



# ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

**cidny**  
CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE OF  
THE DISABLED, NY

# Executive Director's Message

Sharon McLennon Wier,  
Ph.D., MEd., CRC, LMHC  
Executive Director



As I reflect on CIDNY's 47th year as a Center for Independent Living located in New York City, I am filled with pride at how we have continued to expand our reach while staying true to our core mission of ensuring that people with disabilities can navigate and direct their own life journeys with grace, dignity, and autonomy.

This year CIDNY provided vital services to over 65,000 New Yorkers with disabilities across all five boroughs. The people we served had many types of disabilities, including physical, mental, cognitive, sensory, medical, emotional, behavioral, and learning. Our staff assisted 225 consumers with transitioning from institutional settings to independent living in the community, and provided benefits counseling to more than 4,000 households—critical work that enhances self-sufficiency and day-to-day living. We provided 201 consumers with employment support in a city with increased financial costs.

I am particularly excited about two major expansions in our programming service delivery. Our Veterans Direct Care Program, launched this year, supports veterans with disabilities through home-based personal assistance and care coordination. It is CIDNY's honor to serve these veterans, who have given so much of their bodies, hearts, and minds to our country. They protected us, and now we must support and lift them up in their time of need. In January 2025, we made significant strides in our mental health services, by launching free Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) group sessions with a framework of multicultural disability competency, to help people with disabilities explore identity, build community, and cope with stress.

# Executive Director's Message

This year's advocacy wins demonstrate our continued impact on systemic change. We mobilized against the pause in NYC's congestion pricing plan and celebrated long-awaited concrete progress, like the opening of the 14th Street subway station elevator. We organized Consumer Action Network meetings and action alerts to defend the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program from harmful state proposals.

Through our Disability Mayoral Forum in April, we brought together candidates to discuss the seven major areas of barriers to accessibility in physical health care, mental health care, housing, employment, education, transportation, and voting—ensuring disability voices are heard in our city's future.

A wonderful highlight of this year was our commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Willowbrook Consent Decree, featuring CIDNY Board member Bernard Carabello, alongside journalist and advocate Geraldo Rivera. This event was a powerful reminder of our disability rights history, and reinforced why our advocacy work remains so essential today.

We are grateful for the continued support of our Board members, donors, and partners. Following our successful inaugural gala in May of 2024, we are planning our next celebration, on October 27, 2025: "Celebrating Advocacy: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow." This event will honor CIDNY's legacy while raising funds for the critical work ahead.

Each donated dollar contributes to our ability to positively change someone's life. Thank you for your trust and support of CIDNY and for helping us build a more inclusive New York City for all.

# President's Message

## Sunita Dutta, Esq. President of the Board



After serving on CIDNY's Board of Directors for 17 years, it remains a true honor to serve as Board President. Each year deepens my admiration for this extraordinary organization and the inspiring team that drives our mission forward.

This year, I've witnessed CIDNY's impact in so many meaningful ways: a veteran able to remain at home with the support he deserves, job seekers gaining the confidence to pursue new opportunities, and families navigating housing, healthcare, and benefits with dignity. Our staff provided benefits counseling to more than 9,154 people and helped 387 New Yorkers move out of institutions and into homes of their own.

Our advocacy has been just as powerful. Together, we fought for accessible transportation, defended education funding, and raised our voices in defense of Medicaid. We ensured that people with disabilities remain at the center of vital conversations about housing, climate justice, voting rights, and civic participation. And we celebrated disability rights history by honoring the 50th anniversary of the Willowbrook Consent Decree, recommitting ourselves to the ongoing fight for inclusion and equality.

The power of our advocacy extends beyond the disability community. When we fight for accessibility and inclusion, we create benefits that reach elderly people, pregnant individuals, parents with strollers, people recovering from injuries, and anyone navigating temporary or permanent disabilities. Our work builds a more inclusive society for everyone.

None of this would be possible without our partners, donors, advocates, and friends. Your generosity and solidarity brings CIDNY's mission from vision into reality.

# Board of Directors

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**MISSION:** CIDNY'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.

**HISTORY:** Founded in 1978, CIDNY has its roots in the Independent Living movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This movement challenged the segregation, inequality, and dependency that people with disabilities had been forced to live with until then. Inspired by the Civil Rights movement, Independent Living is premised on people with disabilities having every opportunity to live with independence and dignity, remedying deficiencies in the environment rather than viewing people with disabilities as deficient and working toward a society where everybody can thrive.

