



CID-NY

Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York



Biannual Report 2015-2016



MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York's goal is to ensure full integration, independence, and equal opportunity for all people with disabilities by removing barriers to the social, economic, cultural, and civic life of the community.



President's Message

Martin Eichel, President, CIDNY Board of Directors

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) is at the forefront of changes that improve the lives of people with disabilities in NYC. We celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 2015 with the publication of a groundbreaking report on the status of people with disabilities in New York City. It covered key indicators of well being after a quarter of a century of civil rights progress and recommendations for further improvement. While tremendous gains were made, we found that even today, New Yorkers with disabilities experience worse outcomes in education, employment, health care, housing, food access, transportation, and other measures. Civil rights enforcement lags and people with disabilities are at risk of losing those advancements.

Our staff work one on one with people with disabilities every day to help them develop their own roadmaps to meet their goals. We make sure they have the resources and support they need to live their lives in the most independent and fully integrated way possible. We help people develop the skills they need to advocate for themselves and to be as independent as possible. Our peer counselors create a "safe space" to talk about the day to day issues that people with disabilities face. In the last two years, we helped more than 38,371 individuals in all neighborhoods of New York City.

When they work with us one on one, people find the resources to avoid eviction, get health coverage, and have more money for food and rent. We help people think about how their lives would change if they go to work. We work with high school youth to help them develop job-related "soft skills." We help people move from institutions into the community—with the supports they need. As a result, 418 people transitioned home in 2015 and 2016. We protect the rights of people in nursing facilities. We help resolve problems that come up when people seek the health care they need. As a result

of this work, taxpayers save money and people come closer to living the lives they imagine for themselves.

We work with policymakers to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Our organizing and policy work addresses the systemic issues that lead people to seek services in the first place. We advocated successfully for the Governor to issue an Executive Order creating measures to improve employment of people with disabilities. We helped improve school policies to ensure that students with mental health disabilities don't miss school because of unnecessary trips to the ER. We helped craft the State's "basic health plan" for people with low incomes to ensure that it had lower cost sharing for rehabilitation therapies. CIDNY's work continued on our civil rights and participation in legal challenges that improve the lives of New Yorkers with disabilities. Because the federal court has found in our favor on legal challenges we made seeking to enforce civil rights, our job now is to monitor and support compliance by the City with the remedies approved by the Court.

We are proud of our success in educating policymakers and the public. Stories of our work to empower the lives of people with disabilities were carried in the national media—on radio, television, in print, and online. We remember the inequality that led up to the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 and the struggle to implement the ADA since then. Even as we reflect upon our accomplishments, our work is not yet done. We hope you will recommit with us to help make the promise of the ADA fully realized for all New Yorkers. We urge you to take action by becoming involved.

Your financial support is more critical than ever. Please consider donating online at www.cidny.org to help us continue our work. Together we can make a better future.

PROGRAMS

DIRECT SERVICES

WE HELP PEOPLE find income or other supports including healthcare, housing, transportation, education, and food that make their lives better.

- understand how to look for housing and use the rental support programs that can make it possible for them to live in the community.
- transition from institutions to living in the community so that they can resume their lives.
- understand how moving into the world of work will affect their lives.
- navigate complicated systems and solve difficult problems to get the health services they need.

EDUCATION

WE TEACH people life and work readiness skills, about their rights, and about healthy eating.

- businesses, the courts, and the public about disability literacy and disability rights.
- the public about the lives of people with disabilities through stories about daily life in both mainstream and social media.
- policymakers about the status of people with disabilities and the issues affecting them by collaborating with University-based researchers to develop reports.



Peer advocate Lilliete Lopez speaking about her experiences as a person with disabilities at an event.

ADVOCACY

WE ORGANIZE a network of advocates who can respond quickly to policy developments that affect them, speaking out, demonstrating, educating policymakers, and speaking with the media to educate the public.

- with people with disabilities to advocate for their own rights and teach them the skills they need to make a difference.
- with individuals to tell their stories about barriers to health care, voting, emergency services, transportation, and other topics to fight for change.

POLICY

WE ENGAGE with elected officials, provide testimony, and share recommendations on policies affecting people with disabilities.

- coalitions that we initiate, lead, and join to bring together disparate groups to improve law, regulation, and public policy.
- with the court when our civil rights are being violated by government.

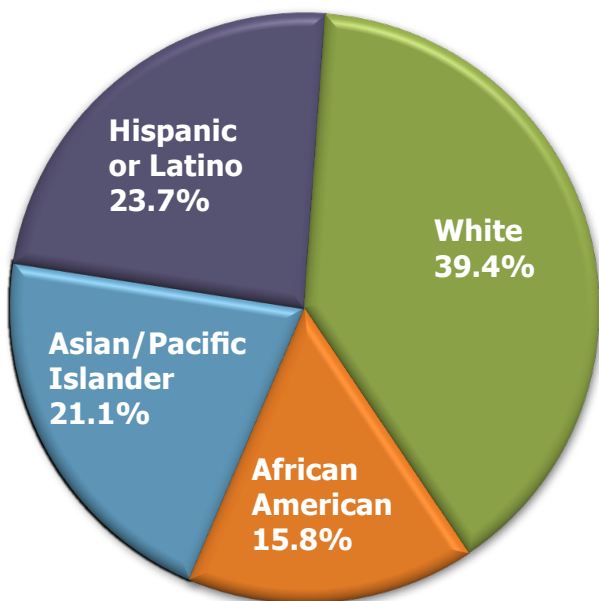


WHO WE ARE

The Center for Independence of the Disabled New York (or CIDNY) serves all people with disabilities. We are rooted in the Independent Living Philosophy. We advocate for equal opportunity, self-determination, and self-respect for people with disabilities and seek to remove barriers to full inclusion. We actively support the right of people with disabilities to live independently in the community rather than in institutions. We teach people with disabilities ways to be heard, to advocate, and to understand the choices before them. We work together to analyze the impact of proposed policies on people with disabilities and to create solutions that are right for our community. We believe that we are the experts on our own needs and that we must organize ourselves to engage in the policymaking process to protect our rights.

