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Creating and Operating Services to Support Youth in Transitioning to an Employment Goal

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>> JUDITH: All right. It's time for us to begin our afternoon session. I hope everyone had enough chocolate cake to get them through the break, which is an hour and a half. So I don't know if you need more food yet, but try to hang on for now.

We're going to continue our discussion with a focus on post-secondary. And I think in the years that I've been working in the Independent Living field, this is some of the most exciting times in terms of more opportunities for students with disabilities in post-secondary settings.

So we're going to have for our panel for this session -- remember questions are always welcome -- Augusta, Cindy and David. And I'll let them introduce themselves if any more introduction is needed. Thank you so much.

>> AUGUSTA: How is everybody doing?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Good.

>> AUGUSTA: Like David said yesterday, we have to keep you up after lunch. So if I throw something at you, make sure you duck. I'm not joking. I like full attention on me.

One of the things that with post-secondary education, I'm doing a little mini intro about why I'm so passionate about post-secondary education and about education in general. And then I'll turn this over to Cindy to go through how we provide those services through LIFE in Mississippi.

As I told you yesterday, I have two wonderful kids. One of them, my oldest, I'll tell you his age. He's 30, but I'm only 32. While he was in school, we started with the tedious process of trying to figure out exactly what was going on with him. When he was about 8 -- 9 years old and had an IQ test, he tested through the roof, had an amazing IQ, but was failing all his classes. So we couldn't figure out what was going on with that.

As a parent, I could tell you I was that typical uneducated and ignorant parent when it came to working with him and his disability. And I can say that now because a lot of parents don't want to acknowledge that they don't know things. And I had to acknowledge that I didn't know what was going on with my own child.

As he progressed on and we started to figure out that there were some issues that were going on, I was told by an educator that I needed to have a realistic goal, stop pressuring him, that he would never graduate from high school, and that he would never go to college, and I needed to be realistic about this.

I'm not going to tell you exactly what I said to her because that won't be nice, but you can imagine. And from that point on, I became very passionate about making sure all kids got to the post-secondary education that they wanted and they chose to have.

We were very fortunate and very, very blessed that we got the opportunity to look in that teacher's face when he graduated from high school and when he graduated from college. A lot of people don't have that opportunity.

So I just wanted to let you also know that when you're working with kids and you're working with transition, that you are dealing with the whole child, dealing with the whole person. And he is an extremely unique individual, when David was describing the person in his life.

A little story about him. His name is Jojo. So whenever you go to these post-secondary and IEP meetings, picture him, picture Jojo in your head so that you realize that each child is important. Each person is important. You may not understand their dreams. They may not be important to you, but it's their dreams and their transitions.

And we need to make sure we're helping them to follow those dreams. He wanted to be an actor. And I was worried because I thought I was going to have to take care of him the rest of his life, because most actors don't make money.

While he was in high school, I decided to do the medication route. And on his meds, he is a straight A student; not a problem. Off his meds, we working with D minus. At 15, he chose to come off of his meds. That was the hardest thing for me to have to do, but that was his transition. Because I wanted him to stay on his meds so he could be an A student. What he told me was, how can you tell me to stay off drugs but you're popping pills to make me into somebody that I'm not? Me being the parent wanted to have a really smart answer, but I didn't. So I said we'll compromise. He ended up winning.

But the funny thing about that is my daughter who is extremely opposite and extremely anal -- she's a captain in the United States Army -- was an A student and wanted to make A's on everything. Well, she did graduate with honors. Jojo had a D minus, but he graduated. But the funny thing about it is all of his graduation photos have him with the honor's tassel because he talked someone into letting him use their tassel.

So needless to say, there's a thorn of contention in my house every time we look at graduation photos because I have one child who studied her little behind off, and he's saying I graduated with honors too. I have the pictures to prove it.

So just to let you say he is a good actor, and he can talk his way out of anything and into anything, which is how he graduated with honors. He took that -- he was an extremely creative person which transitioned into his post-secondary education. He majored in what in college? Can somebody guess?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Theater.

>> AUGUSTA: Theater. There you go. And I was still worried. Lord, how is he going to pay his bills? We have a problem. But when he went on to college, he soared. He went from being a D minus student to an A student because they took those reins off of him. They let him be creative, and he turned into an A student.

