



# Oregon Health & Science University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

## Training medical and allied health students and health care professionals to provide care for people with disabilities: A lifesaving, cost-cutting solution

### The impact of UCEDDs:

Providing training to students to provide health care to people with disabilities is cost-effective and lifesaving. Without UCEDDs, people with disabilities, members of their families, state and local government agencies, and community providers will lose a vital connection to a program that produces impactful analysis, services, and training. This disruptive change threatens to increase rates of institutionalization (which cost 5X more<sup>1</sup>), homelessness, and long-lasting economic hardships.

If the OHSU UCEDD did not exist, Oregon would lose a vital hub for training future health care providers to serve people with disabilities—training that is both cost-effective and lifesaving. The absence of this center would sever a crucial link between individuals with disabilities, their families, state and local agencies, and community providers, leading to a significant gap in access to data-driven services and education.

Investing in UCEDDs is a critical piece of infrastructure to keep Americans healthy and a fiscally responsible strategy that empowers communities to solve problems locally, supports working families, and ensures that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently to improve long-term outcomes. It's a smart, investment in a healthier, more self-reliant Oregon and across the country.

### The problem:

- Approximately 1 in 4 American adults and 1 in 6 American children experience a disability (CDC data).
- People with disabilities face barriers to access health care services and preventative care<sup>2</sup> and often use of more expensive health care such as emergency department visits<sup>3</sup> resulting in greater costs to our health care system.
- Health care providers do not feel confident providing high-quality and preventative care to people with disabilities due to lack of training and experience.<sup>4</sup>

### Our solutions:

- **Training & Education:** OHSU UCEDD prepares medical, nursing, and health professionals to deliver effective care to people with disabilities—reducing costly emergency visits and building a more self-reliant health care workforce.
- **Community Services:** By supporting practical, community-based solutions, the UCEDD helps individuals with disabilities live independently, lowering reliance on institutional care that costs taxpayers five times more.
- **Data & Policy:** The UCEDD delivers data-driven insights to guide smart, efficient policy decisions—grounded in real-world outcomes and local needs.
- **DD Network Partnerships:** Working alongside Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities and Disability Rights Oregon, the UCEDD promotes coordinated, cost-effective approaches that strengthen families and reduce long-term public costs.

## How the OHSU UCEDD makes a difference in rural Oregon

In many rural communities, families face additional barriers to health care<sup>5</sup>, including specialized disability services. Long travel distances and a lack of trained professionals make it even more difficult for individuals with disabilities to receive timely diagnoses, therapies, and coordinated support. These gaps can lead to poorer health outcomes, increased caregiver burden, and greater reliance on emergency services or institutional care—costly options that are often avoidable with early, community-based intervention.

The OHSU UCEDD works statewide to address these challenges by preparing future professionals, offering continuing education to practicing professionals, and promoting access to Developmental Behavioral Pediatricians through phone consultation to strengthen local communities. Investment in the OHSU UCEDD helps ensure that Oregon has a well-prepared, homegrown workforce capable of serving people with disabilities in every part of the state—especially in rural areas.

### OHSU UCEDD by the numbers

UCEDDs save taxpayer money by reducing dependence on costly institutional care and enabling people with disabilities to live and work in their communities.

- ✔ In the last 10 years: 4, 583 Preservice Health Care Students trained
- ✔ In the last 5 years: every \$1 invested Federally in our UCEDD Core Grant has resulted in an average of \$18 in additional grants, contracts, and projects to serve the state of Oregon and the nation.

### Lived experience from a student



*“UCEDD’s work is not just valuable - it’s essential to training a health care workforce in Oregon that truly serves all people. As a Physician Associate (PA) student in Oregon, I have benefited significantly from the training UCEDD has done with students in medical education. I have worked in medicine for the last six years, and this was the first formal disability-centered training I’ve received. The UCEDD taught us how to adapt to a variety of communication styles and accessibility needs, which will guide our interactions with future patients. Without this kind of education, providers risk making harmful assumptions and decisions that significantly impact real people in our communities.”*

~OHSU Physician Assistant Student, Class of 2026

### What are UCEDDs?

UCEDDs are congressionally authorized programs that strengthening states to support people with developmental disabilities and their families. The OHSU UCEDD, established in 1971, is a member of the national Association of University Centers on Disabilities. Our work is a partnership with Oregonians who experience disabilities, our ACL funded programs, Developmental Disabilities Network partners, and community-based organizations.

If you would like to learn more about our work, please visit our website at: [www.ohsu.edu/ucedd](http://www.ohsu.edu/ucedd).

### References

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2. Horner-Johnson W, Dobbertin K, Lee JC, Andresen EM. Disparities in health care access and receipt of preventive services by disability type: Analysis of the medical expenditure panel survey. *Health Serv Res.* 2014;49(6):1980–1999.
3. Lindner SR, Martinez Acevedo A, Heinlein J, Daly A, George R. Evaluating Health Disparities of Medicaid Members Diagnosed with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities in Oregon. Center for Health Systems Effectiveness, Oregon Health & Science University; 2024.
4. Iezzoni LI, Rao SR, Ressler J, et al. Physicians' Perceptions Of People With Disability And Their Health Care. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2021;40(2):297-306. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.2020.01452
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