



**CFI**

CENTERS FOR  
INDEPENDENCE

# Annual Report

**2024**

**Disability Support & Advocacy  
Behavioral Health Services  
Children's Health & Well-Being**

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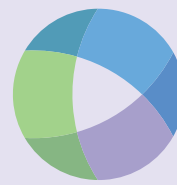
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**CFI**

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENCE

## Our Board of Directors

### Officers

**Morgan Tilleman, Chair**

**Robin Reese, Vice Chair**

**Heidi Chada, Interim CFI President & CEO**

**Steven M. DeVougas, Secretary, VP of Legal & Compliance**

### Members

Jordan Boehm

Morris Cain

Lyah Holmes

Norah Johnson

Tobias Kaemmerer

Morgan Phelps

A. Joy Rivera

# From Our CEO



Dear Friends, Partners and Supporters,

Reflecting on 2024, I'm filled with profound gratitude. Our team and the people we serve inspire me each and every day with their spirit, creativity and commitment to building healthy, hopeful and inclusive communities.

***Three strengths consistently stand out: our innovative, high-touch approach to care; the unwavering professionalism of our team; and the extraordinary depth of our community partnerships. These elements define who we are at CFI.***

Our team doesn't merely provide services—they cultivate authentic relationships founded on dignity, respect and an unshakable belief in each person's potential. This personalized attention transforms lives for individuals navigating disabilities, social barriers and behavioral health challenges.

Daily, our team members bring both compassion and expertise to complex situations, creating environments where healing flourishes and independence thrives.

CFI's strategic partnerships with health care systems, educational institutions, government agencies and fellow nonprofits enable us to deliver truly comprehensive support. Together, we're weaving a stronger safety net and building truly inclusive communities where everyone belongs. These collaborative relationships are the bedrock of our success.

As we enter 2025, CFI stands at an exciting inflection point. Building on our rich legacy of excellence, we're poised for thoughtful growth to deepen and expand our reach. We will continue to lead, partner and advocate to help make greater Milwaukee a model community for people with disabilities and behavioral health issues to thrive.

None of this would be possible without you—our dedicated team, visionary board members, generous donors, collaborative partners, and most importantly, the individuals and families who trust us with their care. Thank you for your continued commitment to our shared mission.

Together, we are building healthy, hopeful and inclusive communities. I couldn't be more honored to lead CFI into this promising future.

With deep appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi Chada". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

**Heidi Chada**

Interim President & CEO  
Centers for Independence

# About CFI

## Building Healthy, Hopeful and Inclusive Communities Since 1938

For more than 85 years, **Centers for Independence** has strengthened our community by supporting and advocating for people with disabilities and behavioral health needs. We are committed to helping the people we serve overcome challenges and live their best lives.

From our humble beginnings, first as Jewish Vocational Services, then Milwaukee Center for Independence, and now CFI, we've grown and evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. Today, CFI provides access to over 800 skilled specialists and more than 30 programs—an unmatched breadth of life-changing support services that positively impact the lives of tens of thousands of adults and children every year.

Our longevity and reputation for excellence were born from our collaborative and community-based approach and unwavering commitment to be an industry leader in self-directed long-term care. Our secret to success is no secret at all.

**Equity.**  
**Excellence.**  
**Innovation.**  
**Collaboration.**  
**Community.**



***We meet people where they are so they can maintain control and choice over their care and achieve their fullest level of independence.***

### The CFI Difference:

-  Proven success addressing the most challenging, complex needs
-  Support for wellness of individuals, families and communities across their lifespan
-  Committed to total health trauma-informed care approach
-  Partner with health care and community networks to deliver integrated services
-  Address social determinants of health in the communities we serve (i.e., housing insecurity, food insecurity, health disparities, unemployment)



# Level UP

*CFI's Level Up program provides paid training and career support to individuals facing self-identified employment barriers and lacking access to conventional funding sources.*

## CFI Opens 3rd Commercial Kitchen at Concordia 27

Through our Employment and Nutrition Services, we strive to improve neighborhood health by offering nutritious meals and job training. This important work is a win/win because it empowers community members to overcome employment barriers (e.g., homelessness, criminal backgrounds and disabilities) to contribute to a healthier Milwaukee.

