Indiana Institute on Disability and Community

2021 ANNUAL REPORT
Celebrating 51 years at Indiana University providing visionary solutions in disability and community through research, education, and service.
From Our Director

Friends and Colleagues:

The last 18 months have been exceptionally challenging for so many within the IIDC and in the broader community in which we serve. Every aspect of our daily lives has been dramatically affected. Our kitchen tables have turned into offices and school rooms. We canceled and delayed trips to see family and friends. And, in the event we went into the community, we masked up for our own safety and the safety of others. Also, by now, we all know someone whose had COVID-19 and, sadly, too many have lost loved ones.

Persevering through this time has not been easy and I want to thank the entire IIDC faculty and staff for their amazing work and dedication during this once in generation event. Through countless video meetings and events, a great deal of adaptation and innovation, they truly rose to the moment, ensuring that the important work of Institute continued and the needs of people with disabilities remained a priority during a time of major turmoil and uncertainty.

For many with disabilities, the pandemic exacerbated inequities that existed long before COVID-19. Access to critical health care, necessary educational supports, and employment was dramatically limited. Many were also unable to connect with their friends and loved ones leading to greater isolation and exclusion. The effects of the pandemic will be felt long after the virus subsides and we, at the IIDC, are committed to doing our part to ensure a full recovery that rightly addresses the needs of people with disabilities.

Of course, we are not in the clear yet, but Indiana and the country have made major gains in vaccinations to contain the COVID-19 virus. The IIDC website contains many accessible resources about the virus and vaccinations, including videos, informational documents, and contact information for supports to become vaccinated. I encourage you to review the materials and share widely (https://www.iidc.indiana.edu).

Now, I’m pleased to present to you the 2021 Annual Report. I hope you can take some time to review and go to our website to learn about some of the great work happening at the IIDC.

Sincerely,

Derek Nord, PhD
Director
A Foundation of Excellence

The Indiana Institute on Disability and Community (IIDC), Indiana’s University Center for Excellence in Disabilities, has fostered a foundation of excellence for community investment in developmental disabilities since 1970. Our mission is to work with communities to welcome, value, and support the meaningful participation of people of all ages and abilities through research, education, and service.

Our work crosses the lifespan and is conducted across seven centers and an Indiana University disability-focused library accessible to all state residents.

Advancing Improvement in Policy and Practices in Disability

The Indiana Institute is a bridge that connects the university to the broader community through the sharing of ideas and innovations to improve communities and lives. The Institute’s work achieves this through:

• Advocacy – Advancing effective policy and best practices by informing and educating decision makers.
• Coalition Development – Developing collaborative solutions by connecting and convening diverse community stakeholders.
• Family Engagement – Supporting families through partnerships among educators and human service providers to strengthen learning, independence, and community connections.
• Information Dissemination – Communicating and sharing information and research findings with broad constituencies over various mediums.
• Pre-Service Education and Preparation – Supporting the training of professionals to become leaders and prepare future practitioners to implement best practices in the field.
• Research, Evaluation and Policy Analysis – Conducting disciplined inquiry to test and improve policies, programs, and practices.
• Training and Technical Assistance – Building capacity to support community members and professionals in applying specific skills and best practices.

By the Numbers

The Institute’s research to practice initiatives support the advancement of applied research, evaluation, and public policy; outreach that is community oriented and state wide; technical assistance activities that are collaborative, systematic, and results driven; and educational preparation that supports the pre-service and in-service training of professionals to become leaders in the field.