Our work reflects this philosophy by providing direct services, education, policy, and advocacy. We work with people with disabilities to develop a roadmap for and direct assistance with meeting their goals, such as locating housing, obtaining health coverage, getting food assistance, understanding the impact of returning to work, and seeking to transition from public school to adult life. We educate people with disabilities on self-advocacy and other skills. We provide educational programs and technical assistance for government and private sector entities on disability literacy. We conduct research in partnership with University researchers, publish reports, and educate the media and general public. We advocate for fair government policies, conduct research, and litigate civil rights violations.

By Race/Ethnicity



60% of CIDNY staff are people with disabilities



Staff Languages

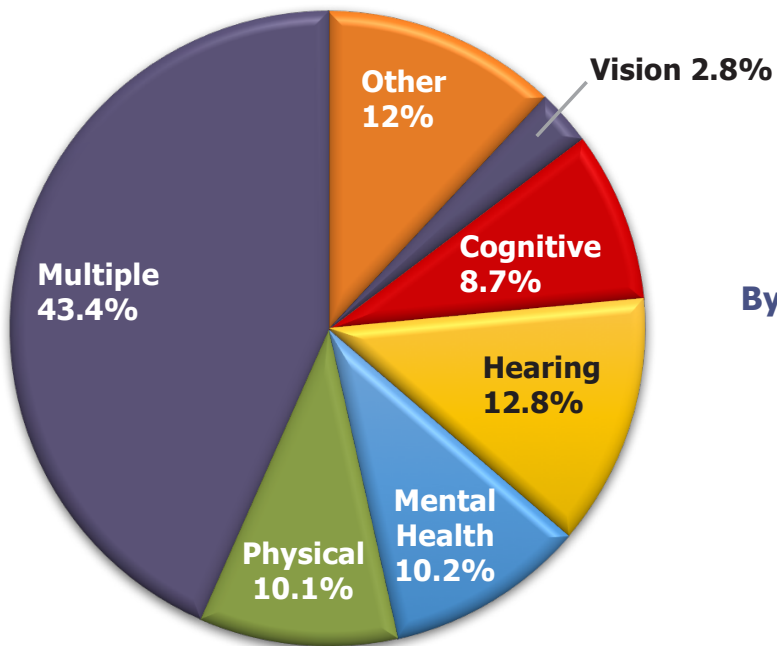
- ✧ **ASL**
- ✧ **Bengali**
- ✧ **Cantonese**
- ✧ **English**
- ✧ **French**
- ✧ **Nepali**
- ✧ **Portuguese**
- ✧ **Russian**
- ✧ **Tagalog**
- ✧ **Tibetan**
- ✧ **Urdu**



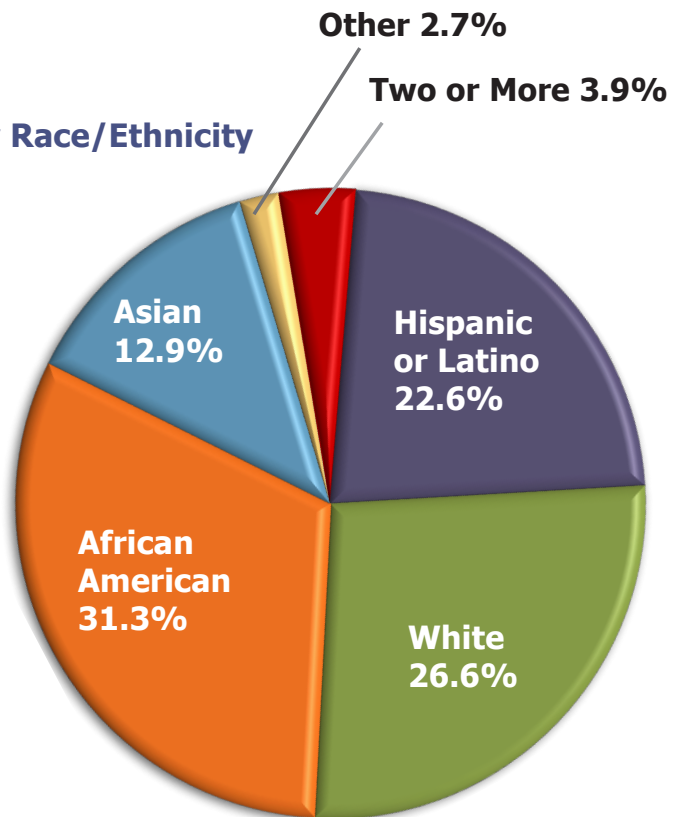
CIDNY benefits counselor and participant discussing insurance options.

WHO WE SERVE

By Disability



By Race/Ethnicity



Staff and participants in Albany for Lobby Day.

We served even more individuals with disabilities of every racial and ethnic group in Manhattan and Queens and increased our work with people with mental health disabilities and multiple disabilities.

DIRECT SERVICES

HOW WE CAN HELP

BENEFITS

We conduct comprehensive benefit screening for health care, SNAP (formerly food stamps), heating assistance, Social Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), tax benefits, veteran's benefits, housing subsidies, Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE), Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE), various waiver programs, prescription assistance, unemployment insurance, subsidized transit, among other benefits. We provide information on these programs, help with applications, explain the appeals process, and make referrals to the appropriate agencies.

