

THE

INDEPENDENCE CENTER

February 2026 Newsletter

Opening Doors to Opportunities

Fair Housing: Free Virtual Training from HOME

Everyone deserves access to safe, fair, and inclusive housing. A free, virtual training with Brenda Castañeda from Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) will be on Tuesday, February 10 at 1:00pm, to learn all about fair housing rights and how to support equal access in your community, particularly as it relates to individuals with disabilities! To register, scan the QR code to the left or visit the ECI website for the registration link. Training presented by the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL) - www.vacil.org. Training provided with funding from the Virginia Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).



Paratransit Advisory Committee Meeting

The Paratransit Advisory Committee serves as a communication link between the Transportation District Commission (TDCHR), persons with disabilities who use HRT's services, and service providers to the disabled community on matters related to Paratransit service within HRT's service area. Meetings are open to the public; the next meeting is Wednesday, February 11, at 1:00pm at the TDCHR office in Norfolk (509 East 18th Street, Bldg. 4, Norfolk).

Virginia Housing Community Impact Sessions

Virginia Housing will host six Community Impact Sessions across the state to showcase available programs and collect feedback from organizations that promote production and preservation of affordable housing. **REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED TO ATTEND**, and capacity is limited. The Hampton Roads session will be on February 25 from 10:00am to 12noon at the Chesapeake Conference Center, 700 Conference Center Drive, in Chesapeake. The link to register can be found on the ECI website.

Norfolk DHCD: Community Needs Survey

For its next Five-Year Consolidated Plan and Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, the Norfolk Department of Housing and Community Development has developed an online Community Needs Survey. Your responses will guide the City toward creating relevant housing goals to meet the needs of Norfolk residents. Paper surveys are available as well. To complete the survey online, please go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NorfolkCommunityNeeds>



Upcoming ILS Training: Fair Housing

Do you feel like you've faced barriers or unfair treatment when applying for housing? ECI will hold a Fair Housing training on Wednesday, February 18, from 2:00pm to 3:30pm. Staff and participants will explore fair housing discrimination in the rental application process, including how certain disability-related questions may be illegal, and what steps can be taken to challenge and prevent unfair treatment.

EVENT LISTINGS

FEBRUARY 2026



ECI Events

Unless noted otherwise, events are held at ECI (6300 E. Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk)

11th WED *NEW GROUP* Connect & Grow 2:00 pm - 3:30pm
Connect & Grow is a fun, welcoming space where ECI participants come together to make connections, share laughs, learn, and grow together as part of our independent living community.

18th WED Independent Living Skills Training: Fair Housing 2:00pm - 3:30pm
See page one for details.

24th TUE Independent Living Skills Training on Podcasts 3:00pm - 4:30pm
This month we'll finish Episode 4 and decide on a topic for Episode 5.

25th WED Group Peer Mentoring 2:00 pm - 3:30pm
The monthly Group Peer Mentoring Discussion is an opportunity for participants to share experiences, provide information, and support one another to accomplish their goals.

28th SAT Youth Independent Living Skills Training 1:30pm – 3:00pm
This month, we will learn about healthy relationships and independence. This includes making friends, setting boundaries, and learning new skills that can build confidence.

Community Events

Transportation tickets are NOT provided to attend community events.

10th TUE Statewide Training: Fair Housing 1:00pm
Virtual
See page one for details.

11th WED Paratransit Advisory Committee (PAC) 1:00pm
Transportation District Commission, Norfolk Office (509 East 18th Street, Bldg. 4, Norfolk)
See page one for details.

21st SAT TOUCH Group 11:00am – 1:00pm
Independence Center (6300 E. Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk)
Let's discuss Time Management. It is important for us to understand that we need to use our time wisely on a daily basis to be productive and maintain our daily schedule. For questions, contact Montrell Rodgers at 757-238-1293 or VATOUCH.22@gmail.com.

25th WED Virginia Housing Community Impact Session 10:00am – 12noon
Chesapeake Conference Center (700 Conference Center Drive, Chesapeake)
See page 1 for details.

27th FRI Women's Group 3:00pm – 4:00pm
Independence Center (6300 E. Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk)
This month, we'll talk about the freedom to speak and talk about the issues we face in every day life.

FEBRUARY 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Paratransit Advisory Committee* @ TDCHR Office, Norfolk 1:00pm Connect & Grow @ ECI 2:00pm - 3:30pm	12	13	14
15	16	17	18 ILS Training: Fair Housing @ ECI 2:00pm - 3:30pm	19	20	21 TOUCH Group* @ ECI 11:00am – 1:00pm ASL Hangout* @ Chef's Market Food Hall 6:00pm – 9:00pm
22	23	24	25 Virginia Housing Community Impact Session* @ Chesapeake Conference Center 10:00am – 12noon Group Peer Mentoring @ ECI 2:00pm - 3:30pm	26	27 Women's Group* @ ECI 3:00pm – 4:00pm	28 Youth ILS @ ECI 1:30pm – 3:00pm

Events subject to change. Check the ECI website and Facebook for up-to-date information.

***This event is not organized by ECI; bus and Paratransit tickets will not be provided.**

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

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Disability Advocacy & Services

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Website:

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Accommodations

To request accommodations
for ECI activities:
(757) 351-1586 voice
(757) 461-7527 TDD
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To request an alternate
format of our newsletter:
(757) 351-1598 voice
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