54,975 People Impacted
9,727 Hours of Training Provided
71 Boards and Committees
1 National Award

Research

Service

Scholarship

Education

56,975 projects ranging in topics across the lifespan
48 people impacted at 492 events
224 products produced by Institute professionals
143 university students impacted by the Institute

16 Recreation and accessibility
14 Early intervention and education
10 Health promotion and equity
6 Self-advocacy and families
2 Employment

38,273 Professionals/paraprofessionals
12,899 Family members/caregivers
4,450 People with disabilities
678 General public
613 Students
8 Legislatures/policy makers

83 Academic courses and distance learning modules
58 Reports and monographs
56 Electronic and web-based products
21 Newsletters, pamphlets, brochures, fact sheets
10 Book chapters and peer-reviewed journal articles
8 Conference presentations
4 Other categories
3 Press communications

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A special thank you to our IIDC Advisory Council members: Sylvia Brantly, David Carter, Christine Dahlberg, Sherman Eliay, Frank Epperson, Shari Fulton, Becky Health, Leah Helveling, Sarah Horowitz, Melissa Hayes, Mary Ann Lencerta, Kate McQuain, Cori Mitchell, Chris Myers, Cynthia Nassim, Donna Nord, Amber O’Haver, Chris Stroguiludis, and Karen Vaughn.
Exploring Racial Equity in Indiana’s Part C Early Intervention System

The IIDC’s Early Childhood Center (ECC) received an Indiana University Racial Justice Fund grant to compare the experiences of the First Steps system’s Black and White families. First Steps is Indiana’s early intervention program that provides services to children from birth to their third birthday who have developmental delays or disabilities.

ECC’s study examines families’ involvement in the entire early intervention process including the referral, written Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), ongoing home services, and early intervention exit transition. The study’s initial phase has involved analyzing existing quantitative First Steps data regarding the relationship between race and multiple system factors. While these analyses are still in process, early findings have revealed differences between experiences of Black and White families in the First Steps system:

- Social service agencies are more likely to refer Black families while physicians are more likely to refer White families.
- First Steps identifies White families earlier than Black families.
- Fewer Black families experience successful outcomes across all outcome categories.
- First Steps is less likely to maintain the continued participation of Black families compared to White families.

The differences noted above are likely due to a variety of factors including bias in the referral and service system as well as higher poverty and a lack of resources in communities of color due to systemic racism. The study’s second phase will include conducting a sample of 200 (total) Black and White family interviews. Half the interviews will be with families who chose to leave First Steps while their children were still eligible for services. The study’s third phase will consist of 30 semi-structured provider interviews with 20 agency directors and 20 providers (10 White and 10 Black). The study’s final phase includes comparing the experiences of participating families.

Results will be shared with Indiana’s First Steps leadership in late summer/early fall 2021. Findings and recommendations may inform existing policy, professional development, and workforce recruitment decision-making.

Cross-Center Collaboration to Integrate Family Engagement into the New State Personnel Development Grant

The Early Childhood Center (ECC) is collaborating with the IDOE’s Center for Education and Lifelong Learning (CEL); on a five-year project to integrate family engagement practices within selected rural school districts. ECC Center staff provide content expertise to 1) create foundational modules, 2) curate resources for the Indiana Center on Naisher Quality (ICQ) website, and support CELL staff with incorporating family engagement practices into existing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) training. The SPDQ also funds ECC staff to continue working with Part C leadership to adopt the evidence-based, family-centered home visiting services and create evidence-based family-centered professional development focused on promoting effective transition practices for Part C early intervention providers and Part B preschool coordinators.

Literacy and Improvement in 3rd Grade Reading Scores Among Children with Disabilities and Children of Color

The Early Childhood Center (ECC) is working in collaboration with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to identify and disseminate evidence-based practices for PK-3 early literacy instruction. This umbrella project includes: (a) identifying and interviewing high performing Indiana schools with above average 3rd grade reading scores; (b) developing a literacy Toolkit of evidence-based early literacy practices that provide inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally responsive pedagogies; (c) providing early literacy Technical Assistance to Indiana elementary schools identified as part of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP); and (d) supporting IDOE in their SSP implementation strategies. The ECC will develop a directory of high performing, high equity elementary schools in Indiana, and will conduct research on participating schools to better understand how they are applying evidence-based practices to produce equitable early literacy outcomes.

