

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
**Division of Employment and Independence
for People with Disabilities**



Your goals. Our support.



2025 Annual Report

Director's Message

Welcome to the annual report from the Division of Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities. I am proud to announce that our division continues to demonstrate success in alignment with our core mission: providing vital services to people with disabilities as they work to achieve their goals.

We have so much to celebrate in the pages that follow and I urge you to look past the numbers and see that the data represents so much more. These are people, members of communities, family. The numbers you see on these pages – they're our friends and neighbors.

For each client we support, there are immeasurable effects that spread throughout the state of North Carolina and beyond that we simply cannot tabulate. A mother who overcomes addiction then goes on to help others to do the same, while renewing bonds with her children. Each of these lives is changed and will have an impact on those around them, rippling across communities. When a former officer transitions to the classroom to share his hard-won knowledge, compassion and wisdom with the next generation of law enforcement professionals, every community is the better for it.

Those personal success stories are presented here in the pages of this report to give you a glimpse into the victories we at EIPD are privileged to witness every day. Our mission is vital, our goals are extensive, and thanks to the combined efforts of our staff, our partners, and our clients – our successes are extraordinary.

We are proud of what we have accomplished, but we remain motivated daily by the fact that there is so much work yet to undertake. With this look back at last year, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting our clients as they pursue competitive integrated employment and maximize their independence.

