

# Center for Persons with Disabilities becomes Institute for Disability Research, Policy, & Practice

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On July 1, the Center for Persons with Disabilities will be renamed the Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice, denoting its status as a national and international leader in research and service.

Effective July 1, 2021, USU's Center for Persons with Disabilities will be renamed the Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice.

Housed within the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, the newly renamed Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice has provided research, service, and training for professionals, families, and individuals with disabilities across the lifespan since 1972. They have specifically focused on improving the social support systems that serve people with disabilities and their families and have been Utah's federally designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) for over 50 years.

The Institute for Disability has expanded significantly with the development of many high-profile, national projects such as the Center for Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education, the National Center on Digital Accessibility in Education, and the Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities National Training Center.

This widening scope and nature of the original center's programs qualified it for new designation as an institute, clarifying its organizational hierarchy and increasing its

overall visibility and impact. The change in designation was reviewed and approved by the USU Board of Trustees in 2021.

"After two years of research and work, we are thrilled to unveil our new name," said Matthew Wappett, director of the Institute for Disability. He said that the new designation is more representative of the Institute's mission and status as one of the leading UCEDD programs in the nation. "This new name more accurately captures the essence of what we do as an organization and acknowledges our growth from a school to a center and now an institute housing multiple national centers and projects," he said. "Over our 50 years, we have seen an exponential increase in our impact in Utah, the U.S., and internationally. We are proud to continue our tradition of innovation and excellence."

Wappett went on to explain that in addition to its recognition of the Institute's current focus areas, the new designation is a statement of their continuing goal to inform policy and practice in Utah and across the U.S. "This new name is a nod to our role to provide the most current evidence and the most innovative practices in disability services, special education, and other related fields," he said.

Alan Smith, dean of the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, noted the global regard for the newly renamed institute. "The Institute for Disability is a national and international leader in training, research, and services for people with disabilities. The new designation is indicative of its growth and success, and we are proud that this team of skilled professionals is continuing to expand their work, which makes a difference in so many lives."

In 2020, the Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice was backed by \$19 million in funding and served over 14,000 people across 49 U.S. States and Puerto Rico, as well as the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Sweden, Kenya, Russia, and Mexico.

Although the name has changed, the mission of the Institute for Disability remains the same: "To create inclusive communities and improve the lives of children and adults with disabilities and their families through sustainable innovation, collaborative research, responsive service, as well as interdisciplinary training and education."