EMPLOYMENT

We train people with disabilities in job readiness skills and provide resources for training, employment, and vocational rehabilitation services.

FOOD ACCESS

We assist with enrolling in food assistance programs including SNAP, school breakfast, and summer meals programs.

HEALTH CARE

We offer full wrap around services in health care access. As a Navigator, we help people enroll in private insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare through the New York Health Exchange.

We help people with problems that arise with health insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid.

We assist people with Medicare cases, especially the Medicare Savings Program and/or Extra Help.

We help people understand their Managed Long Term Care and Fully Integrated Duals Advantage (FIDA) coverage, and help with advocacy and the appeals process when they are denied coverage.



CIDNY volunteer Gloria Goodson waiting for Access-A-Ride.

HOUSING

We educate and assist people with their rights for accommodations and modifications under the Fair Housing Act.

We help people learn how to search for housing and housing subsidies so that they understand and can use online and other resources.

We help people in nursing homes or unstable housing to apply for a housing subsidy.

INDEPENDENT LIVING

We advocate for individuals and to change the systems that affect them for the better. We provide peer counseling—using our own experiences as people with disabilities to help others. We provide educational information, workshops, and make referrals to community resources. We help people develop their independent living skills, learn about their rights for accommodations, and teach them advocacy skills. We advise people on their housing search and on ways to stretch their housing budget and to avoid evictions. We help youth transition into adulthood with job readiness skills or planning for further education including college.

We prevent institutionalization by helping people stabilize in the community and get access to additional resources and benefits. We bring people home from nursing homes to live full lives in the community.

We help people with disabilities who need Independent Living Services with information, referrals, and advocacy in benefits, transportation, healthcare, and assistive technology.



LONG-TERM CARE

We educate, empower, and advocate for long-term care residents in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

We assist people with their managed long-term care cases

The top issues that we assist people with disabilities who work with us with are housing and health care. With a lack of accessible housing, high food and health care costs, and high rent burdens, most of the people we work with are squeezed financially.



Department of Justice representative speaks with Queens participants about protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

GETTING HEALTH COVERAGE AND SUPPORT TO GO TO WORK

For Jaime, a 27 year old Latino with Asperger's Syndrome, working with a CIDNY benefits counselor meant that for the first time, he was able to get health insurance coverage. A benefits eligibility check-up found that Jaime was eligible for Medicaid, so his counselor helped him fill out the online application form and send it in. Since Jaime would like to go to work, we were also able to help him understand how to apply for services under ACCES-VR, New York State's adult career and continuing education services. Jaime is currently developing goals for his future and exploring his options to prepare for work.*

RELIEVING STRESS, PROTECTING HIS CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Nahzir is a 49 year old immigrant from Bangladesh with a heart condition, anxiety and depression. He has two young children and works two jobs to make ends meet. He made an appointment with a CIDNY counselor to see if he and his family qualified for any health coverage, but two weeks before his meeting, his wife unexpectedly passed away. He was very worried about childcare and feared losing work because of the added stress. Nahzir was unsure if he could receive public benefits because of his immigration status.

A CIDNY benefits counselor performed a benefits eligibility check-up and enrolled Nahzir and his children in Medicaid. The counselor referred him to his nearest HRA office for child care support. Nahzir was relieved to know his family's medical needs would be taken care of and that he could receive child care help.

PROVIDING A VARIETY OF ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICES

Aurora, a 38 year old woman who is Deaf, came to CIDNY for help with Medicaid. She wasn't sure if her Medicaid was active or if she needed to fill out her recertification form. Because she was Deaf, her ASL-speaking benefits counselor called the Medicaid helpline on her behalf and learned that she needed to recertify online that day or her benefits would be cut off. We were able to recertify her that day and keep her benefits going.

Because of her low income, Aurora told her counselor that she needed help with a few other things. She needed tax filing information, and her counselor referred her to an accountant who is Deaf and serves the Deaf community. She also needed help applying for a reduced fare Metrocard, which her CIDNY counselor was able to help her with. Aurora was having difficulty paying her phone bill. Her counselor called the phone company to enroll her in the Text Accessibility Plan for people with disabilities. This will allow her to pay solely for unlimited texts and eliminate the voice feature on her phone. Aurora reported that all the programs set up with the help of CIDNY's benefits counselor are currently in place and her out of pocket expenses have decreased significantly.

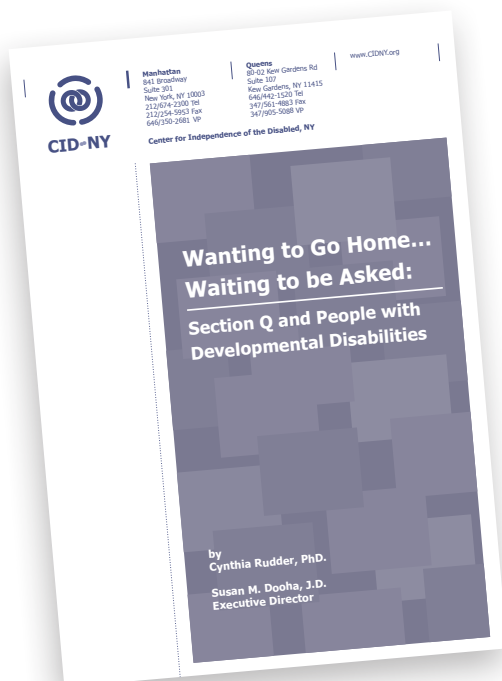
*All names have been changed.