Now I have to tell you that some of his classes was creative dance and tennis, but he still did okay. I was proud of those A's. He went on, and he actually has been in a few commercials. He was in a movie, but now he's realized that he has to pay his bills because I'm not paying them, because I told you yesterday he had to do what? Get out and stay out. So he has a job, and he has taken that creative talent. And I'm telling you, parents, when your kids are saying I'm playing video games, kind of let them. Because guess what he does?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Designs videos.

>> AUGUSTA: He has a dual role with Game Stop. He's a manager of a Game Stop, but he's also one of the people that comes up with the parental controls for the games. So he plays all the games, then decides what kind of parental controls should be on the game. So me, now, me being worried about him, he actually makes more money than I do. But that's good because I can now tell him that transition that started when you were 12 years old helped you to get to where you are.

Just remember when we talk about transition, remember the whole person. Remember that transition is going to start at 11 and 12, whatever we want to start these ages are. But they come out to the end result of the whole person being able to accomplish the goals that they want to accomplish with their life. It's not our choice. It's their choice to be able to put whatever they want in those transition pieces. A lot of times we'll say that's not going to happen. You don't know until you give the person the opportunity.

So with that, I'm going to turn this over to Cindy. And remember whenever you're at an IEP meeting and you think of someone who can't do something and look at the kid and say this is impossible, what name are you going to remember?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Jojo.

>> AUGUSTA: Jojo. He's an actor. He was a D minus student that graduated with honors. Okay?

(Applause)

>> CINDY: All right. So we're going to talk about post-secondary education. What are you going to do after high school? There's really two options, work or school. We're going to focus on what are you school options. Not everybody goes to it, but it should be an option. What do we do at CILs? We give our consumers choices. They choose, but we help them know what they are.

So what does post-secondary education mean in transition? It means that the chance, of course, education after high school, and the education can be a big word. That doesn't have to be formal. It can be training, anything, learning. Everybody needs to learn. It means that young adults can grow and learn more about themselves.

I never went and lived in a dorm, but I know those who did. I've heard lots of stories. So that could be a wonderful transition for a consumer, a youth, to sort of branch out and learn about independence in a safer environment while they're learning things. So that's an option.

Socialization, college is totally different than high school. In high school you have a bell to tell you when to go, when to leave, when to do this and that. In college you just chill. I mean you have to get to class on time, but that's your responsibility. You're not having teachers yelling at you down the hallway.

Socialization is a great thing. It's amazing how sometimes the population, the people without disabilities, all of a sudden it's like the wall goes away on a lot of them. They grow up. To me, it's just amazing to me. It's like now they're no longer around their peers so much. They're not in all the clicks. They're the individual selves. So if you have them as an individual self, they're not as scared to talk to the girl in the wheelchair or the person that has a hearing impairment. They're not scared about that. So it's interesting.

Independence can be gained. This is very true. You don't have the assistance in college like you do in high school. You do get accommodations, and we're going to go over that, but you don't have them plopped on you. You don't have Mary following you around. If you have a helper, you can have things like that, but you have to ask for it.

You have to tell each professor what you need. So if you don't want help in English, you're not going to get help in English. But if you start to fail, you're not going to have someone coming up to you and say, honey, are you sure you don't need help?

That's a very big growing period for a youth. Because they're not with mama, and mama can't tell that school to do it because they're not going to listen to mama, daddy, grandma, nobody. It has to be the student. But you learn how to say I need a little bit of help here.

Of course, there's more opportunities in the future. As you learn more, your options are bigger. The world, with the economy the way it is, you definitely need to know as much as possible.

So how does HOT do it? Oh, we do it well. Each IL specialist or transition specialist serving youth develops relationships with youth and their families, the whole person. We need to know these families. What always baffles me, and I have to remind my assistants because I'll put down Mary Wallace called. Okay, but who's her child? I need to know the whole thing. If I don't know them, I don't know them. So I'm learning relationships.

Then there's this one I talk to every day. After I've gotten to know them, I know them, but you develop relationships. You learn where the mom may be a little protective, and the girl can't get out of the house. You learn about that, and you need to because you need to know what their strengths and weaknesses are. And when you give them the choices, how to display it for them. You don't want to give them everything and then say now you have a choice, because that's a lot of options, hopefully.