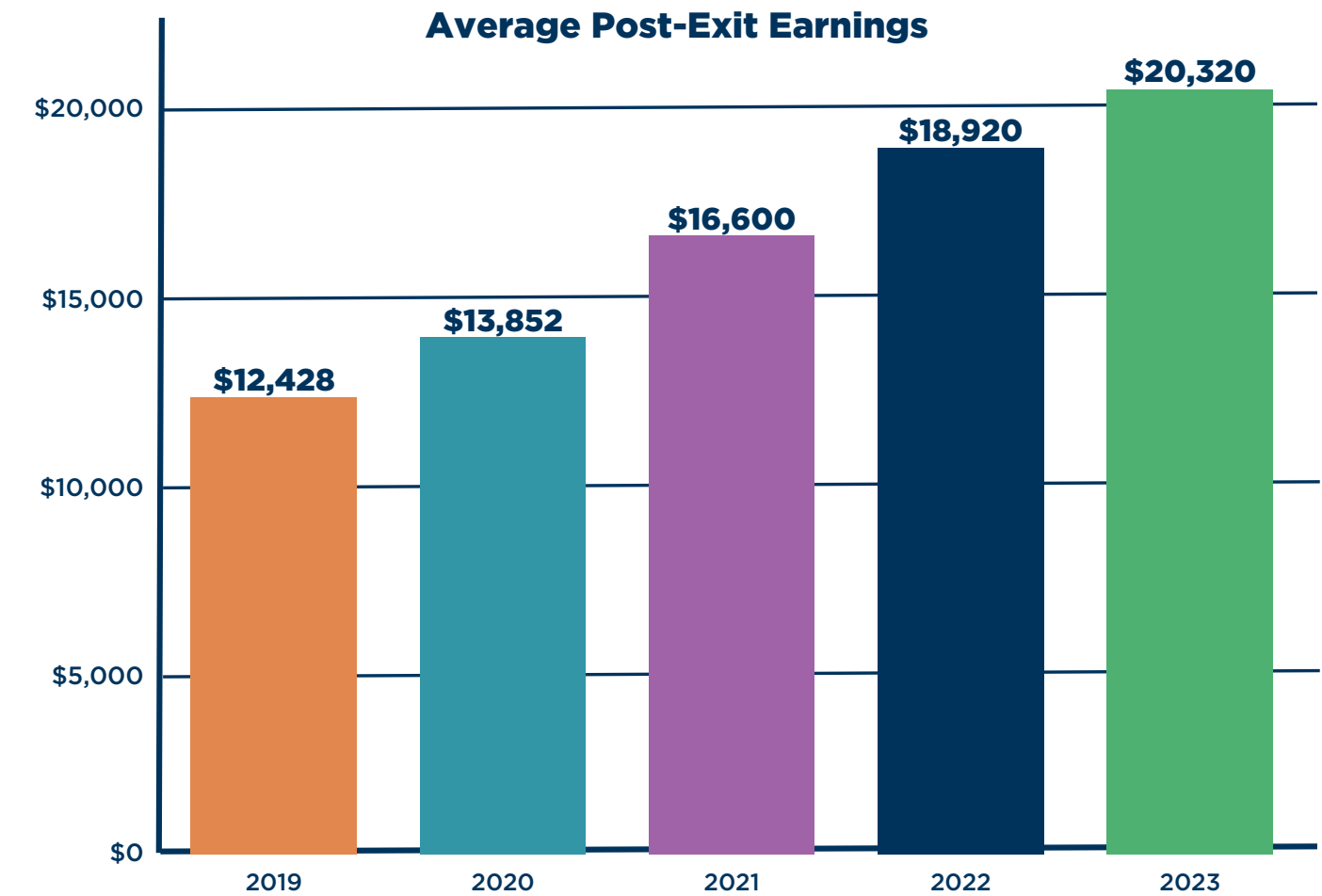


Kathy Smith
Director, EIPD

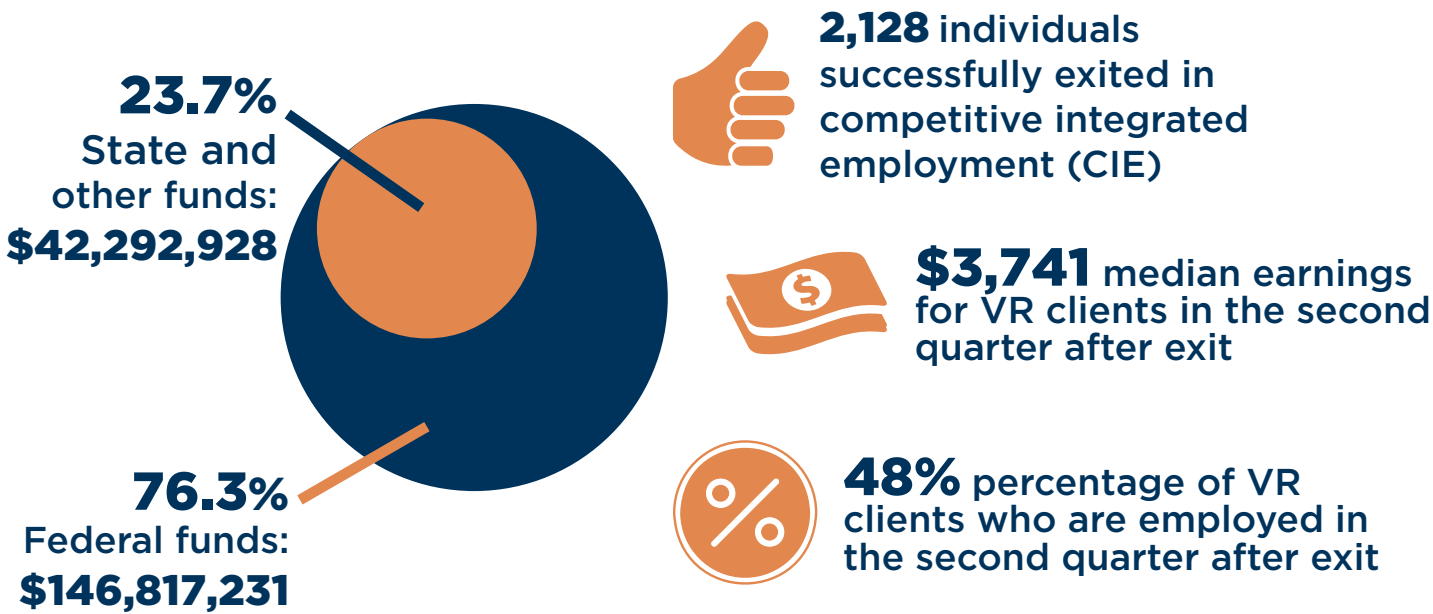
2025 Snapshot: Increased Earnings Over Time

Clients who successfully exit the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program have achieved their competitive integrated employment (CIE) goal by getting and keeping a job for 90 days. However, it's important to know what happens after the case closes. Based on statewide performance data, EIPD clients tend to increase their earnings over time.

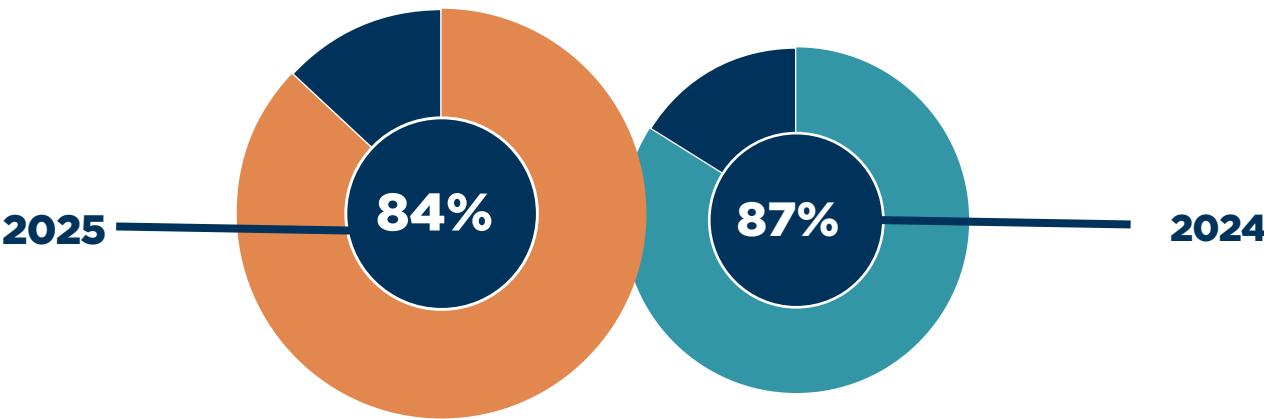
Based on statewide workforce system data reported to the federal government, the average earnings for a client who successfully exited in 2019 was \$12,428. Five years later, the average earnings for a client who exited in 2019 is \$20,320, which represents a 64 percent increase in earnings over time.



