

# CENTER FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



2022

# ANNUAL REPORT

## CELEBRATING 45 YEARS!

[www.CPWD.org](http://www.CPWD.org)

# Celebrating 45 Years

CPWD was founded in 1977 by CU graduate student Judy Dixon and former Boulder County Commissioner, Homer Page. Originally, our mission was to provide Independent Living skills and help people with disabilities find jobs.

Today, we provide 5 Core Services through a series of programs across the Denver-Boulder and Boulder-mountain region. We are a Center for Independent Living, consumer-controlled (more than 51% of board and staff are persons with disabilities), provide unique person-centered services, are champions of access, equality and equity for all people with disabilities, and all marginalized persons. We assist all people with any disability in overcoming barriers to living independently.

In July, 2022, we celebrated 45 years of providing Independent Living services to people with disabilities.



Images Above: Left: Elizabeth Crowe, Deputy Director, City of Boulder HHS signs disability American flag. Right Top: A crowd gathers under canopies on a July summer day to celebrate CPWD's 45th anniversary. Right Bottom: Executive Director Maria Stepanyan celebrates 38 years of service by CPWD manager Diane Groff with flowers and a gift as Diane announces her retirement.



# '22 Highlight: Delegates from Kyrgyzstan

AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

In August 2022, CPWD hosted international visitors from Kyrgyzstan through the International Visitor Leadership Program, a program of the U.S. Department of State and the Boulder Council for International Visitors (BCIV.org). Our guests were professionals from Kyrgyzstan interested in learning more about disability laws, and how to implement programs that would support people with disabilities in achieving Independent Living.

Kyrgyzstan, and many other countries around the world, have very few programs and almost no rights for people with disabilities. This gathering served to inform our guest about reform, leadership, and ADA-inspired changes that could increase quality of life and Independent Living for people with disabilities in their country.



Image Above: Left: CPWD Executive Director, Maria Stepanyan, Director of Core Services, Heather Kamper, Community Organizer, Craig Towler, and representatives from Kyrgyzstan outside holding the disability American flag in CPWD's garden.

# '22 Highlight: Systems Advocacy - Social Security

In addition to providing direct services, one of CPWD's important roles in the greater community is systems advocacy. We engage in critical issues and current needs at local, regional, state and national level when the voice of advocacy or a call for change is needed.

We help ensure that the needs and voices of people with disabilities, in particular those who are un- or under-served and often unheard, are heard. Ultimately, Systems Advocacy strives to influence or affect positive change for Independent Living, often through collaboration or in concert with other organizations and elected officials.

On May 21, 2022, one of our consumers received a letter from the Social Security Administration (SSA) stating her benefits were canceled effective immediately and she owed \$52,000 in back pay. This was a clerical error on the part of the SSA, an error that is far too common among people with disabilities receiving Social Security Income.

CPWD employs Community Partner Work Incentives Counselors (CPWICs), who are expert in this area. Fortunately, we were able to assist this consumer in reaching the SSA and clearing the issue. However, many are not so fortunate. Applying for benefits often takes up to six months, denials and cancellations due to clerical errors are common, and 50% of calls to the SSA go unanswered.

CPWD reached out to Congressman Neguse, (D-CO), and was able to garner his support and the support of other elected officials to send a letter to the SSA requesting attention to these problems and seeking solutions. A response from Kilolo Kijakazi, Ph.D., M.S.W., Acting Commissioner of the SSA, indicated they are aware of the backlog and errors, and are making efforts to remedy the situation, including looking for new solutions.



Image above: a representative from the Amputee Coalition, Ryan Shuman, Legislative Assistant for the Congressman, Craig Towler, CPWD's Community Organizer.

# '22 Highlight: Voting and Disability Rights

During all public voting and elections, individuals called **Election Judges** monitor in-person voting locations to ensure lawful voting and to assist and answer questions. However, most Election Judges are not trained in accessible voting processes, and further, most voting regions fail to provide accessible voting. These shortcomings restrict access to voting for people with disabilities.

To help resolve this barrier, CPWD conducted accessibility training for Election Judges in Boulder County. We trained the judges on the accessible equipment, and roll-played many common scenarios and questions that arise for people with disabilities. Our work continues with the Boulder County Clerk and voting centers to ensure that announcements, and all voting-related information and opportunities become increasingly accessible to all.



Image above: Craig Towler, CPWD's Community Organizer and Micheal Stone, CPWD Board Member, with his guide dog testing voting equipment.

In December, 2022, CPWD participated in a **Disability Rights Conference** hosted by Rep. David Ortiz at the State Capitol. This event was attended by more than 80 disability rights advocates representing various communities from across the state. Some attendees presented proposed legislation focused on the disability community, and all were community advocates working to affect change.