The core team. We're going to talk about that in a second because it takes a village to raise a child. It takes a team to get you going. We need collaborations. I rely on that very greatly. So the core team needs to collaborate. When the student is in high school, and, of course, we already talked to the student, hopefully, earlier on. But when our student is in high school and we're really getting closer, we really get our core team together.

And that core team can consist of a lot of people, of course, first and foremost the young adult. No matter what the disability is, no matter what the communication, because if they can't public communicate, that obviously needing to be a goal of communication devised or some way of communicating. Because everybody has a say -- yes, no, something to that effect.

Parent/guardian, if -- and I'm saying this -- if the young adult wants it. Oh, did I say that? I did. If the parent or guardian is going to be a part of that child's life, as an adult, like they're going to be providing supports, if they're going to be paying for college, it's a good idea to have them there, but it's the young adult's choice. Once they turn 18, that's my consumer as an adult.

The parent choice, I should be there, obviously, because I'm going to be working with you. So the CILs specialist needs to be there. VR counselor, I know that each state has different age times that kick in, but you need to learn what that age is and get a defined answer from the head part of the vocational rehabilitation. Because if you ask one, you have to make it another answer because some of them it's changed I know. So you want to get that answer, and you want to get them involved as soon as possible because it takes time to get this going.

And then if your school has a transition counselor, get them in there because they know all the school stuff going on and the teachers. They know all that stuff. And if you know you want to go to a certain college or that student wants to go to a certain college, each college usually has a disabilities support, somebody that is the disability contact; ODA, which is Office of Disability Accommodation, things of that nature. There's somebody there that's going to get you your accommodations. And lots of them, especially junior colleges, are willing to meet and willing to be a part of that.

So what does it take? We've got a core team. We've got them together. We've identified who we need to have there. Now we're going to have what I call a PCP meeting, Person Centered Planning meeting. I love these things because it helps the youth see what their options are, see what they have, see where they've been, and see what we have to do to get them there.

Because a lots of them say I want to do this, but they don't quite understand the steps it's going to take to get to that. And we want to make sure that they understand I'm not going it all. Your mom's not doing it all. If you want to go to college, this is what you need to do. If you want to go to a tech school, this is what you need to do.

So you can facilitate yourself as a specialist or you can collaborate with another agency to allow you to be more participating in the activity, which I like to do that. There are different agencies that do PCP meetings. So I usually have a few that I work with. So, again, collaboration. And they can also sometimes get an outside view if they have not looked with that student.

Meet with the youth and family before the PCP meeting. I like to do that to let them know what's going to happen, what to expect, what they need to be thinking about. Because it can be overwhelming if they haven't had a meeting like this before. So you've got this meeting, and they're taking about what you want to do. They're talking about you, the youth. And they're like whoa, this is little bit too much. So talk to your youth and the family, if they want the family involved. Talk to them and let them know what's going to be done.

Again, make sure you plan early enough on the meeting also because you have a lot of people, that can core team, that doesn't have to be just them. It could be anybody else that's involved in that student's life. So if there's a friend that's going to be the PCA or whatever, have them there, if there is a sister or anybody.

But you need to make sure you can plan early enough because if you don't have certain pieces, likes the VR counselors scheduled or the disability support person's schedule is full, it kind of takes away from the meeting. Like I said, it helps them get their wants pinpointed and help them realistically fulfill them.

So what does it take? It takes planning, planning, planning. I'm big on planning. So I love to get my students as early as possible. But, unfortunately, some schools like to wait until it's not time to transition them. So you just start as early as you can on planning.

Beginning at school IEP. Like I mentioned earlier, your transition page. It's a beautiful, beautiful page. I know that it got moved, the age got moved up to 16 federally for you to have to start working on that. But as a child/parent, you can start discussing that with your school. Well, I want to fill that out. I do want to do that because that's the student's IEP. It is that student's IEP. And our state is still 14. It's state mandated at 14. So thankfully we've got something there. So I think as early as possible.

And what that page is, is talking about that transition of that student. Because that IEP is supposed to help with the curriculum and everything like that, but it's also supposed to help with helping a student into Independent Living. And that point gets kind of shadowed a little bit.

But learning after high school is that. The IEP -- I don't know if I put on the next page or not. Okay. That IEP, another big thing is what degree setting do you have on that IEP? Do you have high school diploma? And if your state has it, do you have occupational diploma or do you have certificate?