2025 Snapshot: VR Program Outcomes and Cost



2025 Snapshot: Client Satisfaction with VR Program



New Beginnings for Former Officer

A catastrophic boating accident left Thomas Duty III unable to walk and with limited use of his arms, but with the support of EIPD, he found himself thriving in the kind of work he'd never considered.

Today, Duty teaches in the Criminal Justice and Criminology department at East Carolina University. Duty previously worked as an officer with the Emerald Isle Police Department. Having earned his master's degree, along with graduate certificates in criminal justice education and in public management and leadership, Duty accepted a position as an adjunct instructor. He graduated in May 2024 and taught his first class in August that same year.

"I think that teaching needs to be geared towards real life, what you can expect in the field," Duty said. "I can tell students, using first-hand experience in law enforcement, which academic theories apply to situations I saw on the job."

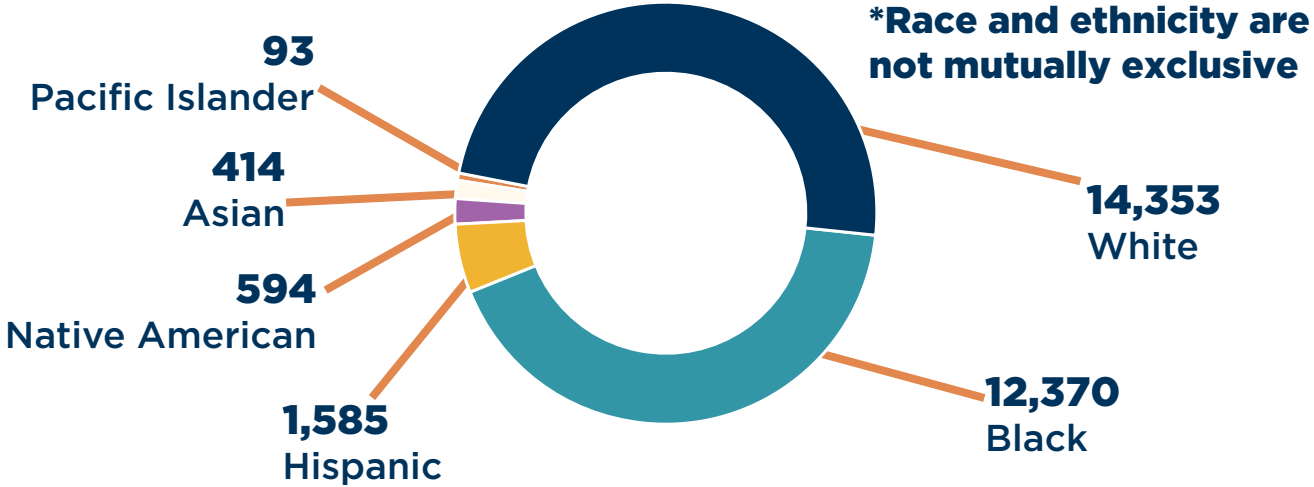
EIPD funded his education and provided him with the equipment he needed to complete his studies. For Duty, that meant using Siri on his iPhone and iPad to complete assignments using dictation voice to text, along with using his thumbs to type on his touch screen when writing academic papers.

With his new career underway, Duty is ready for the next step in his new life. EIPD supported him in employment. Now he's ready for the kind of independence that can be found behind the wheel of a car and re-learning how to drive.



Thomas Duty
ECU Adjunct Instructor
and former EIPD client

2025 Snapshot: VR Clients by Race and Ethnicity



WorkSource West Client Gives Back

The training and support Erin Turnbull received from the team at WorkSource West have allowed her to have something she'd never had before: employment and independence. Turnbull, 39, of Valdese, was working to overcome her anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder when her therapist ask if she'd ever heard of "vocational rehabilitation."

"I had never had a job before," she said. "I was living with my mother and stepfather - they're getting older, and I realized it was time to get my life together." When Turnbull went to WorkSource West and saw the career training programs offered, one stood out.

"I leaned toward the housekeeping program because I need to be moving, and I like to work independently," she said. "I'm not sure I want to do custodial work forever, but since I have the certification, this is something I'll always be able to fall back on."

Turnbull completed the course and, about a year ago, she began a custodial internship at Draughn High School. Her successful internship led to her current full-time custodial position at East Burke Middle School.

"She applied for services and came through our work program. She really blossomed and came out of her shell in the program," said Business Relations Representative Janet Hannah. "Burke County Schools offered her an internship and then permanent employment - they've been a great partner to us for many years."

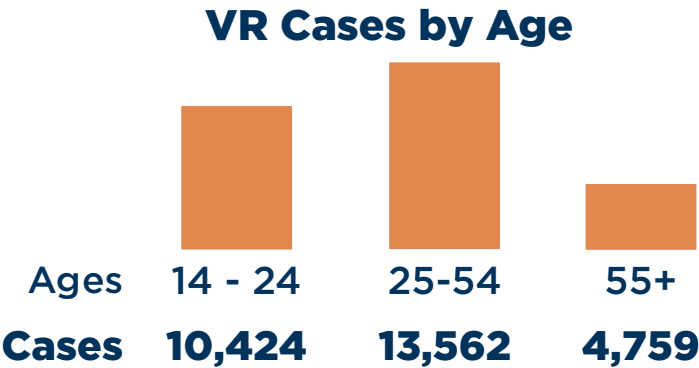
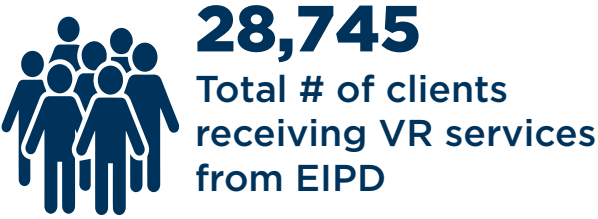
In addition to the housekeeping coursework, Turnbull also completed WorkSource West's soft skills classes. "I learned how to carry myself, and to be mindful of my self-talk," she said.

