GOAL 1: Employment

ND citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have access to information, experiences, and supports that allow them to be successful in the general workforce.

GOAL 2: Aging

ND citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities will experience highest levels of quality of life and self-direction as part of healthy aging.

GOAL 3: Educational and Early Childhood

ND children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have quality education and early childhood services and systems.

GOAL 4: Health

ND citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities will have improved quality and access to health services, systems, and information.

Executive Director’s Report

I am happy to present the 2017-2018 annual community report of the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities, a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. As part of a national network of 67 university centers, we are proud to share our accomplishments over the last year.

All UCEDDs are required to address community services, technical assistance and community training; research, information dissemination, and interdisciplinary pre-service education in a comprehensive five-year plan. NDCPD's 2017-2018 plan centered on four key areas: employment for people with disabilities, access to and information about health and health care; aging and disability issues, and education and early intervention, especially for under-served populations in our rural state. NDCPD staff made significant progress in these areas and the following is just a glimpse of the work of our faculty and staff.

Employment for People with Disabilities

A cornerstone of a successful quality of life is employment. This past year, NDCPD staff worked with state and national partners on Customized Employment. This community-based initiative centers on supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to seek, obtain and remain in community employment with pay at or above the minimum wage. We are especially proud of the work done with the North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation office and the North Dakota Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Division in piloting customized employment strategies in four state provider agencies. The results show how an early investment of discovery, job matching and on-site support can put people to work in our communities.

Health and Disability

North Dakota citizens with disabilities were supported in many ways to understand and then access quality health services and health information. The Affordable Care Act Navigator Project and the Benefits Enrollment Counseling Project both provided high quality information and assistance to persons with disabilities so they could make informed decisions about health insurance and health care. Further, staff worked closely with the ND State Council on Developmental Disabilities to teach healthy eating strategies to youth and adults with disabilities as well as sponsoring a statewide health conference for persons with disabilities and their families and providers. The use of technology applications and highly interactive presentations made an impact on the participants.

(Continued on next page)
Kenya ADA International Inclusion Fellowship

NDCPD provided technical assistance and support to entities beyond North Dakota’s borders by participating in an ADA International Inclusion Fellowship. This fellowship was part of the Professional Fellows Program offered by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) and the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston (ICI).

Mr. Martin Kavua from Nairobi, Kenya, spent three weeks in May of 2017 at NDCPD. Dr. Evan Borisinkoff, Asst. Professor of Special Education and Director for Research and Evaluation at NDCPD, and his family, hosted Mr. Kavua. While in ND, Mr. Kavua visited local schools, where he saw the impact of Universal Design for Instruction and Learning (UDIL). This is a powerful strategy to engage students and have them demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do.

In March 2018, Dr. Borisinkoff travelled to Nairobi where he helped Mr. Kavua implement a train-the-trainer model of instruction. Together they taught lecturers from the Kenya Institute on Special Education (KISE) on strategies of UDIL. Mr. Kavua has already noted that the project has had a “carry forward” effect in the professional development of teachers. This opportunity allowed Mr. Kavua to be promoted from his position of lecturer at KISE to the Ministry of Education at the Directorate of Special Needs Education as a Chief Education Officer in Nairobi. Mr. Kavua believes that his experience at NDCPD will transform the way his country trains educators who work with children of all ages with disabilities.

Aging and Disabilities
Understanding the challenges of aging, and preparing for successful supports in aging, were the focus of this past year. NDCPD staff supported individuals in their understanding of Medicare and Medicaid rules and procedures, and helped in preventing scams and abuse in the system. Staff and trainees gathered research data on falls prevention programs and supports for the elderly and those with disabilities. Further, staff worked to assure that those who were aging and homeless received appropriate housing and community supports in several communities across the state.

Education and Early Intervention
Not all children and youth with disabilities receive the same high quality education, services and supports. In some cases, the services are not available due to lack of trained personnel. In other cases educators are not always aware of effective and evidence-based instructional strategies. This past year NDCPD worked to level the playing field for our children. Staff initiated a new partnership project with the Turtle Mountain Community College to attract and prepare local adults and youth to serve as community disability support providers. In addition, staff provided numerous hours of direct mental health support to rural head start programs and provided additional hours of professional development to improve the education of underserved children.

These accomplishments are amazing, but they are just a small part of the amazing work of the NDCPD staff. With over 30 externally funded projects staff reach out to every county in the state. But our work is not done. There is more training to do, more research to conduct, more professionals to prepare, and more information to distribute. We certainly celebrate this past year; but look forward to making more progress on the critical issues that impact the lives of North Dakota citizens with disabilities and their families.