In 2024, we opened our third commercial kitchen, thanks to a partnership to develop vacant property on 27th Street in Milwaukee's Concordia neighborhood into a mixed-use space, called Concordia 27. The new space features a community center, affordable housing and commercial kitchen serving as a catalyst for health, social and economic improvements for City of Milwaukee and Southeast Wisconsin residents.

By the end of 2024, CFI's Employment and Nutrition Services team prepared and delivered a record 4.85 million meals to 125 locations! We're grateful to our community partners who helped make Concordia 27 a reality, supporting healthy, vibrant communities through nutritious food and meaningful employment.



# Farm 2 Table Program Achieves 2nd Successful Year

One of LIFE Services' most popular activities is the Farm 2 Table program, which completed its 2nd successful year in 2024. This innovative farming concept provides learning opportunities and work skills training for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Fresh, healthy produce is grown in two hoop houses and an outdoor garden for local restaurants and sold at a monthly farmers market, located at Sixth Street and Norwich Avenue, along the Garden District neighborhood's Green Corridor. Some of the produce is donated to local food pantries. Nearly 70 participants help with weeding, watering, planting, harvesting and delivering produce in our Farm 2 Table program.

CFI's LIFE Services program provides various experiences and opportunities to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities enhance their independent living skills, improve their health and well-being, prepare for employment—if that's their goal—and engage actively in their communities. Programming includes pet, art, horticulture and music therapy, fitness classes, sensory experiences, nutrition and cooking opportunities, community integrated outings, multicultural and seasonal activities, and more.

Diners at Milwaukee's Braise restaurant enjoy fresh romaine leaves, bronze fennel and other produce from CFI's Farm 2 Table urban garden. In exchange for a monetary donation, restaurants such as Braise receive CFI's freshly grown goods.

**This partnership is crucial for providing individuals with physical or developmental disabilities or limiting neurological conditions the opportunity to work in the garden.**

As individuals cultivate rows of vegetation, they also develop life skills that help them live independently by overcoming their fears, boosting their self-confidence and understanding what independence can mean. To ensure that people of all abilities can experience the garden, it is accessible and accommodating, featuring physical modifications for various levels of mobility and socialization.





# Making Milwaukee a Model City

CFI's broad range of services that provide advocacy and support, giving our team a unique perspective into the intersection of disability and mental health. Disability experiences, such as social isolation and discrimination, can increase the likelihood of mental health conditions. Conversely, mental health conditions can exacerbate existing disabilities, creating a complex interplay of factors that affect well-being.

Through our own comprehensive services and in collaboration with strategic partners, we dramatically increase access to care, expand the state's capacity to address the overdose crisis, reduce mental health-related hospitalizations, help address the workforce shortage and create innovative partnerships with law enforcement, schools and hospitals to improve care.

As a SAMSHA Certified Community Based Health Clinic (CCBHC), CFI can connect with those who are the most vulnerable and in need of crucial behavioral health and crisis services. As funding for behavioral health services remains in flux, we remain committed to providing access to a comprehensive range of mental health services, regardless of their diagnosis.

*CFI's \$4 million SAMHSA\* CCBHC grant funds critical behavioral health services in Milwaukee County. The funding supports treatment for residents of all ages living with serious mental illness, substance use disorders, co-occurring conditions and youth with serious emotional disturbance.*

*\*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration*



# CFI Ranks Among the Best for Rehabilitative Services

For the 24th consecutive year, we have been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

This 3-year accreditation represents our adherence to the highest quality and care standards in providing rehabilitative programs and services. Additionally, CARF's surveyors offered no recommendations for improvement, which is achieved by only 3 percent of CARF surveys—ranking CFI among the best in its class.

Every day, CFI's team members demonstrate extraordinary commitment to helping clients overcome challenges, build independence and achieve their personal goals. This accomplishment, combined with the positive outcomes seen in clients' lives, are a direct result of exceptional teamwork and a person-centered approach to care.





## CARF evaluates agencies on the following areas:



Community Employment Services:  
Employment Supports & Job Development



Community Integration



Comprehensive Vocational  
Evaluation Services



Employment Skills Training Services



Governance Standards Applied

CARF's accreditation demonstrates CFI's commitment to continuous performance improvement and accountability for our team, our stakeholders, and the communities we serve.

