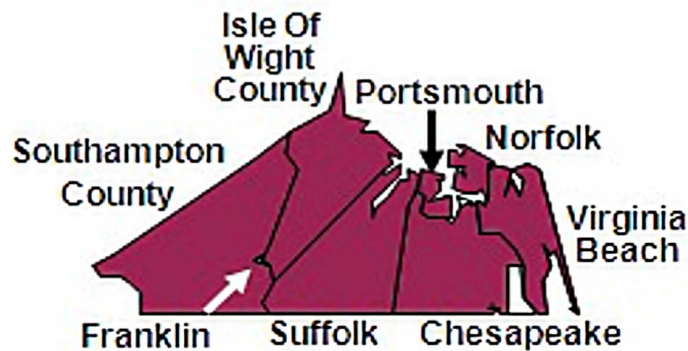


# Endeppendence Center, Inc.



## 2010 Annual Report

October 2009 - September 2010



**“Opening Doors To Opportunities”**

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## ***Community Message***

As we approach our 30 year anniversary of services in South Hampton Roads, the Endependence Center continues to prioritize and provide community advocacy and direct services that support the issue of deinstitutionalization. Many individuals with disabilities were moved out of nursing homes into the community with the supports they need and many were prevented from having to go into a nursing home during the past year.

During 2010, ECI expanded services and provided outreach to the outlying counties in our catchment area and we are hoping to more fully serve the western Tidewater area. Our 2010 Annual Meeting was sponsored by Amerigroup and provided a very positive message to the community as individuals with disabilities who had made the transition from institution to the community spoke of how this impacted their life and future. ECI also held a celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act to increase awareness in support of this very important civil rights legislation.

The Center staff and Board thanks the community for your support and we look forward to working together in the future as we continue to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

## ***Mission***

The Endependence Center, Incorporated (ECI) is a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, non-residential, private, non-profit Center for Independent Living (CIL) operated by and for individuals with disabilities in South Hampton Roads. The purposes of ECI are to prepare individuals and to prepare the community for full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society. These goals are accomplished by the following strategies: (1) the provision of direct services to individuals with significant disabilities that result in a greater level of independence and community integration/functioning, (2) the provision of services/advocacy in the community that result in a greater awareness of disability issues, physical and programmatic accessibility and systems change.

As a consumer-controlled organization, the majority of staff and Board Members are people with disabilities. All services, training and advocacy are provided supporting the philosophy that persons with disabilities should control the services they utilize that facilitate independence and community integration.

## ***Core Services***

- Advocacy
- Peer Mentoring
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Information and Referral

## ***Service Highlights***

During the past year, the following services were provided:

- 8,240 Individuals with disabilities received direct services
- 2,293 Independent Living goals were accomplished by Center Participants

Hours of services directly provided to individuals with disabilities:

- 8,217 Individual Advocacy
- 1,318 Peer Mentoring Services
- 1,449 Independent Living Skills Training
  - 837 Housing, Home Modifications
  - 130 Assistive Devices/Equipment Services
  - 281 Information & Referral Services to Center participants
  - 647 Socialization Services
- 2,281 Transportation Services
- 335 Other Services

Hours of Community Activities Provided:

- 4,211 Community Information & Referral
- 2,894 Collaboration/Networking
- 1,979 Information & Referral
- 1,741 Community Education & Public Information
- 1,769 Community/Systems Advocacy
  - 471 Outreach Efforts
  - 153 Technical Assistance
  - 675 Volunteer

## ***Funding***

### Public Support and Revenue

|                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Federal Government                    | 46% |
| State Government                      | 15% |
| Local Government                      | 10% |
| Other Grants, Contracts & Fundraising | 29% |

### Expenses

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Services to Individual Consumers | 43% |
| Community Services               | 33% |
| Management & General             | 24% |

2009-2010 Operating Revenues: \$1,843,000

## ***Staff and Board Members (April 2011)***

### **Staff**

#### Administration

Stephen Johnson, Executive Director  
Maureen Hollowell, Director of Advocacy and Services  
Amadeo San Antonio, Finance Director  
Cheryl Simpson, Operations Manager