Additional Featured Projects

First Steps Personnel Study

A research study on First Steps workforce provider recruitment and retention is underway by the Early Childhood Center (ECC). This study examines policies and procedures to discover their potential positive or negative impact on providers’ decisions about enrolling in, and resigning from, the First Steps system. Last year’s data revealed a higher percentage of providers leaving the system than enrolling in the system. Therefore, ECC staff are interviewing First Steps agency directors, Part C directors, current providers, and recently past providers to determine the cause of this discrepancy. We hope to discover from the interviews: 1) how the workforce has changed over the last 10+ years, 2) the greatest personnel needs, 3) the impact this turnover has on families’ ability to access services, 4) why some providers remain and 5) successful small business recruitment and retention practices for maintaining an adequate workforce.

Maternal Advocates Resource Alliance

In partnership with Maternal Advocates Resource Alliance and the Indiana University Center for Rural Education, the Center on Collaborative Systems Change (CSCC) is using collaborative evaluation to inform the design and implementation of the Community Postpartum Support Training. Training outcomes are designed to assist community groups and faith-based organizations better understand the needs of pregnant, birth, and postpartum women and to promote greater community’s needs, planning, implementing of sustainability community plans, and evaluating their success. Example plans include access to labor support, advocating, transportation, house childbirth education, material and resource support (e.g., car seats, food security and home cleaning), childcare services, parent support groups, and breastfeeding support.

Reading Scores Among Children with Disabilities and Children of Color

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School-Age Improvement throughout the state. Indiana Center on Teacher Quality creates a professional learning framework to support systemic educational improvement from high-quality teachers. Using the principles of implementation science, ICTQ works to:

• Expand the capacity of school leaders at the school and district level to develop, implement and sustain effective partnerships that support teacher development and student and school improvement.

• Increase the number of licensed special education teachers with improved recruitment, support, and retention of teachers for students with disabilities.

• Expand the capacity of school leaders at the school and district level to develop, implement and sustain inclusive practices through systems of support implemented through the framework of implementation science.

• Increase support for families of students with disabilities through effective partnerships that support teacher development and student and school improvement.

ICTQ works to:

• Increase the number of teachers delivering high-quality instruction to students with disabilities in the general education classroom through job-embedded professional development at the state, regional and district levels.

• Maintain and increase the number of licensed special education teachers with improved recruitment, support, and retention of teachers for students with disabilities.

• Expand the capacity of school leaders at the school and district level to develop, implement and sustain inclusive practices through systems of support implemented through the framework of implementation science.

• Increase support for families of students with disabilities through effective partnerships that support teacher development and student and school improvement.

Established in 2005, Indiana Center on Teacher Quality partners with families, agencies, and communities to improve educational outcomes for students with and without disabilities by ensuring access to a PK–12 continuum of instruction from high-quality teachers. Using the principles of implementation science, Indiana Center on Teacher Quality creates a professional learning framework to support systemic educational improvement throughout the state.

“Our partnership with the Indiana Department of Education spans over three decades and we are honored to continue this partnership with a new opportunity to focus on rural Indiana school districts,” Sandi Cole, director, Center on Education and Lifelong Learning.

In 2019, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) published a Framework for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) specific to Indiana, with seven SEL competencies identified. The IDOE continued to share information and resources to assist schools and districts with implementing and integrating SEL across academics, College and Career Readiness, Out of School Time, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. The Center on Education and Lifelong Learning (CELL) worked with the IDOE to provide professional development and technical assistance, utilizing a district framework to achieve high quality, systemic and sustained implementation of SEL. The framework included engaging leaders in key activities that begin with building a strong foundation. Activities then focused on strengthening adult SEL as well as promoting SEL for students, differentiating the pace and depth based on the needs and strengths of a given district. Every step of implementation support was guided by a process of continuous improvement.

Scaling Up in Response to COVID-19

With the onset of COVID-19, staff of the Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) began to retool their work around visual supports, social stories, and reformatting workshops to be delivered virtually. The goal was to provide support to the networks of professionals and family members in Indiana as they worked to assist individuals on the autism spectrum as the pandemic evolved. The Center provided a series of free family Zoom meetings that reached over 500 individuals now archived on their website, on a myriad of topics including behavior, communication, and education. Additionally, Center staff developed a training series comprising 27 modules titled Comprehensive Programming for Students Across the Autism Spectrum. Center work also encompassed the implementation of a needs assessment to determine how best to deliver information and support to school personnel overseeing mental health and social emotional learning work through the Indiana School Mental Health Initiative (ISMHI). Additional virtual workshops and meetings were also conducted with these school groups.