**94% of the people we
served would recommend
CIDNY to others**



**CIDNY advocates with NYC Public Advocate
Letitia James.**

WANTING TO GO HOME, WAITING TO BE ASKED: SECTION Q & PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



The federal government and New York State instructed nursing homes and other facilities to ensure that residents are asked if they want to move back into their communities rather than stay in institutions. While some progress was made, as of the first quarter of 2014, there were 1,057 people with developmental disabilities in New York State's nursing homes who were not offered the opportunity to go home.

With a grant from the New York Community Trust, CIDNY looked at the tool, known as Section Q, used by nursing homes to assess whether a resident wanted to transition back to the community. We looked at whether people with developmental disabilities were asked if they wanted to go back to the community and, if the answer was "yes," whether they were getting the help they needed to understand and explore the transition process.

What we found was that the process does not appear to be working for anyone and particularly for residents with developmental disabilities. As we put all of the pieces of our research together, recommendations for changes in New York State became clear.

CIDNY recommends: federal consideration of having a neutral party ask the referral question, developing regulations specifically relating to the question and referral, bringing all stakeholders together to help craft remedies, training nursing home discharge planners to ask the question, involving ombudsmen, and improving the State's monitoring role.

CIDNY also developed and delivered a training on Section Q requirements for nursing home staff, administrators, and advocates. The training also helps staff learn about the rights of people with developmental disabilities under these new rules, understand and learn from ways other states have complied, and develop and share ideas for improving the referral process. The final report on our study and the training is on our website, www.cidny.org.



NEW PROGRAMS AT CIDNY IN 2015-2016

Open Doors Transition Center – From Nursing Home to the Community

The Open Door Transition Center is a statewide program for people who live in a skilled nursing facility for 90 days or more, are eligible for or on Medicaid, and are interested in moving back to the community. In this period, CIDNY's Open Door Transition Center staff assessed over 866 people for community-based services and transition. We also helped 156 people transition back to the community from the institutions they were in. Our team provided outreach information, identified barriers to leaving the facilities, and worked with people with disabilities to establish goals for making the transition back into the community.

Long Term Care Ombudsman – Advocating for Rights and Services in Nursing Homes and Other Facilities

In late 2015, CIDNY became the Long Term Care Ombudsman for New York City. "Ombudsmen" are advocates for people living in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and family type homes. The program is the largest, non-state level program in the country, serving over 53,000 seniors and people with disabilities who are residents in these facilities.

CIDNY's Ombudsman program has six paid staff who oversee a growing team of 90 volunteer advocates. Our volunteers go through a 36-hour training program and are certified by the state. Once certified, volunteers are assigned to a facility to work with the residents to make sure their rights are protected, their needs are met, and any complaints they have are resolved. Since October 2015, we responded to over 3,114 calls or complaints from residents and their family members in the five boroughs. The program is also actively involved in systems advocacy, participating in efforts to improve conditions and promote services in the least restrictive setting.

Fair Housing Act Project – Helping People Understand their Housing Rights and Seek Redress for Discrimination

After a court ruling established that landlords and property management companies were in violation of the Fair Housing Act, a new program was funded to inform landlords of their obligations and renters about their rights. The Fair Housing Act allows for reasonable accommodations (changes to policy such as allowing a service animal in a building that doesn't allow pets) or reasonable modifications (changes to physical space such as installing bars in the bathroom) for people with disabilities. When we identify that someone has faced discrimination in violation of the Fair Housing Act, we refer them to attorneys with expertise in the area.

100%
SUCCESS RATE IN
HEALTH-RELATED
FAIR HEARING
DECISIONS

100%
SUCCESS RATE IN
SOLVING HEALTH
CARE DISPUTES



EDUCATION

CIDNY'S SEVENTH SENSE PROGRAM EDUCATES THE PUBLIC ABOUT DISABILITIES

Our disability literacy training, the Seventh Sense, provides tailored trainings on the ADA and disability rights plus experiential components that help staff of corporations, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations work respectfully and effectively with people with disabilities. CIDNY's Seventh Sense was identified by the Fair Housing Justice Center as part of a remedy in their lawsuit for housing discrimination against Esplanade Venture Partnership, et.al. CIDNY trained the defendant's staff from all five boroughs of New York City as well as staff from White Plains and Rockland County on fair housing law and disability discrimination issues.

Seventh Sense curriculum was also used as part of the training of staff at insurance companies who are now offering case management for people with disabilities through managed care products. This training was delivered in person to over 150 insurance staff members in New York City and for managers of insurance companies nationwide via webinar.

Our Seventh Sense project also developed a specially tailored training to help with orientation for new peer counselors volunteering in New York State's Open Door program and for the Long Term Ombudsman program, which CIDNY administers in New York City. Seventh Sense was also delivered to New York City staff in person and was placed on the New York Association on Independent Living's (NYAIL's) training site for statewide peers as part of their online training program.

Building on Seventh Sense's training for cultural institutions including tourist attractions, like NYC's Skyride, and theaters like the Roundabout Theater, we delivered a training for the house staff of Signature Theatre, to help them assist patrons with disabilities and to develop strategies to help patrons needing accommodations, enhancing the ability of people with disabilities to take part in New York City's rich cultural offerings.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

People with disabilities joined CIDNY for a variety of social and educational activities. These presentations included educational workshops, recreational opportunities, disability awareness trainings, coalition and advocacy meetings, and outreach. Our educational workshops included presentations on budgeting, debt and personal finances, nutrition, civil rights, housing, and using services like Access-a-Ride. Our recreational activities included the ever-popular Writer's Workshop and Movie Nights, as well as outings to museums and New York City greenmarkets, in partnership with Grow NYC. People with disabilities who work with us learned about nutrition, shopping seasonally, and cooking tips.



CIDNY's fun and educational activities for participants included visits to NYC greenmarkets.