#### Administrative Support

Carol Crabill, Executive Assistant  
Stacey Jones, Receptionist/Admin Assistant  
Tammy Manno, Administrative Assistant  
Iris Morris, Administrative Assistant  
Jennifer Nelson, Accounting Clerk  
Pandora Rosenquest-Franco, Administrative Assistant  
Lonnie Sublett, Network Administrator

#### Independent Living Coordinators

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Felicia Brown    | Sharon Franklin |
| Vantoria Clay    | Kelly Gonzalez  |
| Tecia Cogdell    | Cassandra Hall  |
| Esther Dickerson | Linda Johnson   |
| Lisbet Dula      | Erin King       |
| Frances Durham   | Rena Lewis      |
| Debbie Eddings   | Michelle Liddie |
| Brenda Estes     | Paige Shaw      |
| Emily Fisher     | Cheryl Ward     |

### **Board of Directors**

Michael Wang, President  
Chris Dailey, Vice-President  
Linda Dew, Treasurer

Kathleen Blanchard  
Lisa DeMascio  
Malcolm Higgins  
Samuel Painter  
Tom Swanston

#### Ex-Officio:

Stephen Johnson  
Carmen Mendez

## ***Peer Mentoring***

Participants work with staff with a disability to identify and reach their independent living goals. ECI Coordinators act as role models, and provide information, support and personal independent living experience as the participant works toward their goals. An Independent Living support group is offered once a month and provides an additional peer networking opportunity to discuss disability adjustment and independent living issues with peers across a range of ages and disability types. This peer empowerment model is based on the belief that a mentor with shared life experience is the best guide to independence.

A college student with a developmental physical disability had to drop out of school when he became homeless and ended up living with friends in inaccessible housing. Through peer mentoring and information and referral, they were able to apply for a variety of subsidized housing options and moved into a wheelchair accessible apartment to live independently. They were advised of environmental modifications to make their apartment more accessible for them and of funding for the modifications. They were provided information about their options with services through their Medicaid and other resources to support them to self identify what they need to continue to increase their level of independence and to reach their goal to start classes again next semester.

## ***Independent Living Skills Advocacy Training***

Trainings on skills for independent living are offered in group and individual settings to build skills and help in reaching goals. Some examples of the types of trainings that participants request are how to live in the community independently, budgeting, emergency preparedness, applying for and obtaining housing, transportation options, how to schedule transportation, learning about their rights and how to advocate for change.

The Advocacy Group is composed of participants, other community advocates and staff. Our goal is to advocate making our community more accessible. The Advocacy Group worked on a project to encourage accessible taxi services to the Hampton Roads area. They also were responsible for helping to plan and organize the Center's Americans with Disabilities Act 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration that occurred in July of 2010. More than 100 persons with disabilities, disability organization representatives and City officials attended. Virginia Beach Mayor William D. Sessoms, Jr. provided welcoming remarks.

## ***Information & Referral***

Is a core service that provides the public with resources in the community to promote independent living or to facilitate independent living skills. Information is provided on a multitude of different topics to include housing, financial assistance, assistive technology, Medicaid, education, civil rights, transportation and referrals are made to organizations as appropriate. ECI staff provided information about the Virginia New Well Fund where persons with disabilities can apply for a low interest secured loan to pay for assistive technology, adapted vehicles and other disability related equipment.

ECI has joined the social networking phenomena and gone global by making our presence known on Facebook. This opportunity to adapt with the times and stay in touch with our participants as well as improve our outreach and networking capabilities has proven to be a success.

## ***Housing Advocacy***

ECI received a grant from the SILC to increase awareness concerning the housing needs of persons with disabilities. ECI continues to advocate for the expansion of integrated, affordable, accessible housing by participating in the local housing planning processes implemented by the local public housing agencies and the local community planning and development offices. Advocating to local offices to include data on transitioning individuals with disabilities within the local Consolidated Plans, City of Chesapeake has incorporated this data within their plan. After providing needs assessment for their Agency Plan development, Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA) plans to incorporate universal design and provide more than the minimum required number of accessible units for their proposed housing projects. Through networking with the City of Virginia Beach Department of Housing, they held a public meeting at the Center to receive input from participants on their housing needs.