At this conference, CPWD co-presented the "So Coloradans Can Move" bill to Rep. Ortiz, which he agreed to sponsor. The bill would require insurance companies to cover not only basic functionality prosthetics for individuals with limb loss, but also cover active/recreational prosthetics. Functional prosthetics are not effective for recreation such as hiking, and can actually cause more damage to the body; more specialized prosthesis is required.



Image above: Rep. Ortiz and other conference participants at the Disability Rights Conference.



# 2022 by the Numbers

4 CPWD Locations: Boulder • Longmont • North Metro • Broomfield

**2,274** people assisted with **Independent Living** services

**19,914 Services** provided through **11,780 Service hours**

- 154 Hours of Self-Advocacy Training
- 2,864 Hours of Peer Support
- 366 Hours Helping People find Jobs
- 5,049 Hours of Information & Referral
- 2,057 Hours of Independent Living Skills Training
- 486 Hours Transitioning People from Nursing Homes
- 170 Hours Supporting Youth with Disabilities
- 640 Hours of Assistive Technology Training
- 86% earn less than \$30K/year
- 149 Veterans with Disabilities
- 124 Youth with Disabilities
- 5% Experiencing Homelessness
- 25% BIPOC
- 56% Female
- 36% Male
- 1% Trans or Non-Binary



Images above, left: A Korean War Veteran in the VIP program; middle: CPWD staff at outdoor gathering; right: young person with disabilities at a youth rollerskating event.

All services offered at *no cost to consumer*.

# Who We Are

CPWD provides critical services that assist people with disabilities in living independently.

CPWD assists *ALL* people with *ANY* disability in overcoming barriers to Independent Living. We also work with families of people with disabilities, teachers and administrators of youth with disabilities, employers and other people in the lives of people with disabilities.

## CPWD Core Services

1. Information & Referral
2. Independent Living Skills Training
3. Individual and Systems Advocacy
4. Peer Support
5. Youth and Nursing Home Transitions

As a Center for Independent Living, we provide 5 mandated Core Services in six counties: Adams, Boulder, Broomfield, Gilpin, Jefferson, and Weld.

We also provide additional services and programs throughout Colorado and in parts of Nebraska and Wyoming.

CPWD serves the BIPOC Community by sharing resources and information, increasing access by hiring bilingual staff, and collaborating with:

- Cultural Brokers
- Centro Amistad
- Latino Chamber
- Latino Task Force
- Center for African and African American Studies
- Colorado Immigration Rights Coalition
- Intercambio Uniting Communities
- Audio Information Network



Images above, left: CPWD staff at a staff bowling event; right: CPWD Beyond Vision team.

# Core Services

**Information & Referral:** A critical information service available to anyone with questions about CPWD services or needing a referral to outside services that support Independent Living.

**Independent Living Skills Training:** Providing skills training in all areas needed for Independent Living such as assistive technology, transportation, home mobility and safety, shopping, applying for benefits and much more.

**Individual and Systems Advocacy:** Individual advocacy provides education and training related to rights and responsibilities, cultivating a voice of self-advocacy, and making one's own choices about care providers and lifestyle. At a Systems level, we collaborate with other agencies, elected officials and other groups to influence positive social change for services and treatment of people with disabilities.

**Peer Support:** A tenet of Independent Living, peer support includes sharing personal experiences to cultivate learning, friendship, encouragement and independence.

**Youth and Nursing Home Transitions:** Assisting **Youth transitioning** from high school in overcoming barriers to adulthood, learning necessary skills, and connecting to resources. CPWD also offers a summer Youth Employment Program, providing important job-preparation and job-seeking skills training. **Nursing Home Transitions:** Assists people with disabilities in transitioning from nursing care to their own home. This complex process works with consumers, family, doctors, case managers, and many other stakeholders, and includes securing accessible housing, ensuring home health care, acquiring benefits, providing training and support around meals, bathing, assistive technology and communication, self-care, transportation and other aspects of Independent Living.



Images above, top: Young person at a skating rink; below: VIP staff at an outreach event.

**Overcoming Barriers to Independent Living Since 1977**



# Additional Programs



**Veterans Independence Program (VIP):** CPWD works in partnership with the VA to enable veterans with disabilities to live independently, at home, and avoid institutionalization. VIP gives Veterans the choice and power to choose their caregiver, be that a family member, friend, or a team of service providers. Participants can save money for equipment and residential modifications through the program. Family members can earn income caring for their Veterans. VIP helps Veterans of all ages who need non-medical support with daily living. VIP is available in Colorado, southern Wyoming and southwestern Nebraska.

**Beyond Vision:** A unique program, Beyond Vision assists people with visual impairment or who are blind to remain independent. Through 1:1 services, group trainings, and peer support groups, Beyond Vision offers education, skills training, assistive technology training, community support, friendship, encouragement, professional speakers, and more in service of living independently with vision loss.