"They taught us about affirmations, and I have three taped up on my mirror where I see them every day: 'I'm enough.' 'I have people who love and respect me.' 'My challenges help me grow.'"

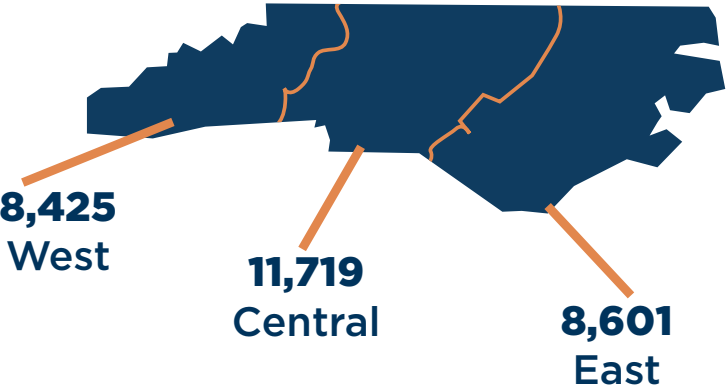


Erin Turnbull
Custodian and former
EIPD client

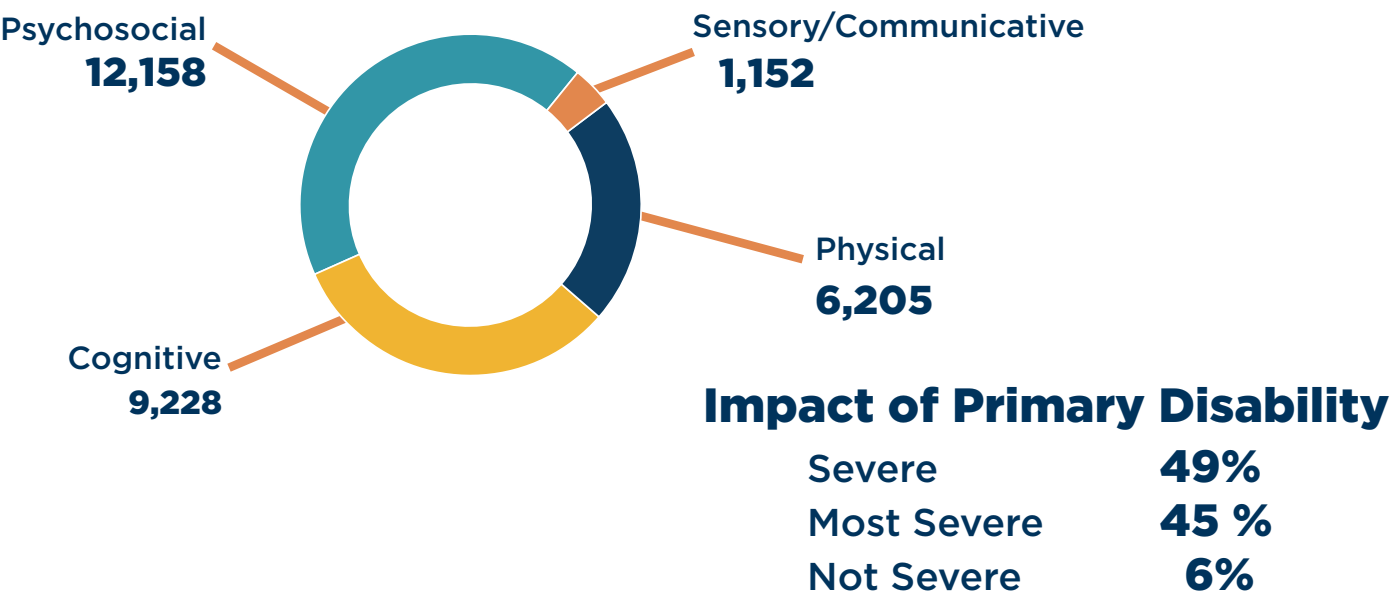
2025 Snapshot: Clients Receiving VR Services



VR Cases by Region



2025 Snapshot: VR Cases by Primary Disability



Counselor, Client, Leader

When Angela Ferebee came to work for EIPD, she knew that she was a natural helper, and she knew that she wanted to serve her community. What she couldn't know was that a head-on car crash and the devastating injuries that resulted from it would put her on the receiving end of the services she's dedicated her life to providing others.

For Ferebee, the Unit Manager for EIPD's Elizabeth City office, everything changed in November of 2023. She'd gone on a client visit in Dare County when a pickup truck hit her car in a high-speed, head-on collision. Her injuries were extensive - her right femur, fibula and tibia were broken, and her kneecap was crushed. She recovered in the hospital before being transferred to a nursing facility. Throughout her ordeal the EIPD team rallied to support her and Ferebee was determined to return to work.