**WHO WE ARE:** CIDNY is led by and for the disability community we serve. Over 51% of our Board of Directors and over 50% of our 160 staff members have disabilities. Many others are caregivers for family members with disabilities. We represent the great diversity of New York City—collectively speaking 13 languages beyond English and reflecting the racial, cultural, and socio-economic spectrum of our city. This year, we served over 65,000 New Yorkers with disabilities across all five boroughs.

# About CIDNY

**THE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS WE FACE:** People with disabilities confront complex barriers to independence that exist in often intertwined systems — i.e., limited access to quality education; restricted employment opportunities; inaccessible housing, healthcare, and transportation; bureaucratic obstacles to essential benefits; and persistent discrimination. These environmental and societal barriers prevent full participation in community life.

**HOW WE CREATE CHANGE:** CIDNY dismantles barriers through direct services, advocacy, and education across seven interconnected “pillars” that are essential to independent living: mental health, physical health, transportation, employment, education, voting, and housing. We also work on climate justice, recognizing that environmental issues disproportionately impact our community. We connect individuals with vital resources, advocate for policy changes and build capacity within our community.

**OUR APPROACH:** CIDNY's work is organized across three key areas: direct services, advocacy, and education. We administer 32 federal, state, and city contract programs that provide comprehensive support to tens of thousands of New Yorkers each year. We build capacity and capability in our community through our education programs. And we fight for systemic change at all levels through our policy advocacy.

We work with people of all ages across a full spectrum of disability—physical; mental health; sensory; vision and hearing loss; medical conditions such as cancer, lupus, and diabetes; emotional; behavioral; intellectual; and developmental disabilities.



# How We Create Change



## **Direct Services**

Benefits Navigation:

- Consumer Services
- New York Connects

Housing:

- Open Doors Transition Center
- Olmstead Housing Subsidy
- Rapid Transition Housing Program

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

Mental Health

Employment

Veterans Direct Care



## **Advocacy**

Policy and Legislation

Grassroots Organizing

Voter Engagement

Legal Services



## **Education**

Community workshops

Disability literacy training

Outreach events

# Direct Services: Benefits Navigation

## Consumer Services

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Our 17-person Consumer Services team provides a crucial bridge between our community and the complex web of public benefits and services that can mean the difference between stability and crisis. When someone faces eviction, can't afford medication, or needs help with disability benefits, our team provides personalized guidance to navigate often overwhelming bureaucratic systems.

We help people access essential support, including cash assistance, food benefits, healthcare coverage, housing subsidies, disability benefits, and emergency assistance for utilities or moving expenses. Our staff work alongside consumers through applications, appeals processes, and system navigation, ensuring they understand their rights and options at every step.

This year Consumer Services provided benefit assistance to 3,815 NYC households and helped complete and submit 932 individual benefit applications.

Consumer Services administers several programs that address specific community needs:

- **Community Health Advocates (CHA)** helps New York City consumers navigate health coverage, access low-cost or free care, solve billing issues, understand health care rights, and file appeals. This year CHA helped 708 consumers with 1,098 healthcare-related needs and saved New York State \$20,959,156.
- **Independent Consumer Advocacy Network (ICAN)** serves as the ombudsman for people with Medicaid who need long-term care services. When managed care plans deny coverage for essential services like home attendants or medical equipment, our ICAN team fights for the services our community members need. We are the exclusive agency in the statewide network serving people eligible for Fully Integrated Duals Advantage for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. This year ICAN closed 643 cases for 450 people and saved New York State \$9,171,779.
- **National Council on Aging's** program helps low-income seniors and adults with disabilities access programs that pay for healthcare and food as part of a network of 85 Benefit Enrollment Centers nationwide. This year the program helped 599 households complete 826 applications.
- **Nutrition Outreach and Education Program** reduces hunger and food insecurity by maximizing participation in federally funded nutrition assistance programs. Coordinators provide education and enrollment assistance at community sites throughout the city.

# Direct Services: Benefits Navigation

## New York Connects

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Our NY Connects program is a parallel benefits navigation system through our 20-person team. Funded by the New York State Office for the Aging, this citywide program helps people of all ages with disabilities access public benefits like Medicaid, Medicare, housing programs, SNAP, and Social Security, while also supporting caregivers, families, and professionals who assist people needing long-term services.

With counselors based in all five boroughs, NY Connects provides person-centered benefits counseling that ensures people are linked with the resources they need to maintain their independence. The program is a trusted resource for anyone navigating the complex landscape of long-term services and supports, from individuals just beginning to explore their options to families in crisis needing immediate assistance.