**Employment and Benefits Counseling:** CPWD offers three employment-related services: 1) Ticket To Work: a program for consumers on benefits who are wanting to return to full-time employment. 2) Benefits Counseling: our Community Partner Work Incentives Counselors (CPWICs) help people return to work without losing benefits, and assist with other benefit-related needs. 3) Career Coaching: our on-staff Career Coach works with consumers on resume and interview preparation, seeking desired work, and other job-seeking skills.

**Disability Etiquette Training:** CPWD provides workshops and trainings on proper language use and treatment of people with disabilities. We have trained communications organizations, child-advocacy groups, county staff, and businesses and organizations that serve people with disabilities.



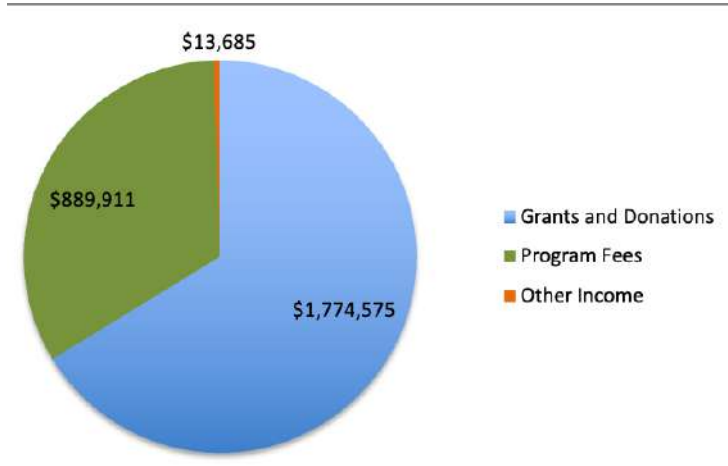
Images above, top: a black lab service dog; below: Core Service staff in the park.

**More than 51% of Board and Staff are People with Disabilities**

# Financials

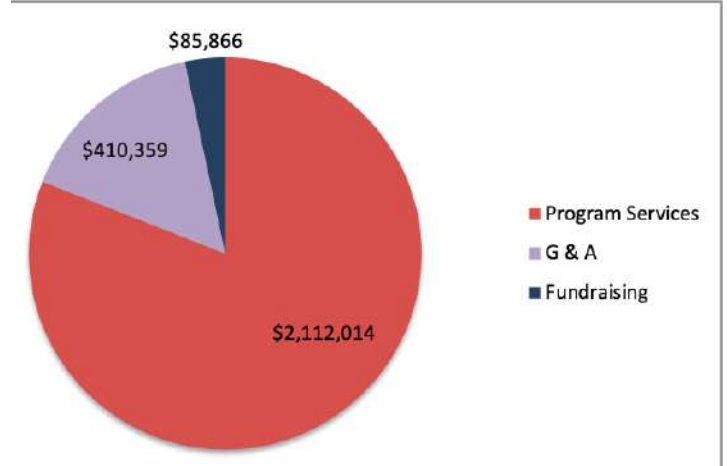
## INCOME

Total Support and Revenue: \$2,664,486



## EXPENSES

Total Expenses: \$2,608,239



For a copy of our Audited Financials, contact [Jude@cpwd.org](mailto:Jude@cpwd.org)

CPWD's revenue is comprised of grants and fees for service. All of CPWD's services are offered at no cost to consumer. Over the past year we have responded to important community needs, increasing services for youth, Veterans, and people with disabilities seeking employment.

Big thanks to CPWD's Board of Directors for their expertise, care, and unwaivering commitment to steward CPWD and our mission!



Image left: Wide picture of CPWD staff and board members at an all-staff retreat in Evergreen, CO.



# Gratitude for Our Supporters

Anschutz Family Foundation  
Boulder County  
Boulder County AAA  
Boulder County Worthy Cause  
Boulder Community Foundation  
Broomfield Community Foundation  
Christopher and Dana Reeves Foundation  
City and County of Broomfield  
City of Boulder Human Services Fund  
City of Longmont Human Services Fund  
City of Thornton  
City of Westminster  
Colorado Dept. of Labor and Employment

Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Colorado Garden Foundation  
Colorado Office of Independent Living Services  
Community First Foundation  
Community Foundation Serving Boulder County  
Daniels Fund  
Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG)  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Longmont Community Foundation  
Lynn & Helen Clark Trust  
NextFifty Initiative  
Rose Community Foundation

Thank you to all of our donors. Your generosity is appreciated!