After collaborating with Chesapeake Redevelopment and Housing Authority (CRHA), NRHA, Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority (PRHA) and Virginia Beach Department of Housing on submitting Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) applications for vouchers targeting non-elderly individuals with disabilities and institutionalized individuals who are transitioning, NRHA and PRHA together were awarded a total of 243 new vouchers targeting people with disabilities. ECI staff collaborated with Senior Services Hampton Roads Regional Lifelong Planning Partnership committee by providing input on housing needs for the agency's 2011 White Paper, [Four Keys to Making this Region a Livable Community](#). ECI, in collaboration with the Hampton Roads Community Housing Resources Board, provided input on the draft of the 5-year Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice. ECI staff presented during a forum sponsored by the City of Norfolk Office of Design and Neighborhood Preservation on Universal Design and Residential Accessibility Modifications. ECI held workshops on the following topics: fair housing, affordable housing options, preparing for housing and seeking accessible housing. Staff assisted persons with disabilities to qualify for and utilize the Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) Home Modifications Program which provides funds towards the cost of residential disability related home modifications.

## ***Transportation Advocacy***

ECI staff presented on "Transportation: Supporting Livable Communities" during Senior Services Annual Aging in Place Conference. ECI staff attended regular meetings such as Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) and Hampton Roads Transportation (HRT) Paratransit Advisory Committee meetings, a public meeting on the Hampton Roads Transit Vision Plan, and a local Virginia Beach citizens' forum, "Envision Transportation", discussing improving public transportation in support of a livable community.

Staff coordinators assist persons with disabilities to obtain certification to be eligible to utilize the paratransit system, HandiRide. They are also encouraged to gain the skills necessary to ride the mainline bus system.

## ***Education Advocacy***

Our role in teaching advocacy extends to the education arena by helping participants and their families gain the knowledge they need to better prepare them for the special education process and all it involves. ECI offered various training opportunities, information and strategy sharing, and basic knowledge of rights through workshops and individual counseling. ECI is committed to helping students and their families learn effective communication and collaboration practices to enable them to be equal partners of the educational team. We continually endeavor to provide support that allows students to achieve academic success and develop educational plans that address the unique needs of each student.

## ***Virginia ADA Coalition and DBTAC: Mid-Atlantic ADA Center***

The Virginia ADA Coalition, a Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC) grant project, provided a variety of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) training and awareness activities. The Coalition continues to help support and organize many ADA activities and events around Virginia. The Coalition partnered with several Virginia universities, the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) and the Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) to present an “Ask the Experts” workshop, addressing access on the college campus. The Coalition also provided training on the Accessibility Standards, Fair Housing and Universal Design to a group of code enforcement staff in Charlottesville. The Coalition presented a fun and interactive workshop on the ADA Amendments Act at the Virginia Transition Forum.

## ***Outreach Offices in Western Tidewater***

During the past year, ECI did extensive outreach and community education to the underserved western portion of the geographic area served by the Center. This was made possible with a grant from the State Independent Living Council (SILC) and a Title VII Part B American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grant. We were able to establish outreach offices to be available to provide services in these areas:

Southampton Department of Social Services  
26022 Administration Center Drive in Courtland, VA

Suffolk Workforce Development Center  
157 N Main Street, 2nd Floor in Suffolk, VA 23434

Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services  
101 S College Drive in Franklin, VA

## ***Project WISE- Social Security Benefits Training and Outreach***

With the support of a grant from Social Security Administration (SSA) the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) staff provided FREE work incentive services to approximately 655 individuals between the ages of 14-64 through the Social Security Ticket to Work Program. Individuals were provided with the support and services they needed to explore work options while maintaining Social Security payments and healthcare. Additionally, information was made available to inform individuals about the impact of other federally funded programs to assist them in making informed choices about employment.

Our Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC's) provided information and benefits counseling about Work Incentives. Work Incentives are special rules that make it possible for people receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to explore work options. The work incentives also provide safety nets to allow beneficiaries to remain eligible for Social Security Benefits and Healthcare Programs until they are able to be self-sufficient.

Outreach was provided to community partners such as the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), Department of Human Services (DHS), and to other agencies that shared in our efforts/mission to empower individuals to reach their goals and maximize their earning potential for greater self-sufficiency.