This year we served 5,339 people through New York Connects.



Sabora has a medical disability and was referred to New York Connects for help with housing. She received help accessing NYC's emergency housing system and longer term housing. Her NY Connects counselor also helped her recertify for SNAP and provided her with a NY Connects grocery card to help with immediate food insecurity. As of November, this mom and her eight-year-old daughter are living in a newly remodeled two-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn.

**"I really appreciate CIDNY's help."  
-Sabora**

# Direct Services: Housing

## Open Doors Transition Program

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Our Open Doors Transition Center works directly inside nursing homes and intermediate care facilities, helping people who want to return to community living prepare for that transition. This federal program, originally called Money Follows the Person, serves people who have been in institutional care for 60 days or more and are ready to move toward community living.

Transition Specialists work with residents and their families on site in their facilities. They provide Community Preparedness Education—building the information and skills needed for successful transitions. They help people identify potential barriers, clarify what services they'll need, and develop realistic transition plans while they are still in residence. Our peer advocates, who have lived experience with transitions, provide one-on-one support and share their experiences with residents and families still in institutions. We also offer coaching to help people develop self-advocacy skills they'll need for navigating systems once they've moved back to the community.

This year:

- With the support of the Open Doors team, 132 consumers transitioned from nursing homes: 110 moved to apartments or homes, and 22 moved to transitional homes or assisted living.
- Our Peer Advocate provided one-on-one services to 550 consumers
- Our Education and Outreach team completed Person-Centered Planning Coaching sessions with 57 participants and provided in-service training to 125 nursing home staff.

# Direct Services: Housing

## Housing Services Department

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Securing appropriate, accessible, affordable housing is one of the greatest challenges facing New Yorkers with disabilities. Whether someone is living in a nursing home and hoping to return to community living, experiencing homelessness, or facing housing instability, our Housing Services Department provides the concrete solutions that make independent living possible. Through two specialized rental subsidy programs, we connect people with accessible, affordable housing and the supportive services they need to thrive in their communities.

**THE OLMSTEAD HOUSING SUBSIDY** provides rental subsidies specifically for seniors and people with chronic disabilities leaving long-term skilled nursing facilities or avoiding nursing home placement entirely. Participants can choose any housing that meets program requirements and receive ongoing supportive services to ensure successful community integration and understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

**THE RAPID TRANSITION HOUSING PROGRAM** provides ongoing rental subsidies for high-need Medicaid beneficiaries, ensuring that seniors and homeless people with disabilities can afford accessible, safe, sanitary, and sustainable housing in the community. Each participant works with both a Housing Specialist and an Independent Living Specialist. Community Transition Services help pay for furniture and other essential items needed to establish a home.

This year:

- CIDNY's Housing Services programs provided housing assistance to 2,655 people
- We helped 344 individuals complete 379 housing subsidy applications
- We helped 225 people transition out of nursing homes and adult homes and into the community
- Through diversion services, we helped 61 people avoid institutionalization in the first place
- We saved New York State \$6,660,348.

# Direct Services: Housing

## Housing Services Department

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"I was a patient in different nursing homes for almost four years, before finding a place that I could call home. The process wasn't an easy one. I experienced many stages of despair; afraid I'd spend the rest of my life inside of an institution.

**Without the help of CIDNY organization and their amazing employees I couldn't imagine what my situation could have turned into." -Anjanette**



"Ever since the beginning, my caseworker, Isabella has been very determined and persistent with making sure I get housing as soon as possible. She did a fantastic job and I feel super appreciative I got somebody like her handling my case. She was with me every step of the way and made sure I was taken care of.

**My time with CIDNY has been a great experience."**  
**-James**

"I am a brain tumor survivor and have been on long term remission from experiencing any seizures for the past couple of years. My medical conditions left me hospitalized, and soon after in recovery at a nursing home with no sense of direction. **CIDNY provided me with a second chance to live again.** This organization has provided me with a home, and the support to maintain stability while I adjust to my transition. CIDNY is the way to go." -Barbara

# Direct Services: Ombudsman Program

## Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

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For many residents of nursing homes and adult care facilities, CIDNY's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program serves as their voice and advocate when they face problems with their care or treatment. As the sole New York City contractor for this statewide program, we work to ensure that 53,000 residents across over 200 facilities in the five boroughs understand their rights and receive quality care.

Our staff and volunteers regularly visit facilities to build relationships with residents, investigate complaints, and work toward satisfactory resolutions. We provide information and assistance on everything from resident rights to discharge planning; helping people navigate complex systems during vulnerable times in their lives.

