

ENDEPENDENCE CENTER NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2023

ECI Operational Plan

Endeppendence Center, Inc. (ECI) recognizes the seriousness and effect that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) can have on the people we work with. So that ECI staff and participants stay safe, we have established the following operational plan:

- ECI's office will be open for scheduled appointments only.
- You can call and speak with your IL Coordinator about scheduling an appointment to discuss your goals.
- ECI staff will be available by phone and email, Monday through Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm.
- ECI will be holding a few in-person group activities.
- ECI will update our Facebook page, website, and newsletter to reflect this policy and any changes.
- ECI will be closed on Monday, February 20, 2023, in observance of President's Day.

Independent Living Skills Training

The next Independent Living Skills Training will be **Wednesday, February 15, from 2:00pm to 3:30pm** at the Endeppendence Center. The training will focus on budgeting and money management.

Youth Independent Living Skills (Ages 16-24)

Saturday, February 18 at ECI

1:30pm to 3:00pm

This monthly ILS training offers a chance for youth ages 16-24 to socialize and participate in activities that promote independent living skills. This month's topic is ADA and Disability Rights. For more information and to register, please contact Sarah Bailey at sbailey@endeppendence.org, call 757-351-1585, or text 757-510-2772. A Zoom option may be available on request.

Advocacy Group

The Advocacy Group will meet on **Wednesday, February 22 from 2:00pm-3:30pm**. Training will be provided on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title III, Public Accommodations.

Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living Legislative Updates February 1 and February 8



During the 2023 Virginia General Assembly session, the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL) will hold several meetings to discuss legislation impacting people with disabilities. The meetings are open to all disability advocates.

The meetings will be via webinar through Zoom at 3:00pm on Wednesdays (February 1 and February 8). Captioning and sign language interpreting provided.

Register for the webinars at

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAudu2hqjIjGtSMSAJesrr_42gJdOqmv10

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the Zoom meetings.

Independent Living Day at the General Assembly in Richmond

The Endependence Center values Independent Living Day as an opportunity to meet with legislators to educate them about the priorities of people with disabilities. On January 18, eight participants, eight staff members, and one board member of the Endependence Center did just that. In groups of three, they met with ten legislators. They shared their experience at ECI, why Centers for Independent Living are important, and the priorities of people with disabilities.



ECI participants and staff visiting with a Legislator at Virginia General Assembly in 2023

FREE TAX PREPARATION

The Income Tax Season started on January 15, 2023. Did you know that many Americans can keep more money at tax time by getting free tax preparation from IRS-certified volunteer preparers? The IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide programs provide free preparation – without upcharges or hidden fees – and serve taxpayers using rigorous IRS preparation standards and certified tax preparers.

Get free tax help and keep more of your money!

You probably qualify for free tax preparation from IRS-certified preparers.

To get the best value this tax season:

- Find a site near you:
- Go to **IRS.gov** and search for "Free Tax Return Preparation"
- Go to **AARP.org** and search for "Tax-Aide Locator"
- File online with help:
 - Go to **GetYourRefund.org** for online tax preparation by IRS-certified preparers
 - Go to **MyFreeTaxes.com** to prepare your own tax return with assistance from IRS-certified preparers

These IRS-certified options are not only free but also accurate and convenient.

How much of your refund is going into your pocket this year?

Visit www.consumerfinance.gov/free-filing-flyer

Resources

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), a federal agency, has published a web-based **Guide to Filing your Taxes for the 2022 Tax Year**.

<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/guide-to-filing-your-taxes>.

It is available in both English and Spanish.

Videos - **Tax Time Minute videos for consumers** - free filing information:

- Tax Time Minute on Tax Prep in Your Community - <https://youtu.be/Pl01Plmmemc>
- Tax Time Minute on Online Tax Prep - <https://youtu.be/rX9QVn1Ufh4>



**Disability Advocacy
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the newsletter is available upon
request by contacting
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Check the ECI website at
**[https://independence.org/upcoming-
events/](https://independence.org/upcoming-events/)** for any changes to the
schedule or by calling
461-8007, Option 4

To request an
accommodation,
757-351-1575 Voice,
757-461-7527 TDD
or
csimpson@independence.org

ECI is on Facebook.
You can access it two
different ways.

1. Go to **www.independence.org** and click on the Facebook image on the right side of the page.
2. Go to your personal Facebook page, and in the search box, look for **Independence Center, Inc. – Norfolk, Virginia**



ECI is on Twitter @ECINorfolk