For example, one young man who is a college graduate and, who was a visually disabled individual, received benefits counseling which helped him to feel confident to take full-time employment at a Civil Service job at Portsmouth Naval Hospital where he receives medical insurance, and he no longer needs the support of SSI benefits, he is maintaining employment because he was assisted by his CWIC to obtain work incentives.

## ***Employment Network***

In a contract with SSA, ECI became certified as an Employment Network (EN) provider. As an EN, the Center works with persons with disabilities who are Ticket to Work Social Security Beneficiaries. They are provided with employment skills training, career exploration, job placement and post employment monthly support services.

## ***Nursing Home Outreach***

Regular outreach is done by a staff member to nursing homes in our service area to reach individuals who may not know about options to move out of the facility and live independently. Participation in ECI's groups and activities are offered to residents as well as assistance to plan for a transition back to the community

Medicaid has a demonstration project, Money Follows the Person (MFP), that assists people with planning for transitioning from a nursing home or other institution. Medicaid will also pay for certain costs related to the transition. ECI assisted eight people to transition from nursing homes with Money Follows the Person. An additional six people have begun the transition process.

## ***Outreach to Hearing Disability Community***

ECI is under contract with the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) to provide outreach services to individuals residing on the Peninsula, Southside and the Counties of York, James City, Southampton and Isle of Wight.

ECI works closely with community-based organizations, schools, medical facilities and other state and local agencies to develop ways to provide technical assistance, training, and disability awareness services to service providers and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Center also maintains an equipment demonstration site for individuals with a hearing loss.

Events to educate and empower people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and speech impaired were offered on a variety of topics including: ADA; movie theater access; smoke alarms for people with a hearing loss and awareness and communication needs of people who have speech related disabilities. Exhibit tables and equipment demonstrations were set up at various community events, including the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Day Celebration.

Staff disseminated a Deaf/HOH eNews distribution list with articles and information of interest to people with a hearing loss or may know someone with a hearing loss.

## ***Medicaid DD Waiver Coordination***

Approximately 105 individuals who received Medicaid DD Waiver services selected ECI to assist with providing coordination of their Medicaid services. ECI Coordinators monitor the implementation, approval, and satisfaction of DD Waiver Services by having regular contact with participants and their family, reviewing reports from providers, and obtaining approval from DMAS and a pre-authorization agency. Coordinators link participants to local resources that benefit them in independent living. The providers, services, and regulations are ever-changing. Participants are kept abreast of these changes.

## ***Medicaid Waiver Consumer-Directed Services Facilitation***

Facilitation supports participants in their role as a consumer directed employer. Plans for services were implemented with approximately 190 participants. Facilitators provided training to participants on responsibilities of being CD employers including hiring, management practices and paperwork. Waiver services prevent participants from nursing facility and other institutional placement by providing support at home and in the community. This allows people to direct their own care or have a caregiver direct their personal care, companion and respite services.

## ***Medicaid Information & Training***

The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities awarded a grant to ECI to provide information and training statewide about Medicaid Waivers. Through a statewide nomination process, 20 advocates were identified to be trained as Medicaid Mentors. Materials about Waivers were developed. ECI organized an eight month training program for the Mentors to prepare them to provide workshops statewide.

## ***Emergency Preparedness***

An ECI staff member serves on several regional and local committees related to emergency planning for people with disabilities in the Hampton Roads area and the City of Norfolk. Committees include the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) Medical Special Needs Sub-Committee, Operational Work Group, Outreach Work Group and the City of Norfolk Public Health Department's Emergency Planning and Response for People with Disabilities Taskforce. As a member of the various HRPDC committees, a regional registry was developed for people with medical and functional needs to provide information about their specific needs that is forwarded to the Emergency Manager in the locality they reside in which is used for planning purposes. In addition, a website ([www.hrspecialneeds.org](http://www.hrspecialneeds.org)) was developed with resources and a link to the registry so it can be completed online. Other materials were developed including a fingertip book magnet containing emergency planning information specific to Hampton Roads, an IPHONE/IPOD/IPAD application "Get Prepared", and a video called "Get Prepared". In addition, our staff member is one of the speakers in a different emergency prepared video called, "People, Get Ready" which can be found on the Virginia Beach Emergency Management website.

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