It would be a long road back. In the beginning, she used a wheelchair. Eventually she was able to use a walker. Today, Ferebee walks unassisted, but does use her cane as needed. Although Ferebee's son and her mother have benefited from EIPD's services, it wasn't until her accident that she found herself on the other side and seeing EIPD from the client's perspective. "I know how much our services mean to our clients because I've used these services," she said.

The emotion that permeates the Elizabeth City Unit Office is gratitude. Ferebee is overflowing with appreciation for her staff and the work that they do. And that appreciation goes both ways because her staff feels the same way about her.

"Angela's leadership of this office is excellent - she treats everybody fairly," said Kelvin Holley. "Her door is always open, and she'll help you with any problems you might have. She inspires us, and she makes sure that we come to work because we love this job."



Angela Ferebee
Elizabeth City Unit Manager

Celebrating 35 Years of Increasing Access

On July 24, 2025, EIPD hosted an event celebrating 35 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The celebration was held at the Hilton in Raleigh and included a variety of speakers and presentations from EIPD and partners from across the state. The event also celebrated Disability Pride Month.

EIPD plays a critical role in cross-agency collaboration to eliminate barriers for people with disabilities. From services to help people with disabilities achieve employment and independence goals, to facilitating access to supportive housing and assistive technology, EIPD is dedicated to ensuring access to the resources and support they need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

"People with disabilities bring so much value and talent to our communities," said NCDHHS Secretary Dev Sangvai. "The ADA's commitment to creating opportunity and increasing access remains critical to our goal of improving the well-being of everyone in our state."



2025 Snapshot: Jobseeker Services

239 clients participated in a paid internship to prepare for their employment goal

81 clients received specialized services through the Brain Injury Support Services program

134 clients met with a Work Incentives Planning Assistance counselor to discuss the impact of earned income on benefits

1,705 individuals received Supported Employment services to help them succeed on the job

387 clients received supported employment services through the Individual Placement and Support program for people with severe and persistent mental illness

1,794 clients participated in Work Adjustment Training to acquire work skills and learn appropriate behaviors

173 individuals participated in a Project Search Transition to Work Program

2025 Snapshot: Supplemental Services for VR Clients



1,319 clients received maintenance and support services



260 clients received medical and/or dental services



1,169 clients received assistance with transportation



313 clients benefited from ASL interpreters and other communication access services



2,182 clients received a psychological evaluation



23 clients received rehabilitation engineering services to remove barriers from their home and/or workplace



258 clients received rehabilitation and assistive technologies and durable medical equipment

2025 EIPD Leadership Mentoring Retreat



Attendees of the 2025 EIPD Leadership Mentoring Retreat

EIPD leaders from across North Carolina attended the second annual Leadership Mentoring Retreat in Burlington on Aug. 13-15.

The retreat gave EIPD leaders a chance to reflect on their journey, strengthen core skills and build resilience. They learned strategies for navigating change, conflict management and communication, while promoting effective stress management. Participants gained practical tools to address burnout and support workplace well-being.

By combining practical strategies with personal reflection, the retreat reinforced a culture of resilient, collaborative and forward-thinking leadership. It fostered growth, collaboration, and a clear path for continued leadership development across the agency.

Participants of this retreat were carefully chosen by their peers, a true testament to their

exceptional leadership qualities and unwavering dedication to the agency’s mission, goals and values. Their selection reflects not only their past achievements but also their potential to drive meaningful change and inspire others throughout the organization.

This retreat served as both a celebration of their accomplishments and a strategic investment in their continued growth as the agency’s next generation of leaders. EIPD is committed to cultivating strong, visionary leadership throughout our division.

EIPD and Elon University Partnership Pays Off



Cevion Marsh
Groundskeeper and former EIPD client

Elon University is home to more than 7,000 students who traverse its 656 acres of meticulously landscaped grounds and it’s up to Cevion Marsh and his fellow grounds keepers to make sure campus remains stunning.

Marsh joined Elon’s grounds keeping team full-time in January of this year. He’s happy in his job, he enjoys the work – and he’s grateful to the EIPD staff who have lent their support and guidance during his career journey.

Rehabilitation Counselor Daylan Acevedo met Marsh in November 2021 when Acevedo joined the team at EIPD’s Burlington office. “I enjoy working with Cevion,” Acevedo said. “He’s highly motivated and he’s got a lot of great family support.”

Acevedo worked with Marsh to help him identify his areas of interest. When Marsh saw the greenhouse at Alamance Community College, he was intrigued and enrolled in the college’s Horticulture Technology program. Upon completing the course and earning his certification, Marsh got a grounds keeping internship at Elon University. Sixteen weeks later he began his full-time job at Elon.

Building Trust in Two Languages

Angel Alvarez-Cuevas earned his master’s degree in rehabilitation counseling at the University of Puerto Rico before leaving Puerto Rico for a new start in North Carolina.

After more than four years at EIPD’s Durham office, he took a job at the Burlington office in May of 2024 and completed the process to become an Independent Counselor.

A major part of Alvarez-Cuevas’ success has been his ability to connect with clients and build their trust. His background in education and teaching is key, as is his language fluency when working with Spanish-speaking clients. He also credits his professional certification.