Social Emotional Learning

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Additionally, Integrated Systems for Mental Health (ISMHI) works to create a community of practice to promote the social, emotional, and behavioral health of Indiana’s school-aged children. In February of 2021, ISMHI held its third annual Whole Child Summit. The Summit focused on sharing progress on how school districts and their community partners built capacity to address the development of the whole child through comprehensive frameworks and improvement plans. Over 1,300 educators, mental health professionals, and community partners came together virtually to develop a plan for continued collaboration and learning and receive technical assistance to support their goals and plans from national, state, and district expertise. As important as the "how" was, the Summit also addressed the "why" and the importance of doing so to change belief systems about behavior and learning. District teams were given time to reflect and plan next steps. Unlike a conference, the goal of the Summit was to leave with actionable steps to continue to refine a community of practice to meet the needs of Indiana’s students.

Educational Improv

Camp Yes And combines communication and social skills instruction for teens with autism and deep professional learning for general and special educators, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, counselors, and social workers. The camp utilizes innovative instructional methods derived from improvisational theater (“Improv”), a form of drama in which plot, character, and setting are created during the moment of performance. Camp Yes And enables educators to practice their new skills and receive feedback while working hands-on with youth on the spectrum. Outcomes of the workshops have found measurable improvements in teens’ social communication skills and significant decreases in their social anxiety. Evaluations also found substantial increases in educators’ confidence and skill around learning with autism, along with a higher degree of implementation in the classroom and sharing of strategies with colleagues. In June of 2021, two weeks of camp were held online using the Zoom platform due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Indiana School Mental Health Summit

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Additional Featured Projects
Evidence-Based Sexual Health Education

Since October 2018, the Center for Health Equity (CHE) has been collaborating with the Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) on the development of evidence-based sexual health training for women with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Indiana. This project aims to increase the sexual health literacy and advocacy skills of Hoosier women with IDD to advance their general health and well-being, as well as their sexual health rights. Individuals with IDD do not have equitable access to sexual health education. When sexual health education is not accessible and tailored to their needs, women with IDD can be vulnerable to unsafe sexual practices, sexually transmitted infections, and sexual abuse.

The pilot in-person sexual health curriculum was developed based on extensive research during 2018-2020. Focused on determining the sexual health needs of Hoosier women with IDD, project staff conducted literature reviews, key informant interviews with stakeholders, and focus groups of both women with IDD and parents of adult daughters with IDD in Indiana.

- Fourteen key informant interviews were conducted with women with IDD, parents, and professionals serving this population, from different Indiana locations, to increase an understanding of the sexual health needs of women with IDD and related barriers and resources.
- Three focus groups were also conducted, two with adult women with IDD, and one with parents of adult daughters with IDD, to have a deep understanding of the sexual health needs of women with IDD including sexual health education and effective teaching methods.

In 2021-2022, the project is doing pilot trainings in both online and in-person formats to refine its development of evidence-based, accessible sexual health education. The curriculum focuses on sexual health knowledge, self-advocacy, and healthy relationships which are essential to health care access and health promotion, as well as healthy intimate relationships. Project staff are collaborating with women with IDD on the development of the sexual health curriculum, as well as on the creation of plain language publications about key project findings. CHE will also promote the importance of sexual health education for women with IDD to family members, direct support professionals, and disability service providers.

Funded by the Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities, research findings are described in reports and fact sheets that can be downloaded from CHE’s website.