The most common concerns we hear from residents include staff shortages, being treated with indifference or insensitivity, and facilities failing to respond to complaints. We bridge the gap between residents and facility administration, advocating for improvements that benefit everyone in long-term care.

This year our staff and volunteers:

- Visited all 167 nursing homes and 84 of 85 adult care facilities in New York
- Made over 1,608 visits to nursing homes and adult care facilities, a 10% increase in routine access visits over the previous year
- Provided over 27,768 instances of information and assistance to residents, families, and other stakeholders, regarding resident rights, discharge planning, and choosing a long-term care facility
- Received and investigated 3,575 complaints.

# Direct Services: Ombudsman Program

Zina Santana, an Adult Care Manager with CIDNY's Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, recently received a special honor from the people who know her work best—the residents she serves.

In August, resident councils at both Brooklyn Adult Care Center and Brookdale Assisted Living came together to present Zina with an award and letter recognizing her exceptional advocacy on their behalf. The heartfelt recognition speaks to the real impact of her work across both facilities.

"We are deeply grateful for the dedication and professionalism you have consistently shown in addressing our concerns," wrote Nathaniel Farley, Co-Captain of the Brooklyn Adult Care resident council. "Your efforts have not only resolved complex issues but have also helped cultivate a stronger sense of trust and fairness within our community. Thank you for being a tireless champion for the residents of Brooklyn Adult Care Center. Your contributions have had a profound and lasting impact."

As CIDNY's 11-person ombudsman team monitors conditions across 167 nursing homes and adult care facilities throughout the five boroughs, recognition like this reminds us why this work matters. When residents feel heard, respected, and protected, it makes all the difference.

# Direct Services: Mental Health

## Mental Health

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Mental health support is fundamental to independent living, yet people with disabilities often struggle to find providers who understand their experiences and needs. CIDNY addresses this gap through peer-delivered services for our community and training programs for providers across New York State.

Our Wellness Calls program provides regular check-ins that help people create action plans for challenges while reducing the isolation that can compound mental health struggles. What makes these calls effective is that they're delivered by staff who understand disability from lived experience.

In January 2025 we began offering cognitive behavioral therapy groups specifically designed for our community. Our Empowerment Group offers an eight-session curriculum that teaches practical coping strategies. Our drop-in Meet Up sessions provide ongoing peer support. Both programs create safe spaces for people with disabilities to connect with others who share similar experiences.

We also address a critical gap in mental health provider education. We offer New York State accredited continuing education courses that teach licensed mental health clinicians how to deliver culturally appropriate, trauma-informed care to people with disabilities.

This year CIDNY's Mental Health Program staff:

- Made 6,057 wellness calls to 5,453 individuals and spoke with 2,257 people. 100% of survey respondents reported feeling better after the calls and found it helpful to talk to someone about their situation
- Facilitated 38 Empowerment Group sessions serving 27 unique participants; 63% of participants who completed both pre- and post-assessments showed decreased stress levels
- Held 11 Meet Up sessions with 10 unique participants; 80% of attendees reported learning new coping skills and feeling less isolated.

# Direct Services: Mental Health

At a feedback session following the first cycle of Empowerment Group sessions, participants said:

"I am very, very isolated, also largely homebound. I was a little hesitant about group settings. But it turned out to be a really positive experience. I was seeking to connect with others who, while not facing exactly the same challenges, share similar struggles as a disabled person. In my experience, it's extremely difficult, if not impossible, for able-bodied people to truly understand what disabled individuals go through... both in terms of basic daily challenges and the ability to maintain a social life." -Maria

"The decision to join did me wonders. I feel more confident in managing my stress, my sadness, and overall well-being." -David

"I felt like everyone in our group was genuinely willing to help, and they had very useful practical tips, as well as sometimes very beautiful perspectives that truly meant a lot to me. Especially knowing that we're all dealing with similar circumstances, not the same but similar struggles." -Rosemarie