“Becoming a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor can help you understand and serve your clients more effectively,” Alvarez-Cuevas said, “and it can also help you continue in your professional development should you decide to move into a supervisory role with the state.”



Angel Alvarez-Cuevas
EIPD counselor

2025 Snapshot: Career and Training



208 clients received career services, like career assessments, counseling and workforce preparation activities, job search and placement assistance, and ongoing follow-up services



688 clients received training services to attain a secondary degree or postsecondary credential

2025 Snapshot: Youth and Student Services



10,424 clients aged 24 or younger received **VR Transition services** under an IPE that helped them achieve their employment goals as they explored careers, entered post-secondary education, training, and other workforce readiness activities, and prepared for the future.

679 transition-aged clients achieved their employment goal and successfully exited the VR program in **CIE**.



10,462 students participated in **Pre-Employment Transition Services** that helped them explore career options and prepare for the transition from high school to adult life.

Pre-ETS activities include workplace readiness training, job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary options and instruction in self-advocacy.

Leadership Requests Solutions and Suggestions



Requests and Offers for Continuous Improvement (ROCI) is a new EIPD program created to establish a line of communication between staff in the field and the division’s leadership team.

EIPD chose to use the “requests and offers” concept, where a request is a suggestion about an area for improvement and an offer is a potential solution that corresponds to suggested area of improvement.

ROCI is inspired and informed by the Statewide Needs Assessment Process (SNAP), which operated from 2003 – 2013. SNAP improved communication between the field and division leadership and led to substantive, meaningful cultural change within the division.

The ROCI Process starts with staff submitting their requests and offers to designated unit-level representatives. These requests and offers are then vetted to ensure that they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. SMART requests and offers that can be addressed through the ROCI process are presented to leadership to review, assign tasks, and take action on potential solutions.

A report with feedback and responses to requests and offers is published by leadership after each ROCI round. As part of the ROCI process, EIPD has increased access to Adobe Pro licenses for administrative staff, is developing position-specific training for casework technicians, modified duplicative processes and authorization requirements in the case management system, and simplified the policy manual and updated agency forms for ease of use.

Multiple requests are currently under consideration or in the process of being evaluated and implemented. EIPD leadership applauds staff for participating and continuing to submit requests and offers.

60th Anniversary of the Eastern School for the Deaf

On Saturday, May 31, EIPD staffed a booth at the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf 60th Anniversary Celebration in Wilson.

There was a full day of events, including a fire truck demonstration, tours of the Eastern School for the Deaf campus, an alumni basketball game, and other amateur athletic contests. The afternoon also featured a performance by the world-famous Harlem Globetrotters.

EIPD staff hosted a booth at the event to inform attendees about the Division’s new name and to let them know we are here to support them if they face barriers on their path to a competitive career, wherever they live in the state of North Carolina.

The event went well, and some believe this was the largest gathering of former students in more than 20 years with an estimated 275 attendees present.



Laura Robison
Deafness and Communicative Disorders Program Specialist

2025 Snapshot: Assistive Technology Services



4,993 individuals were provided outreach, training and a variety of services from the Assistive Technology Program



565 clients received device demonstrations to help them explore options and choose the right product for their needs



440 individuals received new or refurbished AT devices and equipment at no cost



2,085 clients received information and assistance



1,369 individuals received training to help them use AT software and devices



974 clients received no-cost short-term device loans



\$79,665 financed to purchase AT through Self-Help Credit Union’s loan program



\$17,728 estimated value of AT refurbished and repaired for reuse by people with disabilities

2025 Snapshot: Rehabilitation Engineering Services

Cost by Service Type for VR Clients



Cost by Service Type for IL Clients



Bringing the Past to Life



Kai Coleman
EIPD Intern

From cataloging exhibits – like dinosaur fossils and Civil War-era swords – to preparing artifacts for display, Kalias “Kai” Coleman is doing whatever it takes to get the Museum & Archives of Rockingham County ready for its grand opening.

Coleman, 30, of Madison, began working for The MARC in February as an EIPD intern. At first, he wasn’t convinced that he’d be a good fit. His degree is in parks and recreation management and he’d never considered working for a museum, but it wasn’t long before he felt at home.

“This is the first time I’ve been successful at a job,” Coleman said.

From the beginning, it was clear that his skills and interest were a great fit for the MARC – including his graphic design skills, which made Coleman the ideal choice to design the museum’s cartoon fox mascot.

“The museum job was geared toward his strengths,” said Kendra McCallum, Coleman’s Transition Counselor. “He worked in the museum’s library to organize and categorize books, and he knocked that out in a few weeks – they love him.”

His attention to detail and his curiosity were a natural fit for the opportunity. Coleman learned about EIPD’s services when his therapist, who was working to help him with executive function skills and job preparation, encouraged him to give EIPD a try.

“I would definitely recommend EIPD’s services,” Coleman said. “They offer supports that people don’t realize they have access to – I didn’t know a lot of the supports I actually needed until I got into a real-life situation. Now I’m starting to figure it out.”

Working at the MARC has turned out well for Coleman – and it’s been great for the museum too.

“Kai didn’t expect this to be a good fit, but he’s flourished in this opportunity. In fact, he’s inspired us to expand our internship program – now we have eight interns and they’ve been really successful here,” said Cameron Stewart, Operations and Program Manager for the MARC.

