

THE INDEPENDENCE CENTER

MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER

Opening Doors to Opportunities

2026 Independent Living Day Goes Virtual

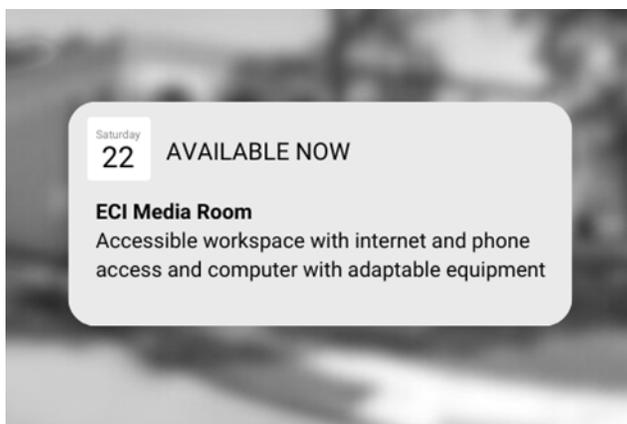


This year's Independent Living Day at the Virginia General Assembly moved to a virtual format after inclement weather impacted travel conditions across the Commonwealth. On January 28, ECI participants, board members, and staff joined other advocates with the Virginia Association of Centers for Independent Living (VACIL) to meet with legislators to discuss independent living and share our community's perspective on VACIL's legislative priorities: establishing a new Center for Independent Living in unserved counties in the Culpepper region, protecting

funding, increasing Medicaid personal care rates, addressing the need for palliative care, opposing assisted suicide, addressing issues impacting housing affordability, expanding access to Medicaid Works, and requiring option captioning of movies in theaters.

Paralympic Winter Games: March 6 – 15

The Milano Cortina Paralympic Winter Games will hold their Opening Ceremony on March 6th, starting nine days of competition. The 2026 games mark the 50th anniversary of the first Paralympics Winter Games, first held in 1976. That year, 198 athletes from 16 countries traveled to Sweden to compete in two sports. This year, 665 athletes from 50 countries are expected to compete across six sports: para alpine skiing, para biathlon, para cross-country skiing, para ice hockey, para snowboard, and wheelchair curling. For more information, visit <https://www.paralympic.org/paralympic-games>.



ECI Media Room

ECI's Media Room is an accessible workspace with internet and phone access and a computer with adaptive equipment. It can be used for up to two hours, Monday – Friday, 9:30am to 4:00pm. Availability is not guaranteed and reservations are encouraged. For more information or to reserve the space, contact your IL Coordinator.

EVENT LISTINGS



MARCH 2026

ECI Events

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

- 11th WED** **ECI Board of Directors Meeting 1:00pm - 3:00pm**
ECI Board of Directors meetings are open to the public.
- 11th WED** **Connect & Grow 2:00pm - 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** **Federal Benefits Training *VIRTUAL OPTION* 1:00pm - 3:00pm**
Join us for an informative training on federal benefit programs, including SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare, and SNAP. Learn about recent updates and policy changes. This training will be held in-person and via Zoom. To register, visit <https://endependence.org/zoom>.
- 25th WED** **Group Peer Mentoring 2:00pm - 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.
- 26th THU** **Advocacy Coalition 2:00pm - 3:30pm**
As the General Assembly session concludes, ECI is convening organizations from across the Tidewater region that advocate with and alongside people with disabilities for a collaborative debrief and discussion. Together, we will discuss what has passed, what was carried over, and share our perspectives on ongoing advocacy priorities impacting people with disabilities and independent living in our communities.
- 28th SAT** **Youth Independent Living Skills Training: Cooking Class: Beyond Frozen Dinners 1:30pm - 3:00pm**
This month, we'll be having a cooking class. We will be learning how to prepare food using the microwave. Please RSVP to Amy Ouellette at (757) 351-1597 or aouellette@endependence.org by no later than 5pm on Wednesday, March 25th.
- 31st TUE** **Independent Living Skills Training on Podcasts 3:00pm - 4:30pm**
This month, we'll finish episode 4.

Community & Participant-Led Events

Transportation tickets are NOT provided to attend community events.

- 17th TUE** ***GRAND RE-OPENING* Participant-Led Event 12noon - 2:30pm**
Applebee's Bar & Grill at Janaf (5750 E Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk)
This event is organized by participants.
- 21st SAT** **TOUCH Group 11:00am - 1:00pm**
Endependence Center (6300 E. Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk)
Come and join us to discuss ideas on how we can be better at budgeting our finances. For questions, contact Montrell Rodgers at 757-238-1293 or VATOUCH.22@gmail.com.
- 27th FRI** **Women's Group (Participant-Led Group) 3:00pm - 4:00pm**
Endependence Center (6300 E. Virginia Beach Blvd., Norfolk)
Topic for March: Wellness & Nutrition

MARCH 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6 Silent Dinner* @ Lynnhaven Mall 5:30pm – 8:00pm	7
8	9	10 Statewide Tornado Drill at 9:45am	11 Board Meeting @ ECI 1:00pm – 3:00pm Connect & Grow @ ECI 2:00pm - 3:30pm	12	13	14
15	16	17 Participant-Led Event (Grand Re-Opening)* @ Applebee's at Janaf 12noon – 2:30pm	18 Federal Benefits Training @ ECI or via Zoom 1:00pm – 3:00pm	19	20	21 TOUCH Group* @ ECI 11:00am – 1:00pm ASL Hangout* @ Voodoo Brewing 6:00pm – 9:00pm
22	23	24	25 Group Peer Mentoring @ ECI 2:00pm - 3:30pm	26 Advocacy Coalition @ ECI 2:00pm - 3:30pm	27 Women's Group* @ ECI 3:00pm – 4:30pm	28 Youth ILS: Beyond Frozen Dinners @ ECI 1:30pm – 3:00pm
29	30	31 ILS Training on Podcasts @ ECI 3:00pm – 4:30pm	<p><i>Events subject to change. Check the ECI website and Facebook for up-to-date information.</i></p> <p>*This event is not organized by ECI; bus and Paratransit tickets will not be provided.</p>			

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Disability Advocacy & Services

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(757) 461-7527 TDD

E-Mail:

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Website:

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Accommodations

To request accommodations
for ECI activities:
(757) 351-1586 voice
(757) 461-7527 TDD
tmano@endeppendence.org

To request an alternate
format of our newsletter:
(757) 351-1598 voice
(757) 461-7527 TDD
ehoapili@endeppendence.org

Facebook



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