# Direct Services: Employment

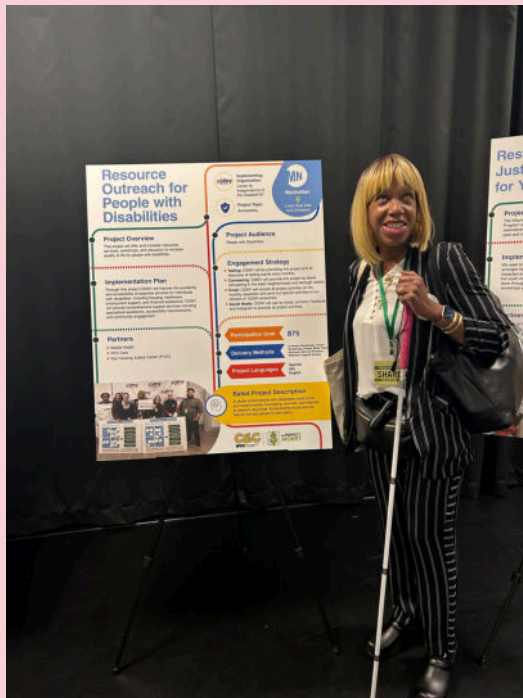
## Employment

Stable employment supports independence, but people with disabilities face significant barriers in the job market. Our Employment Services department helps people with new or chronic disabilities prepare for, find, and maintain meaningful work, while also supporting those pursuing higher education or exploring new career paths.

Through individual counseling and group workshops, we provide comprehensive support that goes beyond job placement. We help people assess their skills and interests, develop job search strategies, practice interviewing, understand their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and connect with employers who value diverse talent.

This year, we:

- Provided vocational services to 441 individuals through our ACCES-VR vocational rehabilitation contract: 404 received vocational services and 37 received youth/youth transition services



From 2021-2025, CIDNY served as a lead contributor to MyCIL, a research project funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR). The project examined vocational salience among minority youth and young adults ages 14–24 with significant disabilities, out of work and out of secondary schooling.

CIDNY vocational counselors worked with 53 participants throughout New York City, administering career assessments and providing interventions including employment readiness workshops and assistance accessing community resources. Of the 53 participants, 10 obtained employment, while 43 continue to require job readiness and independent living assistance.

Results were presented by CIDNY Executive Director Sharon McLennon Wier at the American Psychological Association annual conference in Denver.

# Direct Services: Veterans

## Veterans Direct Care

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In March 2024, CIDNY launched our new Veterans Direct Care (VDC) Program through a Veterans Care Agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This program serves veterans of any age who are at risk of nursing home placement by providing them with flexible budgets to hire their own care providers and receive home and community-based services.

As a VA-approved Aging and Disability Network Agency, CIDNY provides person-centered counseling to help veterans manage their budgets, hire workers, and navigate both VA benefits and state and local resources. Our Independent Living Specialists help veterans secure essential home modifications, medical equipment, and access benefits ranging from property tax exemptions to burial assistance.

The program reflects our commitment to veteran-directed care—empowering veterans to control their own services while providing the support they need to live independently in their communities rather than in institutional settings.

### **This year, we:**

- Served 50 veterans across all five boroughs, with the highest concentration in Brooklyn (39%) and Queens (30%)
- Helped veterans access essential home modifications including wheelchair ramps, walk-in showers, and medical equipment
- Connected veterans with state benefits including the Blind Veterans Annuity Fund, Combat Veterans Property Tax Exemption, and burial assistance
- Assisted with VA benefits applications including Aid and Attendance and service connection benefits
- Served a diverse veteran population: 87% male, 13% female. The highest number of their service-connected disabilities were diabetes (13%), back injuries (11%), and PTSD (9%)

# Direct Services: Veterans



Emanuel, a Vietnam veteran, acquired a disability in 2024 and applied for Veterans Direct Home Care Services through CIDNY and the VA. The program paid for 40 hours a week of home care, alleviating a tremendous financial burden on Emanuel's family. Additionally, Emanuel's CIDNY counselor connected him with the Veterans Blind Annuity Fund, shared information about how to access a property tax benefit, and provided needed supplies and medications.

"Our CIDNY representative was professional and always available to assist in navigating through some complicated VA instructions on filing for benefits," Emanuel reports. "We are truly grateful to CIDNY for the dedication and service for veterans like myself...."

**We strongly recommend veterans to contact this agency for assistance."**



In May, 2025, CIDNY Veteran Direct Care Independent Living Specialist James Calicchio spoke at a packed town hall for the candidates for New York State Attorney General at SUNY Westchester Community College.

James, a U.S. Navy veteran who served during the Second Gulf War, said "I have worked alongside CIDNY and the VA since the beginning of the Veteran Direct Care Program... Our veterans count on this program, and other associated programs to help them live more independently and make them feel that they are a person again."

# Advocacy

CIDNY's advocacy works to create systemic change that improves life for all New Yorkers with disabilities. We work at the city, state, and federal levels to remove barriers, protect rights, and ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard in policy decisions that affect the quality of all of our lives.