2025 NDEAM Celebrated at the Governor’s Mansion

For the first time ever, a reception in honor of Disability Employment Awareness Month was held at the North Carolina Governor’s Mansion in October.

Governor Josh Stein celebrated the contributions of workers with disabilities and recognized employers that are demonstrating their commitment to building a diverse, disability-inclusive workforce in the state.

The event, which featured personal testimony from individuals - including employers - with disabilities, was co-hosted with the NC Department of Health and Human Services and the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities.

EIPD staff provided event support, ensuring that stakeholders from many disability communities were represented and the location was accessible to all. The speakers and the reception highlighted Governor Stein’s commitment to building a strong, disability-inclusive workforce.

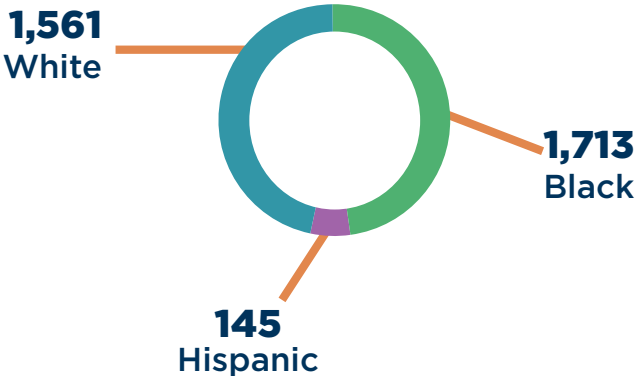


Stakeholders speak to Governor Josh Stein

2025 Snapshot: Clients Receiving IL Services

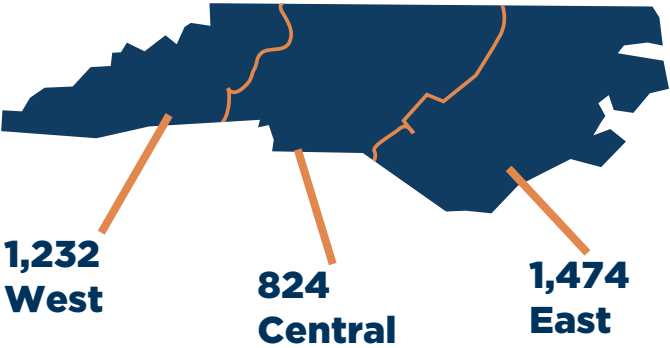


IL Cases by Race and Ethnicity

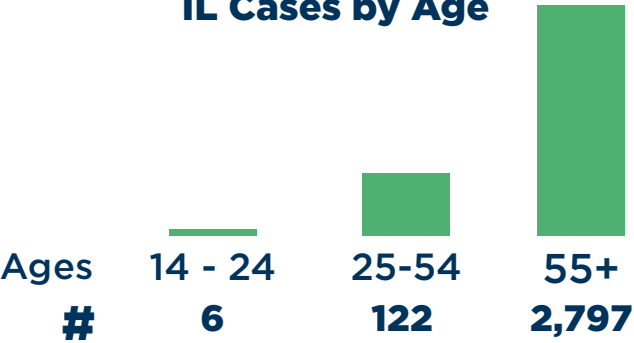


*Race and ethnicity are not mutually exclusive

IL Cases by Region



IL Cases by Age



2025 Snapshot: Independent Living Services



3,530 clients received IL services under a plan for independent living



530 clients received barrier removal and home modification services



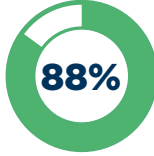
300 clients received AT devices and/or durable medical equipment



368 clients received personal assistance services to help them remain independent



747 clients successfully achieved their independent living goal



Goal achievement rate for clients receiving services under a plan for independent living

Client Overcame Struggles to Serve Others

Having overcome her own obstacles, Mandy Austin is dedicated to using what she’s learned along the way to help others. Mandy’s story began with addiction and includes time in prison, experiences that inspired her to become a peer mentor. Now she helps others navigate their own struggles.

Mandy was born addicted to heroin. As an adult, she became addicted to opioid pain pills, which eventually led her to methamphetamine. Arrests came soon after. Her first arrest was for credit card fraud, which is a felony. Most of the arrests that followed were for probation violations. After her last arrest, Mandy was sent to the North Piedmont Confinement in Response to Violation, a facility in Lexington.

She had been there before, but this time would be different. “I had been in prison for a few weeks when I finally decided that I was done using,” Mandy said. “Something clicked. I know it was God. I couldn’t take any more,”

She knew that getting clean and sober would mean changing her whole life. She called The Wells Center for Women in Transition and asked to join the program. “I had no family, no friends, and only the prison clothes I was wearing,” Mandy said. “I was broken and had no money. I just showed up with a need, and these women never hesitated.”

After 90 days at The Wells Center, Mandy was allowed to look for a job, but her criminal record made it difficult to find work. EIPD Business Relations Representative Tonya Baker had seen others struggle with this and offered help. Today Austin works as a peer support specialist for Monarch, a mental health and human services care provider.

Since she started working with Monarch, Mandy has gotten her own apartment and a vehicle. She’s also reestablished a relationship with her youngest daughter and is working hard to reconnect with her two older children.