CARF is an independent, nonprofit accrediting body whose mission is to promote the quality, value, and optimal outcomes of services through a consultative accreditation process and continuous improvement services that center on enhancing the lives of the people who are served. For more information about CARF and the accreditation process, visit [carf.org](http://carf.org).

“

*We are honored to be ranked among the very best for providing rehabilitative services for people with disabilities and complex behavioral health needs.*”



## In Memory | **John Chianelli**

Last September, we lost an esteemed leader and friend, John Chianelli—a visionary in the mental health world. John served as Vice President of Behavioral Health since 2011. He was a dedicated and passionate health care leader who reminded us to treat each other and those we serve with dignity and respect and to always keep the highest standard of client care at the heart of what we do.

John was an educator in and out of the classroom, and his passion touched countless members of the community, clients and providers alike. John was a fierce advocate and champion for underserved communities and his vision lives on today. **As we reflect on 2024, please take a moment to think of John and his words: “Love is a verb.”**

Plans are being made to honor his legacy and to continue improving health care equity and access for people with the greatest need.





*John's spirit lives on in the many lives he touched and legacy he left at CFI.*





# Our Commitment to Providing Culturally Competent Care

By investing in continuous cultural-competence education, we ensure our work uplifts diverse voices and helps create communities where everyone can thrive.

**98.5%** Cultural competence education will be useful in performing my job

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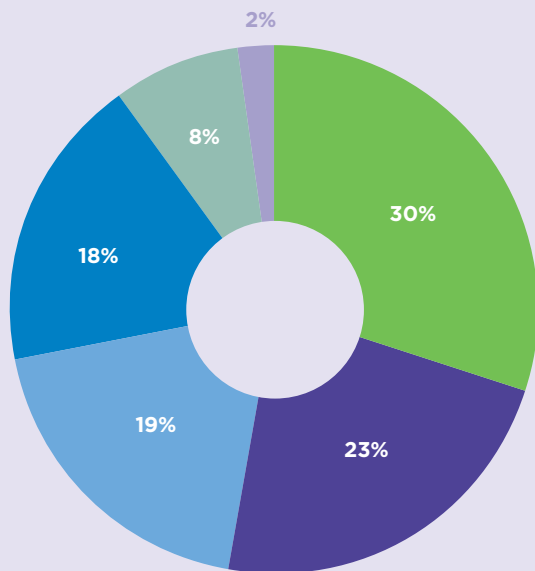
**97%** Would recommend this learning to my coworkers

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**97%** Can immediately use what I learned