Our approach combines grassroots organizing with direct policy advocacy. We mobilize our community around the issues that matter most through our Consumer Action Network's monthly meetings, where community members learn about disability issues and practice advocacy skills; and our Student Action Network, which focuses on improving campus life for students with disabilities. We testify at hearings, meet with legislators, conduct research, collaborate with and help steer other groups advocating on the same issues, and ensure that people with disabilities lead advocacy efforts on the policies that affect them.



This year's CIDNY's advocacy helped achieve major successes in:

**Education:** Secured over \$400 million in restored funding for NYC education programs that disproportionately serve students with disabilities, plus an additional \$70 million for special education preschool services. Updated Advanced Foundation Aid formula to better fund students with disabilities.

**Health:** Passage of legislation providing no-cost asthma inhalers and the Local Input in Community Healthcare Act requiring public engagement before hospital closures.

**Mental Health:** Secured increased funding for Daniel's Law, expanding peer-based mental health crisis response teams from Rochester to New York City—a major victory in how our communities address mental health emergencies.

**Housing:** Supported implementation of Good Cause Eviction protections and advocated for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) program improvements to help seniors and people with disabilities avoid displacement.

# Advocacy

**Transportation:** Successfully advocated for AI-powered translation features in Access-A-Ride apps to improve communication between drivers and riders. Conducted extensive outreach educating seniors and families about transportation accessibility rights.

**Voting:** Led comprehensive poll site accessibility surveys across all five boroughs during multiple elections, working with the NYC Comptroller's Office and presenting findings at national forums to drive improvements.

**Employment:** Continued advocacy to phase out subminimum wage for people with disabilities, testifying at the federal, state, and city levels.

## Advocacy in Action

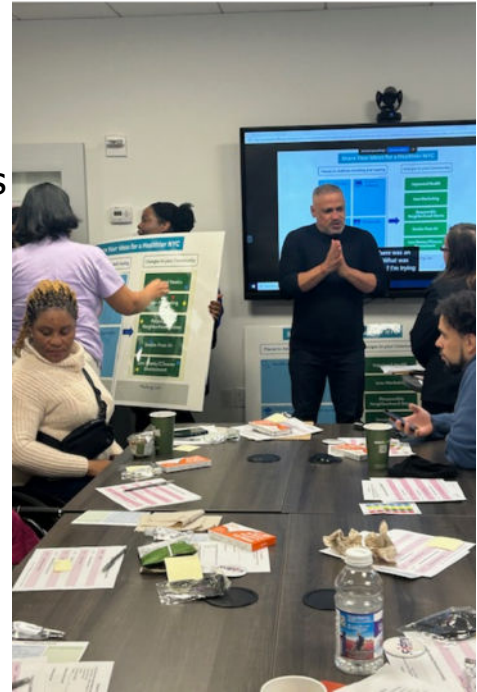


# Education

Education empowers our community with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate systems, understand their rights, and self-advocate. Our educational programming reaches thousands each year through workshops, community events, and partnerships across all five boroughs.

Our workshops cover essential topics that directly impact daily life: fair housing rights, affordable housing navigation, nutrition and food safety, financial stability, and health advocacy. We also provide specialized training on disability literacy and etiquette to organizations and institutions, helping them better serve people with disabilities.

Beyond formal workshops, we engage the community through participatory events like the NYC Civic Engagement Commission's "The People's Money," which offers NYC residents the opportunity to help decide how millions of dollars in discretionary funding gets spent. We participate in career fairs, health and wellness events, and advocacy days that connect our community with resources and opportunities.



## **This year, we:**

- Delivered accessible, culturally responsive educational programming to over 2,000 people with disabilities, families, and community members.
- Provided disability literacy trainings to 25 organizations, covering disability rights, accommodations, and inclusive practices.
- Conducted 157 workshops on housing rights, financial stability, nutrition, and health advocacy.
- Participated in 15 college and career fairs, 7 community resource fairs, and 3 advocacy events.
- Hosted 10 vaccination clinics and 21 health education sessions.

# International Visits

CIDNY's advocacy, information and referral, and training expertise attract attention nationally and internationally. Disability advocates from around the world regularly learn about CIDNY from our website and contact our Executive Director for information and requests visits. Over one billion people living with disabilities globally—approximately 15% of the world's population.

CIDNY's model serves as a leading example for independence, inclusion, and resiliency for all people living with disability.