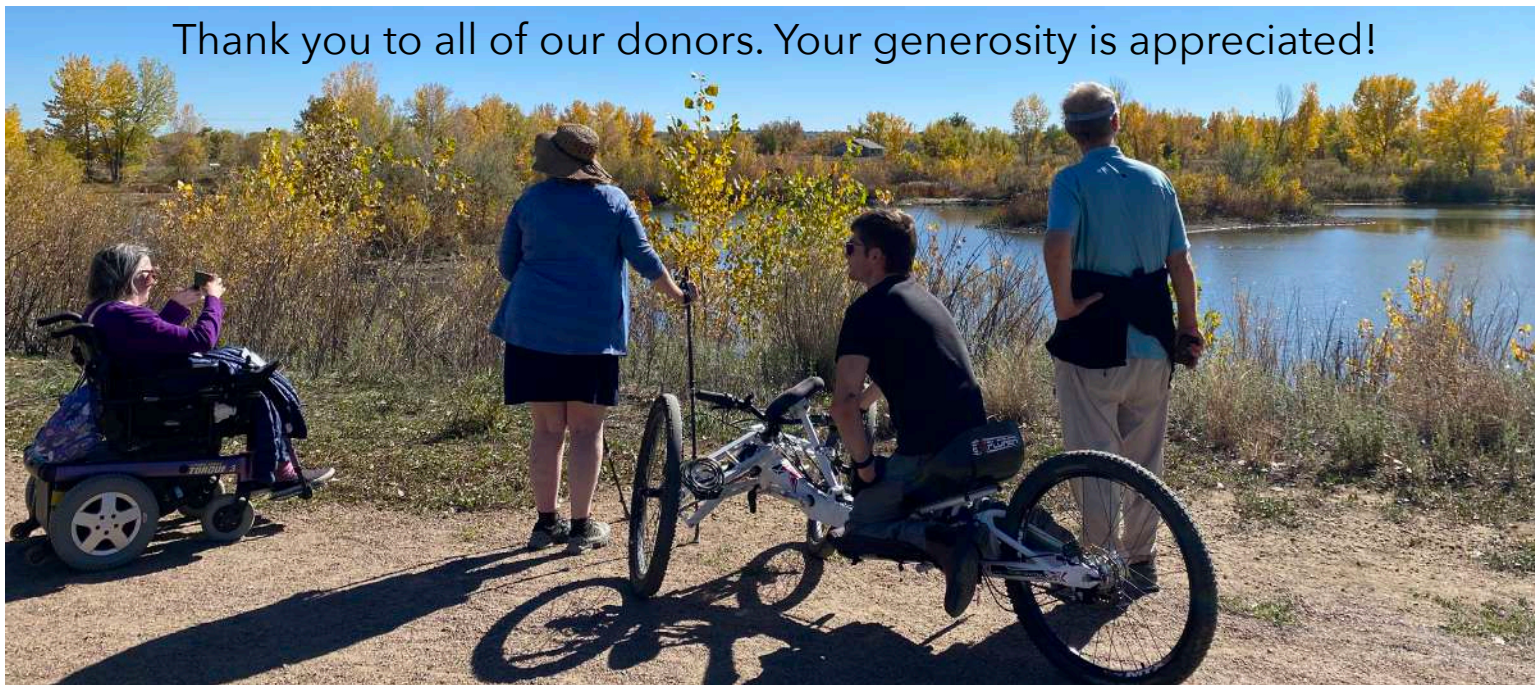


Image above: consumers and staff walking, using a wheelchair, and using an adaptive bike on a walk by a lake.

Sincere thanks to our consumers, advocates, and all who support Independent Living!  
Thank you to our Board of Directors for your guidance and support!



# John's Story: Path to Independence

John self-reported living with mental and emotional disabilities including schizo-affective, bipolar, and anxiety disorders. He had been living off of disability benefits for 25 years, been experiencing homelessness for four years, and relying on food banks, shelters and clothing assistance. When he came to CPWD, he shared that his self-esteem was low and he had no sense of purpose. He was facing personal and systemic barriers to Independent Living.

Working with the Ticket to Work program, he found the support and courage to believe in himself again, and began working towards overcoming barriers, finding employment and housing. John's first goal was to get a job and get off of disability benefits. "I was so tired of not having anything and continuously being broke," he shared. "Being homeless changed my life and outlook, and gave me the courage and determination to change my life."

Through skills training, connection to resources, and self-advocacy, John secured his first real job as a production worker making \$15/hour. He was able to rent a one bedroom apartment. Continuing his efforts and self-commitment, John progressed from production work to shipping, to office coordination, and finally to warehouse manager earning \$60,000 per year.



Image above: John holding a Certificate of Achievement for achieving his Independent Living Goals

The VISION of CPWD is to build a community of resources, services, caregivers and consumers that collectively form a foundation of support for Independent Living. We encourage an integrated community that equally welcomes all members, all disabilities and cross-disabilities.