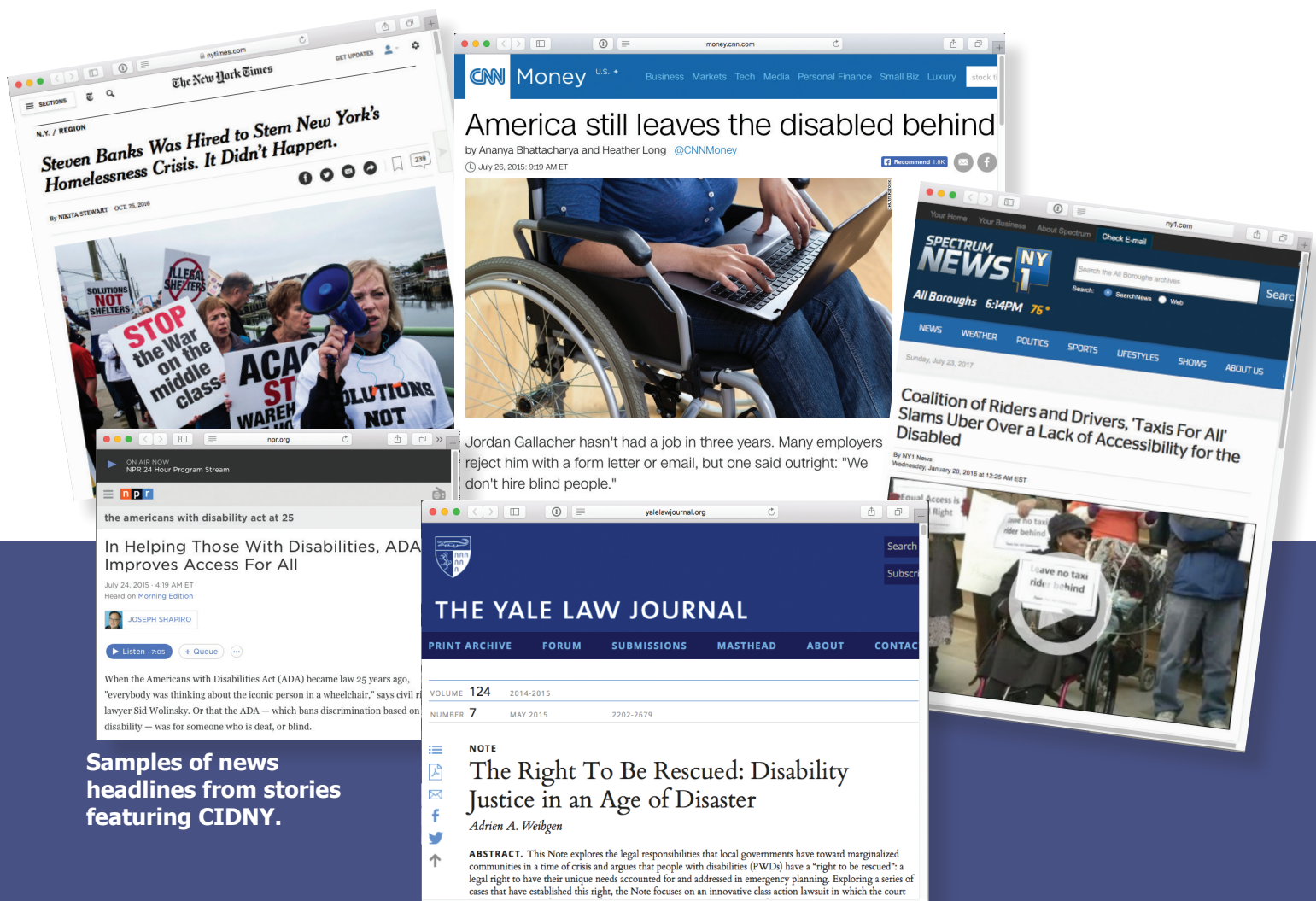
MEDIA

In 2015/16 CIDNY's media outreach garnered over 80 articles, radio stories, and television segments on issues including transportation access, employment for people with disabilities, voter registration access, homelessness and inaccessible shelters, inaccessible sidewalks, taxis and subways, problems related to nursing homes, premium hikes in health insurance, surprise medical bills, and the status of people with disabilities on the 25th and 26th anniversaries of the ADA.

Outlets covering CIDNY included the New York Times, the Wall St. Journal, NPR, the Atlantic Monthly, the Associated Press, WNYC Brian Lehrer Show, DNA Info, CNN Money, Huffington Post, Business Insider, the Daily News, Crain's Health, WCBS-TV, the Albany Times Union, the Yale Law Journal, Midtown Gazette, WMBC-TV News, New Mobility, and Brooklyn Ink.

We produced radio stories in New York State through New York Public News Service, which averaged over 3 million listeners statewide for each story. Stories covered the Emergency Preparedness settlement, the Affordable Care Act, and Surprise Medical Bills legislation.

Our extensive media coverage serves to educate the public, legislators, and potential donors about issues affecting people with disabilities.



Samples of news headlines from stories featuring CIDNY.

Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the ADA

In 2015, CIDNY marked the 25th anniversary of the landmark civil rights law. Since then, we've seen people with disabilities strive and succeed in many aspects of their daily lives.

But New York City still lacks accessible streets, subways, public education, housing, shelter, health care, and more. The little progress made is the result of sustained advocacy efforts and lawsuits brought against the City by disability rights organizations like CIDNY. We've worked in courtrooms, through collective action, and by changing societal attitudes. Here's how CIDNY reflected on the ADA in 2015.

ADA 25:25

In celebration of how far we've come, where we are now, and what we can look forward to, we launched our ADA 25:25 project and spoke to advocates, pioneers, people with disabilities who work with us, and stakeholders. Our 25 stories (for 25 years) covered education, youth, housing, employment, health care, voting rights, and life in general. You can watch these short interviews on the CIDNY [YouTube channel](#).



