The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in their communities through training, research, consultation, and clinical and employment services. The following describes some of the ICI's current projects within four areas of expertise. These projects involve local, state, and national agencies, schools, institutes of higher education, national service programs, rehabilitation providers, and multicultural organizations. The ICI is a program of the University of Massachusetts Boston and Children's Hospital Boston.

The ICI is one of 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDDs) throughout the United States. UCEDDs work with people with disabilities, members of their families, state and local government agencies, and community providers in projects that provide training, technical assistance, service, research, and information sharing, with a focus on building the capacity of communities to sustain all their citizens.

National Service Inclusion Project (NSIP)

NSIP is a Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) training and technical assistance provider. NSIP builds connections between disability organizations and CNCS commissions, offices, and programs to increase the participation of people with disabilities in national service and volunteerism. Services include national, state, and program training to all CNCS grantees including AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and Senior Corps; and technical assistance and resources to support members and volunteers with disabilities. NSIP provides assistance with recruitment, accommodations, selection and retention, and ensuring Section 504 and ADA compliance.

National Service to Employment Project (NextSTEP)

Volunteering and community service are proven avenues where individuals with disabilities gain skills, explore career paths, and develop social networks necessary for gaining meaningful employment. NextSTEP is a national center focused on aiding the transition from service to employment.

Northeast Regional Center for Vision Education (NERCVE)

NERCVE is New England’s only academic center for preparing teachers of students with visual impairments, orientation and mobility specialists, and vision rehabilitation therapists, three key specialties that help people with visual impairments achieve their goals of high-quality education, employment, and independent safety. NERCVE is an ICI project housed within the UMass Boston Graduate College of Education.
Access to Integrated Employment (AIE) Project
For over 20 years this project has described trends and issues related to employment and day supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The goal is to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence employment outcomes at an individual, employment-support, service-provider, and state-policy level. The project is home to several activities, including the following:

- **StateData.info** provides on-demand access to national data sets that illustrate trends in employment outcomes and services for individuals with disabilities.
- **Promising Practices by State Agencies.** The promising practices database highlights innovative policies and strategies that state intellectual/developmental disability agencies are using to increase integrated employment opportunities.
- **Real People, Real Jobs.** This website highlights the employment successes of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities who are working in paid jobs in their communities.

**Work Without Limits Disability Employment Initiative**
*Work Without Limits* brings together people with disabilities and their families, state policy makers, employment-service providers, and employers to create an environment that maximizes work opportunities for people with disabilities, addresses the needs of employers, and strengthens the Massachusetts workforce. *Work Without Limits* is a partnership involving the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, UMass Medical School, and ICI/UMass Boston.

**State Employment Leadership Network (SELN)**
The SELN brings states together to improve employment outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities by building states’ capacity to develop, implement, and support effective employment initiatives. The SELN is a joint program of the ICI and the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disability Services.

**Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center for New England**
The TACE Center responds to the technical assistance and continuing-education needs of the region’s ten state vocational rehabilitation agencies and their partners. The goals of the national TACE Centers are to contribute to the improved quality of VR services, help increase effectiveness and efficiency of State VR agencies and their partners in delivering VR services, and help improve the quantity and quality of VR employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

**Vocational Rehabilitation, Research, Policy, and Technical Assistance**
The ICI hosts multiple national projects focusing on research, technical assistance, and management strategies for the 80 public vocational rehabilitation agencies providing services and supports to people with disabilities seeking work. The Vocational Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (VR-RRTC) functions as a national hub for policy and operations data, while the Research and Technical Assistance Center (RTAC) develops, tests, and disseminates a VR management model improving quality assurance, strategic planning, and human resources practices. Both centers are funded by NIDRR.

**Vocational Specialist Initiative (VSI)**
The VSI assists customers served by Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children in overcoming barriers to employment by providing a vocational specialist at 14 Department of Transitional Assistance offices throughout Massachusetts. These specialists assess recipients’ needs and coordinate support services and appropriate referrals, including access to educational, mental-health, housing, and advocacy services.

**ICI Employment Services Program**
ICI Employment Services helps Boston-area companies successfully hire, train, and retain employees with disabilities. This program helps individuals with significant disabilities achieve their career goals through person-driven career planning, individual job development and negotiation, and post-employment supports. The ICI works in partnership with businesses to ensure an optimal fit between the skills and interests of the job seeker and the employer’s business needs.
**Massachusetts FOCUS Academy**

The ICI is contracted by the Massachusetts State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide online graduate-level transition courses to educators, administrators, and providers in transition assessment and education. The goal of Mass Focus Academy is to positively impact post-high-school outcomes for students with disabilities in Massachusetts by improving the competencies of individual educators, increasing school districts’ capacity to retain educators, and developing a statewide framework for professional development.