"To help people with IDD exercise the same rights as everyone else, CHE is developing evidence-based, accessible sexual health training for Hoosier women with IDD, in collaboration with various stakeholders." Jae Chul Lee, director, Center for Health Equity

Additional Featured Projects

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion within the Context of the Indiana Institute

In an organization as large as the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, we represent multiple perspectives, diverse personal and professional backgrounds, and sometimes, opposing ideas. Yet we share a commitment to working towards equity for marginalized communities of many kinds. For 51 years, the Indiana Institute has operated as a leader in the state of Indiana and nationwide with a focus on disability rights, rehabilitation, and service. With the recent creation of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Center (EDIC), we honor our rich legacy while moving our disability-focused work forward with an equity, diversity, and inclusion mindset. In addition to hosting events and leading conversations at the Institute, the EDIC is proud to be a space where committee members can come together to discuss the complexity of intersecting inequities and how they relate to our work in settings across the state and nationwide.

National Core Indicators

The Indiana Institute has vast experience in identifying issues, finding solutions, and advancing research related to the needs of individuals with IDD and their families. In a collaborative effort with Indiana’s Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS), the Institute is providing facilitation, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of information related to the National Core Indicators (NCI). This effort will ensure that Indiana’s ongoing assessment and progress monitoring is integrated into the state’s data-driven decision making and program management approach. The Institute is assisting in the development of new survey questions tailored to the HCBS waiver performance metrics. Additionally, the Indiana Institute is managing the survey process to both increase response rates via peer surveyors and increase the diversity of the survey team. Data analysis results will provide the state with evidence-based information that will align with national standards and detail progress towards the state’s identified outcomes. The dissemination procedures will also be customized to ensure they meet both the needs of the DDRS and other stakeholder groups.

Transition Portfolio Trainings

Working with the Indiana Department of Education, the Center on Community Living and Careers (CCLC) and the staff of its Indiana Transition Resource Center (INSTRC) project led a series of five trainings in the spring of 2021 for hundreds of Indiana educators and transition coordinators. Transition Portfolio Trainings walked teachers through how to create effective online portfolios for high school students. Students can use their transition portfolios to showcase their accomplishments, interests, and job or volunteer experiences. Students can then use data from these portfolios which can contain videos, articles, writing samples, photos, records of awards, or videos for job interviews, and notes about accommodations, and they can share access to them with their adult service providers and vocational rehabilitation counselors when they leave school. The INSTRC team continues to provide technical assistance to transition teachers with its weekly Portfolio Office Hours.

Family Employment Awareness Training

Indiana is now the fifth state in the nation to offer in-depth Family Employment Awareness Training (FEAT) to transitioning students, young adults, families, and caregivers. Designed to be a series of in-person trainings, the Center on Community Living and Careers transformed FEAT this year into a three-week series of online webinars and discussions. Supported by AWS Foundation, FEAT gives attendees information on employment strategies, systems, funding, and employment supports while also sharing success stories and connecting participants to state and local resources. FEAT trainers recognize that transition is complicated, must be person-centered, and that students have a steep learning curve for families and students. During training, teens and young adults were able to participate in two sessions designed just for them. In addition, FEAT trainers worked with families post training to provide needed support on individual plans for employment. CCLC collaborates with INSOURCE, Indiana’s parent information and training center, in designing, delivering, and facilitating FEAT.

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iind.edu
Older Adulthood

Indiana Disability Resource FINDER

For those with disabilities and their families, trying to navigate a complex web of services, programs, and other disability-related community resources can be daunting. In November of 2020, the Indiana Institute partnered with AWS Foundation of Fort Wayne, IN, to implement Indiana Disability Resource FINDER as part of its library information and referral services.

With guidance from nonprofit organizations, disability-focused state agencies, and Indiana families, FINDER was launched in 2021 through an initiative funded by AWS Foundation. AWS supports a wide range of organizations and service agencies in northeast Indiana, working to develop a community in which people with enduring intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities are engaged fully and meaningfully in all aspects of community life.

Research has shown that locating information about disability services and resources is a major hurdle for community stakeholders and disability professionals. FINDER was developed to be a free and comprehensive online tool specifically designed to connect people with disabilities, family members, and professionals with disability-related programs and services.

“Indiana’s Center of Excellence in Disabilities, the Indiana Institute is the perfect partner to administer the FINDER program and take it to the next level,” said Pati Hays, CEO of AWS Foundation. “Combined with the Institute’s leadership and specialized skills and experience, FINDER provides the latest technology to expand collaboration and develop new partnerships to help empower parents, teachers, caregivers, and others to find answers to disability-related questions and become a more informed advocate.”