## This year's international visitors included:

**Thailand:** Delegation of disability advocates involved in the independent living movement

**Sweden:** Representatives from Swedish Accessibility and SRF Gothenburg (for people with visual impairment and blindness) who visited while participating in the NYC Marathon

**France:** Thibaut De Martimprey, Director of the Louis Braille Campus in Paris, an international initiative focused on research and innovation for visual impairment inclusion (pictured above with Dr. McLennon Wier)

**United Kingdom:** Dr. Amo Raju, Disability Ambassador and former CEO of Disability Direct

**Denmark:** Delegation representing the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs visiting in connection with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



# Employee of the Year

## Damon Anderson

### Benefits Counselor, NY Connects

Damon Anderson has worked at CIDNY for over four years, though his experience in nonprofit and human services spans twenty-seven years. What drew him to this work was "the ongoing need for advocating for people who need benefits and services, as well as increased representation and visibility in the community." As a NY Connects Benefits Counselor, he becomes part of a client's support circle before introducing them to self-advocacy—a process requiring trust, as many remain hesitant about disclosing their disability status. We talked to Damon about his CIDNY experience:

**Q:** Could you share a memorable moment from your work at CIDNY?

**A:** One client contacted NY Connects after losing his home in a fire that tragically claimed his mother's life. When I met him, his sorrow was palpable—he was in shock, living in a hotel with no resources. NY Connects immediately provided a benefits checkup, grocery card, and helped him apply for Human Resources Administration benefits. Within days of entering shelter, he received a housing voucher and became stably housed within months. Another client contacted NY Connects during a period of extreme depression and financial insecurity. We assisted him with completing HRA benefits applications and provided him with a grocery card, then helped him apply for Social Security benefits. He was approved and received \$40,000 in retroactive benefits. Half a year later, he confided that at the time when he initially contacted NY Connects, he had been experiencing active suicidal ideations. He commented that he is uncertain where he would be in life if NY Connects had not assisted him at that time.

**Q:** What makes CIDNY's approach unique?

**A:** CIDNY employees work hard to provide effective communication with our clients, while providing updated information about resources throughout New York City. Also, a willingness to provide advocacy to clients, allows for a meaningful system of trust that benefits our clients and our work as a team. We apply person-centered principles and engage clients in honest conversation. Our work involves resourcefulness, extensive research, and examining needs from the perspective of a humanitarian. We listen because we care.

**Q:** If you had to choose one word to describe CIDNY, what would it be?

**A:** "Necessary." CIDNY staff are well informed, constantly trained, and provide services in a compassionate, human-hearted way during moments of crisis—loss of employment, homelessness, food insecurity. As an Independent Living Center, CIDNY meets clients where they are in their process, at all stages of need.

Director of NY Connects Paige Munson says of Damon:

**"Damon brings compassion and humanity to every interaction. He takes the time to truly understand each person's story and goes above and beyond to ensure they feel seen, supported, and empowered."**

**Congratulations, Damon!**

# In The News

Journalists turn to CIDNY as a trusted go-to expert source for disability-related news and/or a disability perspective. CIDNY frequently speaks with journalists on a variety of issues, including health care, mental health, housing, employment, education, transportation, voting, and more. CIDNY consistently garners media coverage across online, print, television, radio, podcasts, and digital media.

CIDNY helps to ensure that the next generation of journalists is aware of disability issues, including accessibility or inaccessibility of the community around them, by working with student journalists. While most work is done in tandem with student reporters from the NYC area, including Columbia University, CUNY schools, and New York University, CIDNY does work with students across the nation.

Between July 2024 and June 2025, CIDNY reached tens of millions of people across New York City, New York State, and nationally, through media placements and digital communications on numerous issues and topics, from barriers CIDNY documented that disabled NYC voters faced in recent elections to CIDNY's hard-fought winning advocacy on installing subway station elevators.

CIDNY has appeared in mainstream media such as CBS News, FOX 5 News, Gothamist, News 12, Newsday, NY Post, NY1, Politico, Scripps News, SELF, Wall Street Journal, WNYC (NPR), WPIX, Yahoo! News, and more. CIDNY has appeared in local NYC-area media and disability-focused media such as Able News, amNY, BK Reader, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Caribbean Life, Chelsea News, City Limits, Crain's, Crip News, Epicenter NYC, MSN, New York, Our Town, Patch, QNS, Queens Chronicle, Queens Daily Eagle, Staten Island Advance, Streetsblog, THE CITY, The Spirit, The Village View, Washington Square News, WBAI, and more.