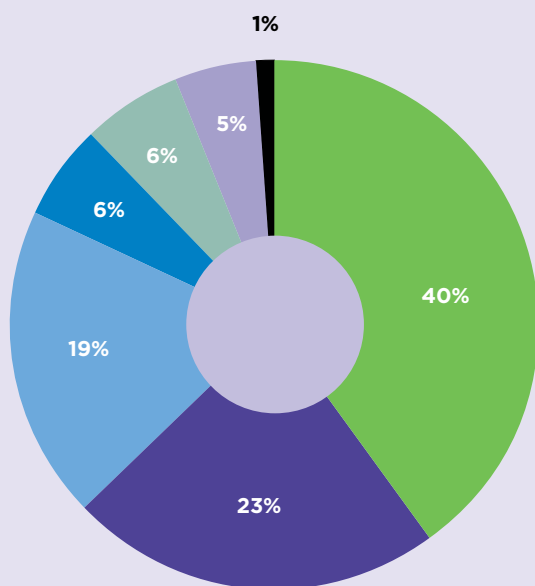


## Financials



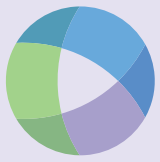
### REVENUES

- GOVERNMENT FEE FOR SERVICES
- GOVERNMENT GRANTS
- INVESTMENT INCOME
- PRIVATE PAY
- PRIVATE INSURANCE
- MISCELLANEOUS

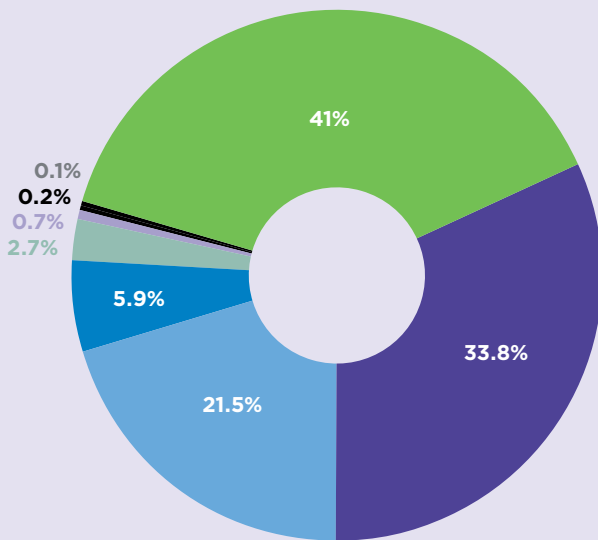


### EXPENSES

- BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
- COMMERCIAL & EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
- iLIFE
- DAY ACTIVITIES (PSC & LIFE)
- HOME CARE
- FIRST PERSON CARE CONSULTANTS
- OTHER



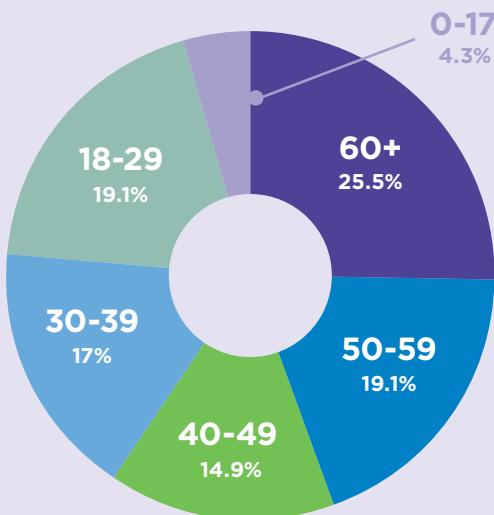
## Client Demographics



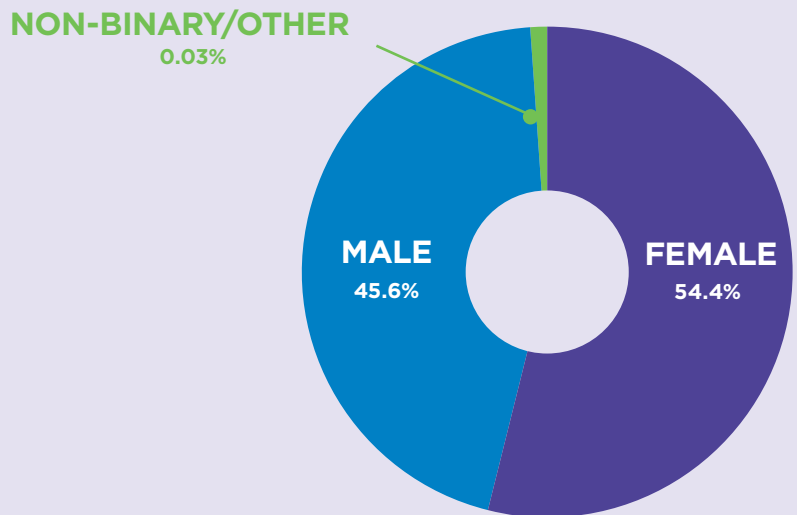
CFI CLIENT RACE/ETHNICITY

- WHITE
- BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN
- LATINO
- MULTI-RACIAL
- ASIAN AMERICAN
- OTHER RACE OR UNDISCLOSED
- NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER
- AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKAN NATIVE

CFI CLIENT AGE



CFI CLIENT GENDER





# What Our Clients Say



**92%**

**trust CFI to help with their needs**

**92%**

**feel respected by our team**

**92%**

**say their lives have improved working with CFI**

**93%**

**feel they have a say in their care**

**91%**

**would refer a friend to CFI**

# Join Our Mission

With your support, we can create healthy, hopeful and inclusive communities where all people with disabilities and behavioral health needs thrive.


*Thank you!*



## Centers for Independence Main Campus

 2020 W. Wells Street Milwaukee, WI 53233

 [cfihope.org](http://cfihope.org)

 (414) 937-2020

Follow CFI on social media



**Feeling inspired?**  
Find your fit at CFI.