

# Keystone Human Services receives international Zero Project Award for its Technology for Independent Living program

*KHS receives international Zero Project Award for Technology for Independent Living program as a model for supporting people with intellectual disability*

HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, February 23, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Keystone Human Services received a Zero Project Award for its innovative Technology for Independent Living program, launched in 2018 through KHS's Intellectual Disability Services. KHS is one of 71 awardees from 42 countries whose programs have been recognized by the prestigious Vienna, Austria-based Zero Project as models deserving global attention and replication.



The KHS team at the conference

Technology for Independent Living focuses on using technology, both what's readily available from Google and Amazon and more sophisticated tools, to support people with intellectual disability to live more independently. Initiated by people with disability who expressed their desire to live more independently and reduce the amount of support they received from staff, the program operates through a collaborative process. Each person sets their own goals and works closely with KHS staff and technology vendors to customize a solution.

“

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*Charles Sweeder, KHS  
President and CEO*

People's goals vary and change over time. The flexibility of

this program gives people the freedom to fine-tune their technology tools and add new ones to enhance their independence in different areas of their lives. Someone who starts with technology support around spending the night alone may discover that they want to learn to

safely cook breakfast on their own.

“It makes me feel happy,” said Earl Stone. “I can do things on my own now. I can be more independent for myself.”

Since 2018, the program has grown to support 250 people across three different services, resulting in 17,000 fewer hours of direct support annually. Although some of the technology started out as a safety net, it has become a natural support for people, allowing them to have autonomy and check in with their support person when needed rather than the support person checking in with them. The use of technology has been so successful that technology has the potential to become a natural support in each person’s person-centered plan.

Most importantly, people who have incorporated smart technology into their lives report that their quality of life has improved.

“We’re honored to be recognized as an innovative leader in using technology to support people with disability,” said Charles Sweeder, KHS President and CEO. “We’re cultivating a culture of curiosity among our employees and the people we support, encouraging people to explore available technology and try it, similar to the way anyone would try new technology to see if it would enhance their lives. Technology gives people greater opportunity to direct their own lives.”

KHS received the award during the 2023 Zero Project Conference in Vienna, Austria. KHS leaders Greg Wellems, KHS Vice President of Operations, and Dr. Ludmila Malcoci, Regional Director of Keystone Human Services International for Central and Eastern Europe and the Executive Director of Keystone Moldova, presented during the conference on inclusive design homes, deinstitutionalization, and inclusive employment.

Related to KHS’s Technology for Independent Living initiative, Wellems spoke on Inclusive Design Homes, sharing that even though technology plays an important role, inclusive design is not just about technology. “It’s about people,” said Wellems. “The person comes first—their goals, their culture, and what they desire their life to look like. Then technology opens possibilities to achieve those goals and increase independence.”

KHS partners with each person with a disability and their families and together, using the person-centered planning process, explores the person’s vision for their life and charts a pathway to bringing that vision to fruition.

Dr. Malcoci shared Keystone Moldova’s work in deinstitutionalization. In 2009, Keystone Moldova began the Community for All – Moldova project, supporting people with intellectual disabilities to leave institutions and build lives in the community, as well as preventing people with disabilities from being institutionalized in the first place.

“We took a systemic, holistic approach for sustainable change, built on a foundation of Social

Role Valorization,” said Dr. Malcoci in the Deinstitutionalization – Are We Making Progress? session. “In addition to designing and developing new services and the legal framework, Keystone Moldova engaged the community and educated the media to combat discrimination and supported people with disabilities to understand their rights and advocate for themselves.”

Keystone Moldova has also developed an integrated, sustainable approach for inclusive employment, incorporating person-centered planning, inclusive policies for labor inclusion, advocacy by people with disabilities and their families, and capacity building of the National Agency for Employment and universities in career guidance.

“Each facet—inclusive policies, improved community and business environment, employment support services, capacity building of all stakeholders, the participation of people with disabilities, and activities to change attitudes and stereotypes—works together to create an inclusive labor market where people with disabilities are valued employees and entrepreneurs,” said Dr. Malcoci during the Moving Out of Sheltered Workshops session.

To read more about the Zero Project and KHS’s Technology for Independent Living initiative, visit <https://zeroproject.org/view/project/0e11d543-ff1d-4119-85b3-25478a78fd47>.

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## About Keystone Human Services

KHS is a multi-national human services organization based in Harrisburg, PA. KHS operates in Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, the Republic of Moldova, and India, providing advocacy, services, and supports in early childhood education and family support, mental health, autism, and intellectual, developmental, cognitive, and physical disability. We build communities where everyone can thrive, direct their own lives, establish homes, find meaningful work, pursue education alongside their peers, and fill valued roles in the community. In addition to operating as KHS, KHS provides services through Susquehanna Service Dogs (SSD), Capital Area Head Start (CAHS), Partnerships for People, Key Human Services, Keystone Autism Services, Keystone Moldova, and Keystone Institute India.

More information can be found at [KHS.org](https://KHS.org) and [KeystoneMoldova.md](https://KeystoneMoldova.md)

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