CIDNY's extensive news listings are on our website at <https://www.cidny.org/media-coverage>.



# Our Supporters

## Government and Institutional Funders

### Government Funders

Funding from the following government agencies supports CIDNY'S projects:

National Councils On Aging  
New York City Civic Engagement Commission  
New York City Health and Hospitals  
New York City Mayor's Office  
New York State Council on Developmental Disabilities  
New York State Department of Education  
New York State Office on Aging  
United States Administration for Community Living  
US Department of Justice  
US Veterans Administration

### Institutional Donors

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# Financial Statement

## CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE OF THE DISABLED IN NEW YORK, INC STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>Total</b> As of June 30, 2025	<b>Total</b> As of June 30, 2024
<b>GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS:</b>		
Government Contracts	\$9,643,944	\$9,351,933
Foundation and Institutional Grants	\$60,446	\$566,425
Individual Contributions	\$130,921	\$251,400
Veterans Direct Care Program Revenue	\$1,656,969	\$2,399
Fee Income	\$258,585	\$77,080
Special Events, Net of Direct Expenses	\$0	\$30,206
Interest Income	\$93,652	\$83,169
Investment Return	\$26,230	\$22,509
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	\$0	\$0
Satisfaction of Program Restrictions	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$11,870,837</b>	<b>\$10,385,121</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>Total</b> As of June 30, 2025	<b>Total</b> As of June 30, 2024
<b>PROGRAM SERVICES</b>	\$10,283,988	\$8,716,954
<b>SUPPORTING SERVICES:</b>		
Management and General	\$1,349,456	\$1,037,238
Fundraising	\$102,821	\$76,894
Total Supporting Services	\$1,452,277	\$1,114,132
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$11,736,265</b>	<b>\$9,831,086</b>
Change In Net Assets	\$134,572	\$7554,035
Net Assets - Beginning of Year - As Reported	\$5,043,872	\$4,489,837
Prior Period Adjustment	\$0	\$0
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$5,178,444</b>	<b>\$5,043,872</b>

# Financial Statement

## CENTER FOR INDEPENDENCE OF THE DISABLED IN NEW YORK, INC STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>Total</b> As of June 30, 2025	<b>Total</b> As of June 30, 2024
<b>CURRENT ASSETS:</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$158,623	\$878,192
Investments	\$1,944,239	\$1,752,501
Unconditional Promises to Give	\$7,500	\$3,750
Government Grants Receivable	\$3,713,377	\$2,116,073
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	\$279,344	\$24,680
Short-Term Operating Lease Right-Of-Use Assets	\$30,906	\$498,929
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>\$6,133,979</b>	<b>\$5,274,125</b>
<b>LONG-TERM ASSETS:</b>		
Security Deposit	\$168,765	\$162,265
Fixed Assets, Nets	\$482,838	\$414,717
Long-Term Operating Lease Right-Of-Use Assets	\$4,833,468	\$3,318,376
Total Non-Current Assets	\$5,485,071	\$3,895,418
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$11,619,050</b>	<b>\$9,918,205</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>Total</b> As of June 30, 2025	<b>Total</b> As of June 30, 2024
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES:</b>		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$1,038,405	\$602,143
Government Grant Advances	\$357,915	\$397,783
Short-Term Lease Liabilities	\$493,931	\$354,745
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$1,890,251</b>	<b>\$1,354,671</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES:</b>		
Long-term lease liabilities	\$4,550,355	\$3,519,622
Total non-current liabilities	\$4,550,355	\$3,519,662
<b>NET ASSETS:</b>		
Unrestricted	\$4,979,695	\$4,576,399
With Donor Restrictions	\$198,749	\$467,473
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$5,178,444</b>	<b>\$5,043,872</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$11,619,050</b>	<b>\$9,918,205</b>

# Contact Us

## **CIDNY MANHATTAN**

1010 Avenue of the Americas,  
Suite 301  
New York, NY 10018  
Phone: 212-674-2300

## **CIDNY QUEENS**

80-02 Kew Gardens Rd. Suite 400  
Kew Gardens, NY 11415  
Phone: 646-442-1520

## **CIDNY BRONX**

4419 Third Ave, #2C  
Bronx, NY 10457

## **CIDNY BROOKLYN**

30 Third Avenue, 8th Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11217

## **CIDNY STATEN ISLAND**

25 Hyatt Street St, Suite 201  
Staten Island, NY 10301

**E-MAIL:** [info@cidny.org](mailto:info@cidny.org)

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