Brent A. Askvig, Ph.D.
Executive Director

ASTEP Advancing Student Transition into Educational Programs

The ASTEP program will have an all-time high enrollment of 17 students for the fall 2018 semester attending the inclusive post-secondary education program for students with intellectual disabilities at Minot State University. Of the 17 students, 12 new students will be joining five returning students. Students from across North Dakota and Montana will be returning to campus fall semester.
Youth with disabilities going to work and advancing their education. Financial stability. Youth and families being more independent. Dream! Act! Achieve! This is what ASPIRE is all about!

Factors associated with increased employment, educational and independent living outcomes include:

1. Self-determination – modifiable predictor of improved post-secondary outcomes
2. Expectations and encouragement from parents
3. Pre-employment activities and high school employment experiences (paid and unpaid work)

Sixty-two percent of North Dakota ASPIRE youth have worked for pay in community employment since enrolling in the program.

Parents of youth in ASPIRE services have a greater expectation that their child will live independently, attend school after high school, and go to work, as compared to their expectations at enrollment.

The ND CSTP is the statewide mandated curriculum for Direct Support and other Professionals employed at licensed DD Provider agencies in ND. The Department of Human Services-Development Disabilities Division contracts with NDCPD to implement a training program based on a series of six core training modules, 35 elective modules, and a variety of field-based practica. The program requires completion of core learning modules, with options to continue with advance certification and degree attainment. For the 2017/18 fiscal year, 403 certificates were awarded to DSPs in ND for module certification, 24 DSPs were awarded advanced certification. One of the key attributes of the CSTP is a network of 43 staff trainers who are employed within the community DD provider agencies and coordinate the training within the agencies.

One adult said they had never used an iPad prior to the project and had been hesitant to try learning how to use the technology. After being shown how to use the “Fill Your Plate with Color” app this participant stated, “I actually finally learned how to use this (an iPad) because before I didn’t know how … now I want to try using it for other things!” Another participant stated the app “had a good video that would help me make good decisions about what to buy at the grocery store next time I go shopping … I know things like what is a protein.”

All of the people who participated in the project received a plastic USDA food guidelines plate to help them with their future meal planning as well as a copy of the curriculum they could take home to study more and use with their friends and staff members.

This project was a huge success! The students who participated were engaged in the curriculum and their enthusiasm showed each time we met to discuss healthy and nutritional eating. Students appeared excited and preliminary analyses indicated that their knowledge of healthy eating improved over time as the project measured participants’ pre and post-test knowledge. The majority of students were also able to build a healthy plate of food when presented with several healthy and not so healthy food choices from a buffet style setup.

The adults with disabilities also benefited from the training and appeared to enjoy having conversations about what constituted making healthy and nutritional food choices. One female from HAV-IT in Harvey was chosen to participate in the project because she had been working on eating healthier and for medical reasons. Project staff noted that she had lost nearly 50 pounds in one year and that the curriculum had been an integral part of her weight loss. Staff noted that she hadn’t been eating vegetables or fruits prior to the training but with exposure to and trying new foods she was able to increase her intake of fruits and vegetables. Staff also noted she exercised more and when in the grocery store started to look at nutritional labels on packaging.

When participants were asked what they liked best about participating in the project they said they enjoyed learning about eating healthy food and receiving instruction about an important topic.
ND Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Expanding Supported Employment

The VR Expanding Supported Employment project builds capacity within ND to deliver customized employment services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities that lead to integrated and competitive employment opportunities for those currently enrolled in Day Supports and/or employed in non-integrated environments.

Here is a quote from a job candidate’s mother expressing her thoughts after her son gained competitive integrated employment: “I have known my son his whole life and did not know what he could do and had been able to do until I saw it for myself.” Previously, it was believed that this job candidate would never be successful working in the community. He has been with the same employer for over a year now and was awarded the 2018 ND Association of People Supporting Employment, Best of the Best.

“[I] took a chance on me.”

This job candidate was told she was not able to learn, not able to work in the community, and would live in a group home the rest of her life. Here she explains how this project has impacted her despite the negative feedback she was getting: “Being part of this project helped me to build confidence, I started standing up for myself, I fired part of my team, and I got my first job in the community!” She presented at the 2018 National Association of People Supporting Employment Conference in Orlando, FL.

Active Support and System Change Project

The Active Support and System Change project has trained 26 provider agencies to assure that people with I/DD are actively and consistently engaged in meaningful activities throughout the day.

Success Stories

One provider supported people to be actively engaged by planting and caring for a community garden. Soon people with I/DD met master gardeners from the community. Staff took a step back as the people they supported exchanged information and socialized while pulling weeds and watering plants. The relationships that formed resulted in a significant increase in confidence and social communication.

Another provider created Fishing Mania, where residents learned to drill the holes for ice fishing, hook the bait, etc. Points were awarded for fish that were keepers or throwbacks, and a fish fry was planned at the end of the season.

ND Center for Persons with Disabilities

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NDPCD Mission: To provide service, education, and research which empowers communities to welcome, value and support the well-being and quality of life for people of all ages and abilities.