“I had the experience to help others face life’s challenges,” she said. “I understand them because I’ve lived it. I can’t fix people, but I can help them. I can show them that I care and that I’m here to support them.”



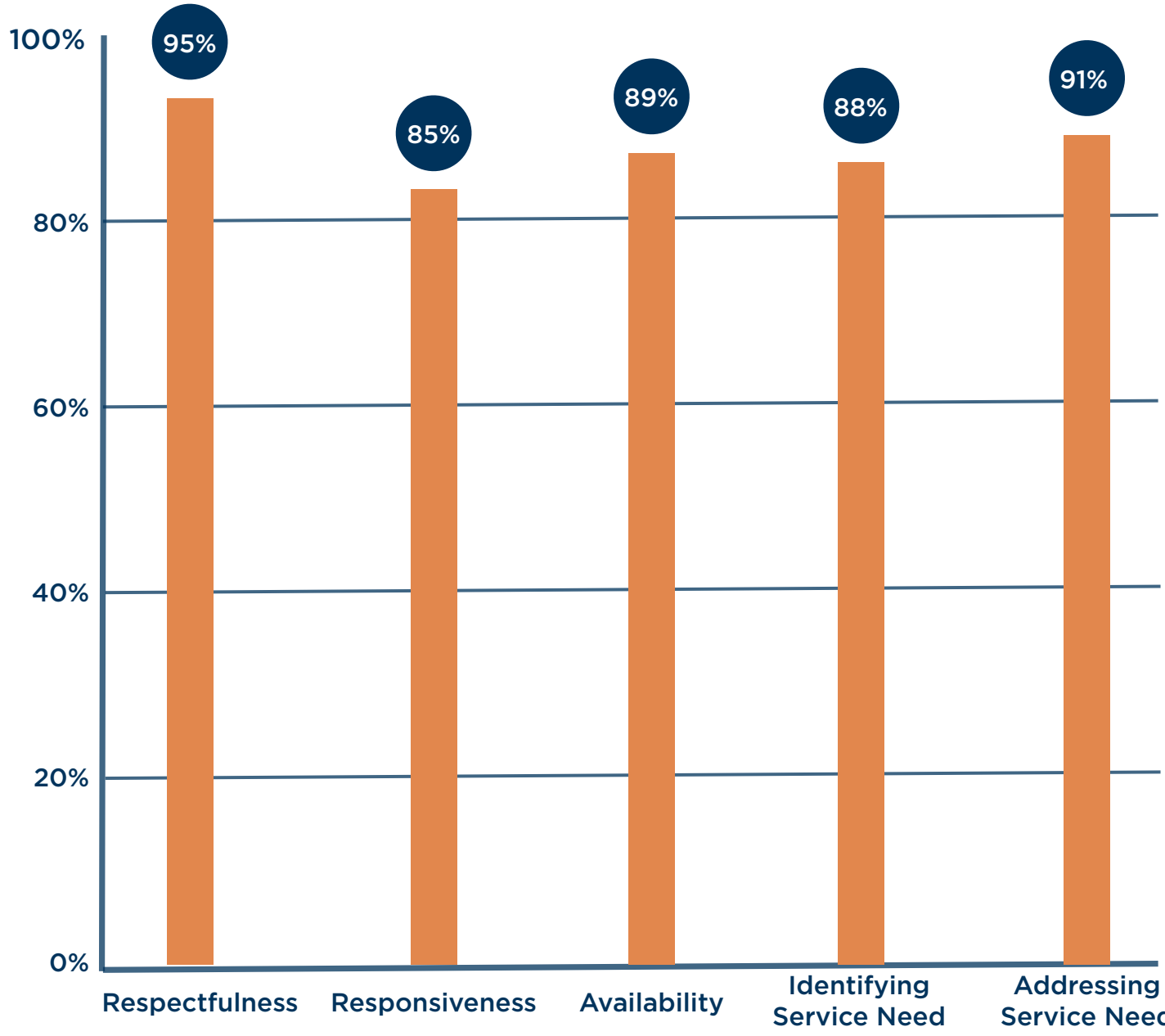
Mandy Austin
Peer Support Specialist

Grace Heights’ Partnership with EIPD Going Strong

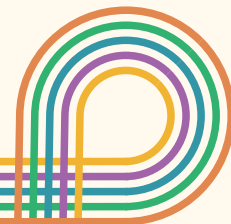


Dianne Anthony & Cynthia Alfaro
Grace Heights Health and Rehab
“The partnership with EIPD and Grace Heights began about eight years ago when we heard from our local Business Relations Representative that they train and coach people looking for the kinds of jobs we’re hiring for,” said Certified Dietary Manager Dianne Anthony.
EIPD staff works to make sure that each clients’ skills and interests align with the opportunities available at Grace Heights.
“Right now, about 75 percent of my team was hired through EIPD,” Anthony said.
“The first person we hired started with us eight years ago as a part-time dishwasher. She still works here and now she’s a full-time cook.”

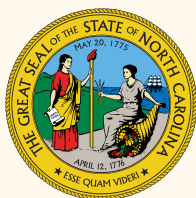
2025 Client Satisfaction Survey: Counselor Ratings



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Learn more: www.ncdhhs.gov/eipd



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