

2024 Christmas at the South Dakota Capitol

We were selected to decorate a tree for the 2024 Christmas at the South Dakota Capitol in Pierre, South Dakota! Our team loves this opportunity to partake in this annual event. The 2024 theme was “Through a Child’s Eyes!” Our team was excited for this theme as it is so fun to capture

the innocence, magic and beauty that children see when approaching the holidays.

We asked our community to assist us with decorations that were from the perspective of a child. Thank you to all who sent in your decorations. There were ornaments created by children, photographs taken by children and drawings by children capturing the approaching holiday season. We enjoyed seeing them all!

We want to give a BIG thank you to Cheryl Ulmer, Charlie Ulmer, Mark Ulmer and Arlene Poncelet for decorating our 2024 Christmas Tree at the South Dakota Capitol! They did an excellent job.



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The Center for Disabilities at the USD Sanford School of Medicine is South Dakota's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research and Service (UCEDD). As the South Dakota UCEDD, the Center for Disabilities works with others to create opportunities that enhance the lives of people with disabilities and their families through training, services, information, research, and community education. The Center for Disabilities delivers activities across the lifespan from a community-based, family-centered and culturally-competent perspective.



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This newsletter is available in alternate format upon request by contacting the Center for Disabilities.

Behavioral Gerontology - Disability Across the Lifespan

Our University of South Dakota Applied Behavior Analyst (ABA) graduate program is thrilled to collaborate with the Sioux Falls Dow Rummel Village in exploring the potential for interprofessional training and support for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) graduate students. This provides an opportunity for ABA graduate students to consider employment within assisted living facilities to support South Dakota's aging population.

Established in 1963, Dow Rummel Village was the first retirement home in Sioux Falls, offering all levels of care, such as independent living, assisted living, enhanced assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing, respite care and a dedicated short-term rehab area. What makes Dow Rummel unique is all the services are under one roof. Grassroots efforts such as this increase awareness of the benefits that a professional BCBA provides to non-traditional employers or agencies that do not have a history of employing BCBA's.

During December, Center for Disabilities Director of Community Education and USD ABA Program Director Ryan Groeneweg, Ed.S., BCBA, partnered with Embrace Therapy Services' Lead Behavior Therapist Morgan Braton, MS, BCBA, LBA from Fargo, North Dakota, to lead a presentation at Dow Rummel Village. The presentation highlighted research contributions and benefits of ABA in supporting the aging population. Braton's ABA specialization in Behavioral Gerontology uniquely positions her to provide expertise and support to ABA graduate students interested in working with our aging population. The goal of the presentation was to establish Dow Rummel Village as an ABA Practicum site for graduate students. This practicum assists students in obtaining clinical experience and fieldwork hours supporting our aging population while also receiving supervision from a BCBA with expertise in this area.



Left to right:

Ellyn Julius-West, Director of Nursing at Dow Rummel
Christopher Hahn, Executive Director of Health Care Service at Dow Rummel
Morgan Braton, Lead Behavior Therapist at Embrace Therapy Services
Ryan Groeneweg, Director of Community Education and USD ABA Program Director at the Center for Disabilities

Not pictured: Charlotte Hayes, Executive Director of Human Resources at Dow Rummel

2024 Charitable Giving Tree

For 20-plus years we have hosted a Charitable Giving Tree for all our staff, Sanford School of Medicine staff and visitors to take part in. Each year this project provides assistance to families in need during the holiday season. Through the Charitable Giving, we provide warm clothing, household items, toys and joy to children and families served by Center for Disabilities programs. This has become a project we always look forward to.

We ask that people choose a tag from our Christmas Charitable Giving Tree for a wish list item and fulfill it. Then all gifts are left unwrapped and given back to us. As a team we celebrate the giving season by have a wrapping party! There are treats, laughter, scotch tape, holiday paper, bows and more for all the fun.



Let's Talk Work

On Feb. 19 and Feb. 25, 2025, the "Let's Talk Work" events were held at the Highland Conference Center in Mitchell, South Dakota, and the Sanford Research Center in north Sioux Falls, South Dakota, respectively. These events were one-day workshops designed specifically for high school students who have a disability and want to learn more about employment, employment skills, tools and resources to achieve their employment goals.

A total of 126 students attended these two events that featured mini-sessions on job interview skills, job applications, healthy work relationships, employment supports and reasonable accommodations. Students also had the opportunity to engage and interact with nine community employers in the region. "Let's Talk Work" was made possible by planning committees featuring members of the South Dakota Transition Services Liaison Project, South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, Employment Disability Resources, and Center for Disabilities.

Jon Wallner, Center for Disabilities Training Associate, led two sessions in Mitchell and five recurring mini-sessions on job interview skills, providing students with helpful tips, common job interview questions and scenarios with role-play demonstrations. He looks forward to these every year and seeing new students come to learn about the possibilities for their future.

This event will also be held on April 15, 2025 at the Sanford Center in north Sioux Falls to allow for more Sioux Falls School District students to attend. "Let's Talk Work" is an event that happens statewide each year.



Upcoming Trainings

Stay up-to-date through [Facebook](#) and [X](#).