**Boston Ready**

Boston Ready helps Boston four-year-olds learn by supporting high-quality teaching. This project is testing the effectiveness of professional-development supports on child outcomes, including literacy skills and mathematical concepts. The project also helps teachers adapt curricula for a range of learners using universal design.

**Building Careers in Early Education and Care**

Building Careers provides college courses and academic advising to early-education professionals, and to after-school educators seeking a degree in early-childhood education or a related field. Funds are also used to promote the inclusion of young children with disabilities and diverse learners by providing practitioners with course work focusing on special education and inclusive practices.

**Including All Children**

Including All Children recruits, trains, and graduates early childhood/early intervention educators to become eligible for licensure to work in PreK–2 public-school settings. The project, in collaboration with the Graduate School of Education at UMass Boston, seeks to address an area of critical teacher shortage.

**Early Literacy Matters**

The Early Literacy Matters project focuses on improving language and literacy skills for preschool children identified as at-risk for academic failure in Lynn, Massachusetts. ELM offers a program of research-based curricula, professional development, and community/family development to enrich the learning experience.

**Think College**

The Think College initiative focuses on research, training, and dissemination of information related to postsecondary education for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities. The initiative consists of four different projects within ICI.

**Center for Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities**

The Center conducts research and disseminates information on promising practices that support individuals with intellectual disabilities so that they can gain access to and be successful in inclusive postsecondary education.

**Consortium to Enhance Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

The Consortium conducts participatory action research, provides training and technical assistance to partners developing postsecondary education options, and disseminates information on promising practices.

**College Career Connection**

The College Career Connection provides training and technical assistance to postsecondary education partnerships focused on providing an inclusive postsecondary education to students with severe disabilities. Currently supporting six partnerships in Massachusetts, the postsecondary model is designed to improve postsecondary education and employment opportunities for students with severe disabilities.

**Equity and Excellence in Higher Education**

Equity and Excellence in Higher Education aims to infuse the concepts of universal course design into the instructional style of faculty at community colleges in Massachusetts. Specifically, the project offers a comprehensive professional-development opportunity for college faculty to increase the diversity of their instructional styles to reach all learners, including those with disabilities.
Opening Doors for Children and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs (A Rehabilitation Research and Training Center—RRTC)

The Opening Doors project strives to give youth with disabilities and special health-care needs a better future. National experts in pediatrics, public policy, education, family advocacy, and rehabilitation are conducting multiple research projects designed to advance early screening, inclusive recreation, and advancement into postsecondary education for youth with disabilities and special health care needs.

TWA ZANMI

The Twa Zanmi (Three Friends) project is co-funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Benton Foundation and is a partnership with the Haitian American Public Health Initiatives and the Haitian Media Network. The project will nurture a new Haitian immigrant community production team to produce and market a “telenovela” program. The objective is to familiarize the Haitian community with the real experiences of immigrants living with depression and anxiety as an understandable result of acculturative stress.

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND)

The Children’s Hospital Boston LEND program at the ICI focuses on public policy, advocacy, diversity, stigma, human rights, and new designs in the developmental disabilities field. The LEND program provides graduate-level interdisciplinary training to health and counseling professionals to improve their knowledge of policy issues and team collaboration in developmental disabilities. Trainees develop their leadership potential to improve the status of infants, children, and adolescents with (or at risk for) neurodevelopmental disabilities and to enhance systems of care for these children and their families.

Down Syndrome Program

The Down Syndrome Program at Children’s Hospital Boston offers specialized services for children with Down syndrome and their families. Program staff work closely with children, parents, medical specialists, community physicians, and educators.

ICI Training, Consultation, and Program Evaluation services

The ICI provides training, consultation, program-evaluation services, and technical assistance on many topics related to the inclusion of people with disabilities. Services are customized to meet specific agency and organization requirements. Below is a partial list of services by topic area:

- Disability awareness
- Employment services
- Program management
- Organizational change
- Early education
- School inclusion and transition
- Organization or system-level services
- Service-delivery efforts and effectiveness
- Internal quality-improvement efforts

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