusive Practices and Policies, is an exciting opportunity for NCEO to do important work for the inclusion of students with significant cognitive disabilities.”

Sheryl Lazarus, Principal Investigator, TIES Center, and Senior Research Associate, National Center on Educational Outcomes

Learn more: z.umn.edu/ici-educational-assessment-intervention
EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT

Working to provide technical assistance and dissemination support to state education and lead agencies as they seek to sustain systems change efforts that improve educational results and accountability for children and youth with disabilities and their families.

“The approach taken by our Systems Improvement Group staff is to listen very carefully to what clients want and need in order to address challenging evaluation and systems-improvement issues. As such, the client is an active collaborator in developing creative and innovative solutions.”

Maureen Hawes, Co-Director, Systems Improvement Group

“We know the needs are great in U.S. states and territories. They can’t afford to wait for assistance, and neither can children and youth with disabilities and their families. The Systems Improvement Group is ready to help with knowledgeable expertise and training.”

Michael Sharpe, Co-Director, Systems Improvement Group

Learn more: z.umn.edu/ici-educational-systems-improvement
TRANSITION

Working to improve access and success for students with disabilities in secondary and postsecondary education, as well as employment, independent living, and community participation.

“Check & Connect is an evidence-based mentoring intervention for students who show signs of disengagement and are at risk of dropping out of school. It was originally designed for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities and/or learning disabilities, but is now utilized with all youth. By training mentors in the critical components of the intervention, and coordinators to support fidelity of implementation, we are ensuring that more youth are successful both in school and beyond.”

Eileen Klemm, Manager, ICI Transition Program Area

“Minnesota ranks 49th out of 50 states in American Indian graduation. We developed a curriculum called Expanding the Circle: Respecting the Past, Preparing for the Future, which is focused on improving graduation rates and helping American Indian students achieve their goals for the future. This landmark educational tool helps students learn more about their culture, practice skills needed for college and adult life, and strengthen their ability to explore career paths and to share their story with peers.”

Jean Echternacht, Research Associate (Retired), ICI

Learn more: z.umn.edu/ici-transition
COMMUNITY LIVING

Working to promote the inclusion and full participation of people with disabilities in the communities of their choice. Staff engage in research, training, and technical assistance in a broad range of topics, which include housing and residential services, direct support workforce development, person-centered planning, self-determination, social inclusion, employment, and the improvement of home and community-based services outcome measurement.

“This project funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services will deliver training in person- and family-centered practices to professionals who work with people who need support for community living due to mental health conditions and/or substance use. Training professionals in these practices will help realize the vision of person-centered support expressed in the Minnesota Olmstead Plan.”

Amy Hewitt, Principal Investigator for the Developing and Engaging Training on Person-Centered and Family-Centered Approaches in Mental Health and Co-occurring Disorders Project, and Director, Research and Training Center on Community Living

“The research findings, innovative programming, and hands-on training curricula from ICI have touched the lives of self-advocates, families, and direct care staff across the world. Because of the Institute, people have been connected with resources to give them greater independence, direct support professionals and families have been given tools to make life in the community a reality for those they support, and the public has been informed of inclusion’s benefits through concrete data generated by rigorous research.”

Don Lavin, Executive Director, The Arc Minnesota, and longtime partner with ICI

Learn more: z.umn.edu/ici-community-living
What We Do

RESEARCH
Through applied research conducted in collaboration with organizations, agencies, colleges and universities around the world, ICI seeks a clearer understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities, those at-risk, and their families. ICI research addresses concerns as diverse as service outcomes, health care coordination, social inclusion, employment, postsecondary education, and alternate assessments for K-12 students with disabilities. We share this leading-edge knowledge and practice worldwide through more than 400 newsletters, research reports, curricula, resource guides, manuals, websites, DVDs, and online products, in addition to staff publication of books and journal articles that offer unparalleled expertise.

TRAINING
ICI offers interdisciplinary training for University students, professionals, individuals with disabilities and their families. On the University of Minnesota campus, the Certificate in Disability Policy and Services (a collaboration between ICI and the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development) allows graduate students and community members to study emerging trends, policies, and services that affect the lives of individuals with disabilities across the lifespan. The Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Program (MN LEND) spans 16 academic disciplines across the University of Minnesota and engages community members as well. MN LEND prepares future leaders who will support children with autism spectrum disorder and other neurodevelopmental and related disabilities, and their families, in healthcare, education, human services, and policy settings. ICI further extends its global training expertise through efforts ranging from K-12 training for school personnel who implement student engagement interventions such as the Check & Connect model, to instructional partnerships with educators in a dozen nations to improve the education of students with disabilities and promote community participation and inclusion for people with disabilities. Through web-based applications such as DirectCourse, ICI equips professionals — including the direct support workforce — to improve practices in community human services.

OUTREACH
ICI conducts a wide range of consultation and evaluation services that enhance the capacity of existing agencies and programs to serve persons with disabilities, those at-risk, and their families. We provide technical assistance and widely disseminate information to local, state, and national agencies; associations and consortia; service providers; and advocacy organizations in the education, human services, and disability fields. We have the expertise to offer contracted evaluations to programs and agencies, as well as assist with implementation and evaluation of new approaches that demonstrate and test model practices.