Watch short interviews online at www.cidny.org

Recognition on the 25th ADA Anniversary by the City Council

On July 22th, CIDNY received a Proclamation from NYC Councilmembers recognizing our work on the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The award was presented by Melissa Mark-Viverito, the Speaker of the Council, Andrew Cohen, the Chair to the Committee on Mental Health, and Councilmembers Rosie Mendez and Ben Kallos. The award recognized CIDNY for our "outstanding contributions to bringing people with disabilities closer to full and equal access" and for our "constructive solutions," advice, and training and technical assistance to public officials and others.

Reports – ADA at 25:

Many Bridges to Cross and ADA Disability Status: ADA 25

CIDNY's reports, "ADA at 25: Many Bridges to Cross" and "Disability Status: ADA 25", reveal that New Yorkers with disabilities do significantly less well than their non-disabled peers. The reports look at eight indicators of well-being: education, employment, income & poverty, health coverage & access, food, housing, marriage & family, and transportation. The outlook is not good for people with disabilities living in New York City.

The data show us that people with disabilities are less likely to get an education or find employment. We are far more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities (36 percent compared to 16 percent). People with disabilities have lower household incomes (51 percent are living below 200 percent of the federal poverty level) and are more likely to be food insecure even when working. We are extremely rent burdened and end up in institutions or become homeless because we cannot afford housing or locate accessible housing. When working, we are stymied by the inaccessibility of our subways and streets.

These reports, created in collaboration with the University of New Hampshire Institute of Disability, identify the gross disparities that persist for people with disabilities and give us recommendations for action. The research should be a catalyst for advocates and policymakers. We should not wait another 25 years to realize the promises of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Both reports are available on our website, www.cidny.org.



Executive Director Susan Dooha thanks Melissa Mark-Viverito and other NYC Councilmembers for their recognition of CIDNY's work.

Council Member Ben Kallos supports CIDNY's push for ADA compliant sidewalks.



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES HAVE CIVIL RIGHTS — WE HELP ENSURE THEY HAVE REMEDIES WHEN THOSE RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED

We educate State and local elected officials and other policy makers on the issues important to people with disabilities in NYC. We participate in various legislative advocacy days with people with disabilities who are part of our advocacy network and staff, provide budget testimony, and organize groups into coalitions that can advocate on common concerns. We draft recommendations and testify on behalf of our coalitions. People with disabilities that we work with come to legislative appointments and lead the teams. Our policy work ensures that legislation that protects the civil rights of people with disabilities, from the Americans with Disabilities Act to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, to the Olmstead and other decisions, are enforced in our community. When advocacy and negotiation do not resolve an issue, we provide comprehensive research, testimony, and story collection to support litigation, as well as acting as plaintiffs in cases that affect the rights of people with disabilities.

Our advocacy efforts include coaching people with disabilities on self-advocacy as well as working for systems change at the city, state, and federal level.

We ramped up our organizing efforts in 2016 by hiring peer advocates

working in all five boroughs of NYC. These advocates work with our long-standing CIDNY Action Network and attend meetings and town halls, participate in lobby days and protests with allied groups, and provide testimony and share their stories with elected officials and other decision makers. Our advocacy efforts center on civic engagement and organizing to support policies and civil rights. We collect stories from the people we work with on a host of issues that impact their ability to participate equally in daily life.



CIDNY staff and consumers march down Broadway during the First Annual Disability Pride Parade.

CURB CUTS: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO POLICYMAKERS

CIDNY volunteers and staff surveyed every cross street in Manhattan below 14th Street to see whether reports from people with disabilities who told us about dangerous curb cuts could be documented to show a pattern. Our surveys revealed that over 68 percent of curb cuts in lower Manhattan did not meet ADA standards and were unsafe for people with mobility and vision disabilities. We presented our findings to the City asking to work with them on remedies. When they refused, we filed a suit seeking civil rights compliance so that people who use wheelchairs, scooters or other mobility devices, and people who are blind or have limited vision have an equal opportunity to be safe on our streets.

Because of our activities and surveys, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer asked us to train her staff so that they could help expand on our snapshot of street and sidewalk safety. They completed surveys on Broadway from 14th Street to 125th Street, finding similar percentages of problems. During a press conference to announce the findings, Ms. Brewer gave CIDNY a Proclamation announcing that July 28, 2015 is CIDNY Accessible Sidewalk Day

– an unexpected honor. The award recognized that “since 1973, CIDNY has been a tireless advocate for New Yorkers with disabilities, consistently and persistently striving to make our city a more welcoming and accessible place.”



Executive Director Susan Dooha joins NYC Councilmember Ben Kallos for a press conference highlighting the status of the City's curb cuts and celebrating the 25th anniversary of the ADA.

Borough President Gale Brewer joins CIDNY in fight for accessible curb cuts



LEGISLATIVE POLICY AND ADVOCACY WINS

In our work, we see the need for change every day. People with disabilities tell us their stories of barriers in their path, getting lost or forgotten in complicated systems, and the hard won successes that they achieve. We learn from these lived experiences and bring people together to help find solutions. We educate the public and government officials, tell them our stories, and help them understand the policy solutions that are within our reach. We testify at hearings and comment on how people with disabilities will be affected by proposed changes to law, regulation, and policy. We bring groups together around common concerns and work to create lasting change. When education and negotiation fail and civil rights are violated, we seek remedies in Court.

Many of these efforts are years in the making. Most of the time, our persistence and hard work pays off. Here are some of our advocacy wins over the past two years.