FINDER provides 24/7 access to community services, is easy to use, and supports first-time users with a step-by-step guide. For more experienced users, it has advanced search features. Regardless of how information is located, search results are immediately available, can be saved for future use and shared.

Service providers, community advocates, and medical professionals regularly contribute to FINDER, keeping the information current, relevant, and practical. All information and resources shared are reviewed, verified, and approved before they are published to ensure their accuracy and value. Promoting collaboration and sharing user feedback supports inclusion of opportunities and resources of all sizes and types from every community statewide. FINDER supports the right for people of all abilities to freely choose how they wish to live their lives to the fullest.

COVID-19 Vaccination Projects

Vaccination is a critical tool for ending the COVID-19 pandemic. With recent funds from the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), the Center for Health Equity (CHE) worked to increase the vaccination rates of Hoosiers with disabilities. The ACL project, which is funded through September 2022, aims to expand access to vaccines for people with disabilities. The AUCD project, which concluded in December 2021, promoted vaccines and increased vaccine confidence among people with disabilities and their caregivers. These two projects focus on education about the importance of receiving a vaccine and dispelling myths about COVID-19 and its vaccines. To that end, CHE is working on the following activities: social media posts, webinars, plain-language fact sheets and infographics in English and Spanish, American Sign Language (ASL) videos, YouTube videos, and information dissemination and adaptation of existing materials.

Hotels 4 Homeless

In partnership with the New Leaf – New Life non-profit agency, the Center for Collaborative Systems Change (COSSC) received a Trailblazer grant through the Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute to combat housing insecurity. The Hotels 4 Homeless (H4H) program focuses on providing immediate shelter to the homeless population affected by COVID-19 in the city of Bloomington, located in Monroe County, Indiana. By providing hotel rooms for individuals and families so they can safely isolate during the pandemic. Once an individual or family is referred to the program or applies directly, caseworkers assess their needs and place them in a hotel room based on the urgency of their situation. While in the program, caseworkers maintain continuous communication with the individual and provide connections to other social services resources that best fit their needs. The center has partnered with H4H to help the program establish best practices for data gathering and analysis, provide guidance on coalition building, assist in establishing community and university partnerships, and support grant writing efforts.

Indiana Institute Expands to Include Eppley Institute

In the summer of 2020, the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands became the seventh research center at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community. The addition of the Eppley Institute under the IIDC umbrella provides a unique opportunity to expand the impact of the Indiana Institute into new spaces — national, state, and local parks and public lands. Established in 1993, the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands is a non-profit that works to protect, enhance, and increase the nation’s parks, recreation, and public land organizations to enhance access, choice, and quality of natural, cultural, and recreational experiences for all people. Eppley has assisted hundreds of agencies across the nation with strategic planning, workforce development, and technical assistance. Made up of a core team of parks and recreation experts, health professionals, researchers, educators, and a strong information technology staff, Eppley provides solutions to a range of industry challenges, creating positive impacts for agencies and their communities.

Park, Recreation, and Outdoors for Health

With record use of parks and public lands due to the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change impacts, the demand to create public access to natural and heritage areas has become overwhelming. Research shows that it is impossible to effectively care for parks, public lands, and protected areas without an engaged and informed citizen. And, with thousands of protected places dispersed throughout the U.S. (over 400 national parks alone), the only effective way to educate citizens and professionals is online. To this end, the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands online learning platform, Park, Recreation, and Outdoors for Health provides over 400 online learning courses to over 50,000 registered worldwide. In partnership with the New Leaf – New Life non-profit, Eppley provides solutions to a range of industry challenges, creating positive impacts for agencies and their communities.

As a state-wide tool, FINDER assists in making information accessible and geographically relevant for all Hoosiers. Through its extensive work, across Indiana that touches on all stages of life, the IIDC is also working to expand FINDER’s reach to make it the go-to resource. Derek Nord, director, Indiana Institute on Disability and Community.