Leveraging AI to Support Students with Sensory Disabilities

This presentation will explore the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in enhancing educational experiences for students who are blind or have low vision, deaf or hard of hearing, and deafblind. Participants will learn about various AI tools and technologies that can facilitate personalized learning, improve accessibility and foster inclusion in the classroom. Through practical examples and interactive discussions, educators will gain insights into how to effectively integrate AI into their teaching practices to support diverse learners.

Presented by Dr. Lacey Long

Dr. Lacey Long is employed through the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD) at Minot State University as a Research Associate. She serves as the Project Director for the North Dakota Dual Sensory Project, the state's deafblind project, and is a contracted TSVI, TOD, COMS and CATIS. Long currently facilitates the AT Builders Project for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Office of Specially Designed Services, a collaborative effort between the North Dakota DPI and North Dakota Assistive, the state's assistive technology implementing agency. Long lives in Bismarck, North Dakota, with her husband, Jackson, and two sons, Reuben and Louis.

Date: April 3

Time: 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. CDT

Cost: Free

To register, [CLICK HERE](#).

American Printing House Resources

We all know American Printing House Resources (APH) as the go-to place for learning tools and materials for our students. However, do you also know the depth and breadth of the services they also provide? How about the online educational resources that could help you in your everyday teaching? Join us in this session to gain a deeper understanding of APH's services.

- Explore APH's educational and professional resources.
- Understand the online tools for inclusive education through APH.
- Differentiate the types of services that APH offers based on their student/client's needs.

Presented by Jennifer Brooks

Jennifer Brooks' professional career in the field of visual impairments extends almost 20 years and includes serving as a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, Orientation & Mobility Specialist, Vision Rehabilitation Therapist, Adjunct Instructor, and Director of Programs. Jennifer has experience in an international role where she developed sustainable programs at schools for the blind and non-profit organizations in the country of Romania. She is currently the APH Outreach Specialist for the Northcentral Region of the U.S. providing professional development and trainings to providers and organizations in this area.

Date: April 10

Time: 3:30 - 4:30 pm CDT

Cost: Free

To register, [CLICK HERE](#).

Intentional Goal Development

This VIRTUAL training will focus on the importance of developing IEP goals that are focused on the individual student and the connection of the IEP to instruction and services to ensure accountability and compliance. Attendees will be given opportunities to discuss the practice of utilizing data and information from the comprehensive evaluation during the process of drafting the student's IEP. There will be collaborative discussions, case studies, and intentional training on how to write integrative IEPs for students that are needs-based, focus on the student's individualized skills, and meet the required IEP components identified in the IDEA.

Presented by Heidi Adderhold

Heidi Aderhold, EdS currently serves as the education specialist for the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine's Center for Disabilities (SD UCEDD/LEND). She provides continuing education, clinical services, interprofessional training, information dissemination, serves as a school liaison, and provides technical assistance to professionals, parents, and community members. She has served in Special Education for 18 years. Most recently as an elementary education instructional coach in the Sioux Falls School District. Prior to this, she was a special education teacher for students with a wide variety of disabilities; both in Northern Virginia and South Dakota.

Date: April 11

Time: 8:30 - 3:30 pm CDT

Cost: \$75

To register, [CLICK HERE.](#)

Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP)

Research shows that multimedia is beneficial to all students. However, it is not easy to find educational media with quality captions and audio description. DCMP is a free, federally funded program, which provides accessible educational media and much more. This presentation will discuss the benefits of accessible media in universal design for learning. And provide criteria for evaluating the quality of the accessibility feature. Participants will leave with strategies for incorporating media into live and remote learning settings and learn where to find high-quality educational media, which is accessible.

Learning Objectives

1. Participants will be able to list the benefits of captions and audio description for all students.
2. Participants will be able to evaluate the quality of captions and audio description.
3. Participants will discuss uses for video in the classroom.
4. Participants will be able to find DCMP media and match titles to classroom learning objectives.

Presented by Cindy Camp

Cindy Camp is the Training Coordinator for The Described and Captioned Media Program. She holds a Master's degree in English, is a nationally certified interpreter, is certified in mental health interpreting, and is a C-Print captionist and trainer. She has provided access services for students with disabilities for over 30 years.

Date: April 17

Time: 3:30 - 4:30 pm CDT

Cost: FREE

To register, [CLICK HERE.](#)

2025 South Dakota Conference on Developmental Disabilities

The theme of this year's conference is Celebrating Strengths, Inspiring Change and will focus on developing partnerships to improve the well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities in South Dakota. This is a joint effort across multiple agencies throughout South Dakota.

Over 25 breakout sessions covering a variety of topics related to:

Early Childhood
Transition
Mental Health and Challenging Behaviors
Advocacy
Accessibility and Inclusion

The conference is open to all and intended for people with disabilities, family members, professionals in the field of developmental disabilities (healthcare, education, mental health), state, community and agency providers.

Date: August 26 - 27

Time: 8 am - 4:30 pm CDT

Cost: \$0 - \$150

To learn more and to register, [CLICK HERE.](#)