EDUCATION

The NYC Department of Education (NYC DOE) relied too heavily on suspensions and emergency room visits to address the mental health needs of students in schools. Students were losing valuable class time and were less likely to graduate and go on to work or college.

We realized that other approaches could work without students losing their chance at an education. We talked with the school and eventually filed a complaint with the State seeking a remedy. Now schools are using new ways to help their students and they have the training and resources in schools to avoid unnecessary emergency room visits and suspensions.

In 2016, state legislators passed a law that we advocated for which required mental health education in the school curriculum. The goal is to create greater understanding and reduce stigma.

Strengthening the supports kids with disabilities have to stay in school improves their options for the future.

Testimony by Monica Bartley on the Proposed Settlement for Eastern Paralyzed v. The City of New York regarding New York City Curb Ramps

"I am a resident of New York City. I also work as a Community and Outreach Organizer at the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY (CIDNY).

...CIDNY and I oppose the proposed settlement on curb ramps and sidewalks by United Spinal Association and the City. We are deeply concerned that the newly proposed settlement adequately meets the needs of my peers who are blind, or have low vision, or those with balance and fatigue issues, as well as... people like me who use wheelchairs.

For most of my life, because of polio, I've had to use crutches and then as my condition worsened, I began to use a wheelchair. It is important to me to work and do most things for myself, but New York City streets steal my mobility and independence (because of bad or missing curb ramps)... Clearly, the original settlement entered into many years ago did not solve the issue as the City itself admits that somewhere around 70 percent of curb ramps are not ADA compliant.

Harriet Gershon, a person with a disability who works with CIDNY, told me that she was traveling along 34th Street and Second Avenue. Because of construction, she was guided off the sidewalk and onto the street — once she passed the construction and tried to get back onto the sidewalk, there was no curb cut, so she was stuck on the street and had to ride in traffic for another block or so until she found a usable curb cut. She was scared as it is very dangerous to be forced to ride in traffic in New York City. As coordinator for the CIDNY Action Network, it's my job to know what issues present barriers to people with disabilities in NYC and I hear of problems people have with curb ramps frequently. Many of the people with disabilities that we work with even tell me that they have trouble getting to our meetings because of bad curb ramps."



Monica Bartley, in wheelchair, faces curb with no curb cut.

EMPLOYMENT

As a member of the Medicaid Redesign Team Work Group on the Social Determinants of Health, CIDNY advocated for the Employment First policy, which uses State policies to support the employment of people with disabilities. Based on these recommendations, the Governor signed an Executive Order to open new opportunities.

Improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities helps reduce the high rates of poverty for people with disabilities.

HEALTH CARE

Our project, New Yorkers for Accessible Health Coverage (NYFAHC), provided critical input as regulations were being drafted to protect people with disabilities from “surprise” medical bills. Health care providers no longer issue “surprise bills” and people with disabilities better understand their rights. The Surprise Medical Bill law went into effect in April 2015. The new law brought protections for people who received services from providers they did not know were out of their network, like anesthesiologists used during surgery. This means that when people with disabilities get a “surprise bill” for services they and their doctor planned ahead for, or a bill for emergency services from an out-of-network provider, the individual will only have to pay the amount they would have owed if the service had been in-network. The new law also says that plans must provide a list of all doctors, hospitals, and other facilities that belong to the network and must include doctors’ board certifications, the languages they speak, and the network hospitals where they practice.

Our health care coalition successfully educated lawmakers to maintain “prescriber prevails,” a provision of law which lets prescribers—rather than insurance companies—select the medicine that is right for the people they treat.

New York State’s insurance coverage limited people who have amputations to “one limb per lifetime,” a limit on prosthetic devices. CIDNY fought to end this requirement and people can get a new prosthetic when the one they have wears out or their needs change.

Eliminating barriers to affordable and comprehensive health coverage and access to care helps people with disabilities maintain their health and independence.

HOUSING

Our advocacy helped the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) understand why it had to revise “fair housing choice” language to give people with disabilities integrated and accessible housing options. The change will help people with disabilities by clarifying reasonable accommodations and modifications, educating tenants about their rights, and landlords about their obligations.

We successfully advocated for changes in state and city law to help prevent homelessness among people with disabilities who live in rent regulated housing through an improved rent freeze program that will help more people.

Eliminating barriers to affordable housing helps people with disabilities to stay in their communities.

IMPLEMENTING CIVIL RIGHTS LAW — CIDNY'S LANDMARK CASES

Emergency Planning

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy once again brought to the forefront how New York City overlooked people with disabilities in emergency management. Hurricane Sandy added new urgency and credibility to our lawsuit, filed in 2011, against the City for its lack of planning for people with disabilities in emergencies and disasters. CIDNY and our lawyers at Disability Rights Advocates and Sheppard Mullin won this landmark case in federal court.

On March 6, 2014, New York City agreed to and the Federal District Court approved, settlement agreements concerning the evacuation of high rises, shelter accessibility, communications, canvassing, transportation, and disability representation in emergency preparedness planning. The agreements are the most sweeping and detailed in the nation, standing as a landmark that will guide state and local planners nationwide. (To see details of the court case and remedies, please go to <http://www.cidny.org/emergency-preparedness.php>.)

According to HUD statistics, at least 40 percent of the homeless population are people with disabilities.

Homeless Shelters

While it is well known that some people who have mental health disabilities end up in shelters, it is not often considered that people with physical disabilities, people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, people who are blind or low vision, and people with other disabilities also end up in shelters. These people often end up in shelters because of their high poverty rates, high rent burdens, and lack of stable, affordable housing.

In October 2014, CIDNY sent a demand letter to the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). It described how New Yorkers are deprived of their civil rights in the following ways, based on a review of the experiences of the people with disabilities who work with us. We entered into settlement talks together with HRA and our partners, the Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless. In 2017, New York City agreed to a settlement that will require them to make shelters accessible and to provide disability-related accommodations.

Experiences in NYC shelters

Joyce, a widow from Queens, has multiple disabilities. She was living on a couch at her daughter's tiny apartment. When her daughter moved, Joyce lost her housing. She tried to enter a women's shelter, but was turned away and told to go to the Bronx because "they could not accommodate someone who uses a scooter." The door at the main entrance of the Queens shelter has a step, and there is no elevator in the shelter.*

Sharon receives Social Security Disability Income since she had a liver transplant and lives in women's shelters. She provided the shelter with documentation of her need for a special diet and accommodations because she is immune suppressed, but the shelter did not meet her needs. She was placed in a room with ten women and shares kitchen and bathroom facilities, although her documentation indicated that these situations would heighten her risk of infections. She was told that she had to leave the shelter during the day, although her physician's instructions indicated that she has to rest. Despite her special diet, she was told that she may not bring food in with her. She is getting infections and having anxiety attacks as a result of her situation.

David has neurological disabilities due to chemical exposure at his previous job; he uses crutches and has a service dog. He also has respiratory disabilities. He has medical documentation of his disabilities and need for a service animal. The shelter security staff harass him about his service animal. The shelter caseworker refused to meet with him because of his service animal.

Alfonso is Deaf. He is in a shelter and reports that the staff members do not provide ASL interpreters for him despite his requests. He tries to write down his communications with staff or gives up attending meetings with them since he knows that an ASL interpreter will not be provided. He reported that while at the shelter, he was never told that the shelter would only hold his belongings for seven days; when he went to get them, they had been donated. Among the things he lost were clothes and personal items like family pictures and jewelry.

*All names have been changed.

Negotiations are underway to remedy these deficiencies. If negotiations are not successful, CIDNY will litigate the civil rights violations.

Voting Rights

Three and a half years after a federal judge ruled that the NYC Board of Elections was not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, in part because of evidence supplied by CIDNY's polling site surveys, we still see access problems at polling sites. Voting is a fundamental right in our electoral democracy and the means by which voters can communicate their concerns to their government. With over 900,000 people living in New York City with disabilities, the NYC BOE must resolve the issues and impediments that confront voters with disabilities. Failing to do so disenfranchises a significant part of our community and discourages voters with disabilities to be active participants in their government.

CIDNY surveyed polling sites throughout the City's five boroughs on Election Day in 2015 and 2016, and we still saw problems with ramps, signage, entryways, and pathways. We continue to apprise NYCBOE and the plaintiffs in the lawsuit of the results of our surveys.

ELECTION ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY, CONDUCTED NOVEMBER 3, 2015

43
TOTAL NUMBER OF
SITES SURVEYED

38 (88%)
NUMBER OF SITES
WITH BARRIERS

5 (12%)
NUMBER OF SITES
WITHOUT BARRIERS



Left: Ramp position and door opening makes space at landing inaccessible for those using wheelchairs.

Right: Chair used to prop open door narrows entrance and blocks access for those using wheelchairs or walkers.

**14.2 MILLION
IN BENEFIT
ENROLLMENT
SAVINGS**

**\$41.6 MILLION SAVED
BY RETURNING PEOPLE
TO THE COMMUNITY
AND PREVENTING
INSTITUTIONALIZATION**

**90 CENTS OF EVERY
DOLLAR GOES DIRECTLY
TO HELP NEW YORKERS
WITH DISABILITIES**

**38,371 INDIVIDUALS
REACHED**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CONTINUED SUPPORT
OF OUR WORK.**

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets	June 30, 2016	June 30, 2015
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	419,986	286,741
Investments	435,489	533,544
Pledges receivable	49,422	35,363
Government grants receivable	513,570	626,228
Prepaid expenses and other assets	9,349	13,377
Total Current Assets	\$1,427,816	\$1,495,253
Non-current Assets		
Security deposits	85,754	85,754
Fixed assets, net of accumulated depreciation	32,450	47,626
Total non-current assets	118,204	133,380
Total Assets	\$1,546,020	\$1,628,633
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	117,906	200,394
Government grant advances	38,422	36,408
Total Current Liabilities	\$156,328	\$236,802
Non-Current Liabilities		
Deferred rent	102,264	81,049
Total Liabilities	\$258,592	\$317,851
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	1,118,539	1,148,449
Temporarily restricted	168,889	162,333
Total Net Assets	\$1,287,428	\$1,310,782
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$1,546,020	\$1,628,633



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES*

	Total June 30, 2016	Total June 30, 2015
Support and Revenue		
<u>Grants and Contributions</u>		
Government contracts	2,551,017	\$2,174,137
Foundation and institutional grants	71,348	27,519
Individual contributions	313,182	340,339
Fee income	76,115	57,140
In-kind contributions	79,000	35,000
Interest income	2,003	4,678
Unrealized gain on investments	399	44
Other income	12,500	0
<u>Net assets released from restrictions</u>		
Satisfaction of program restrictions	0	0
Total Support and Revenue	\$3,105,564	\$2,638,857
Expenses		
Program services	2,815,156	2,441,136
Supporting Services		
Management and general	293,875	338,213
Fundraising	19,887	22,597
Total Supporting Services	\$313,762	\$360,810
Total Expenses	\$3,128,918	\$2,801,946
Change in Net Assets	(23,354)	(163,089)
Net assets – beginning of year	1,310,782	1,473,871
Net assets – End of Year	\$1,287,428	\$1,310,782

*For the year ended June 30, 2016 (With comparative totals for the year ended June 30, 2015).
Audited financial statements are available upon request.



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