And depending on what age we're looking at here, if you're like in elementary school and you see a certificate, I would explain to that consumer, that parent, that we can put that on a diploma track, shoot for that and always change it back to certificate if we don't make it. Diploma, that is so important. It will open so many doors.

They say, well, you can get a GED. A GED is very difficult to get, and also that's going to be time consuming too. You put this label on this child or this young adult of having a certificate. Now they have to learn everything that they didn't learn in high school because they were sitting in the segregated class.

>> JUDITH: Cindy, we have a question over here.

>> CINDY: Oh, I'm sorry. I just start talking.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just have a question about the transition piece of the IEP. Is there a way to access a blank copy of that?

>> CINDY: Yes, there is a way. It should be on the Department of Education's Web site. Just look up IEP, and you should be able to get a blank copy.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay. Thank you.

>> CINDY: Uh-huh. Any questions? Okay. So the degree option is so important. I can't express that enough. Now if you get them in high school, it's probably going to be too late. And that breaks my heart because -- you're like, oh, I'm too late. Don't fret. Because if that student that has the abilities to start learning or to learn, you can have in that IEP that they start focusing on GED and stuff. So while they're going to get a certificate, they can be getting taught to be prepared for the GED. So that is a very important thing.

And, of course, I'm not saying that every student is going to be able to do this. But a lot of them don't realize the accommodations they can be getting with IEPs. You don't have to change the curriculum. You just have to make it accessible.

>> AUGUSTA: I'm going to jump in here and echo what Cindy is saying about when you get your young adults at their seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade and they're starting to transition from junior high into high school, we know that's probably one of the most important transitions. We know that when you're transitioning from elementary to junior high, it's a big change physically and all these things that are going on.

But educationally that's one of your biggest transitions. Because what a lot of people don't realize, a lot of parents don't realize, and I didn't realize this, is that when your child has his IEP in the eighth grade, they're already writing up that educational piece for that ninth grade teacher.

A lot of those ninth grade teachers, they don't know your child. They've never met them. They've never laid eyes on them. They're looking at that transition page or that IEP piece that's been sent over from that junior high or in some states that middle school.

So it's very important that you get involved, be extremely involved. And make sure you stress with your parents if they're extremely involved with that IEP in that eighth grade or junior high IEP meeting. Because you want it to be and you want it to say diploma track.

Because if you get -- if you go to your IEP for your ninth grade year and you might be half way and even if you're three or four months into your ninth grade year and you're on a certificate track or occupational track, then that student is going to have to go back and try to catch up on all of those core classes that they've missed.

And a lot of times, even in the ninth grade, it becomes overwhelming for a student to have to go back and try to catch up on all of those credits or those carnegie units they might have not had to be able to get a diploma. And that's very, very disheartening.

So make sure that your parents know that eighth grade that they need to make sure that their parents are paying attention. Because I'm going to tell you what happened to me. Luckily enough I actually saw it on the IEP. Here I am thinking that I knew what I was doing, and they had certificate track checked off on my son's IEP.

When I asked the teacher, I said what does this mean, certificate track? You now what she said? She said don't worry. It will be easier for him. It's going to look just like a diploma.

So that's why I needed to make sure you tell parents exactly what they're looking for. Read through it. That's why advocates are so important. Because just luckily enough I asked a question because I did not have an advocate with me and did not even know what I was looking for. Just blessedly enough I asked a question.

And when she said it was going to look like a diploma, of course the flags went up everywhere. What do you mean, look like a diploma? So it's a lot of schools. They think they're helping your child by making it easier for them so they won't stress them out about having to take all these classes.

But like Cindy said, even if they take those classes in their ninth grade year and they fail, they can go back to certificate. But it's real hard to go from certificate and occupational diploma to a regular diploma. That's real hard.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: My question is I have a lot of high school -- I have two questions, actually. I have a lot of high schoolers that just now started getting into high schools where the teachers aren't telling them they have a certificate. And they are literally sitting down with the teacher planning to go to a four-year school, and they weren't even notified that they couldn't go to a four-year school because their diploma didn't -- our diplomas are the same as long as you get your work hours, but your transcript is different, and that's what you have to have to go to college. They weren't even aware of that until I came in and said, oh, no, you can't do that.

My other problem is whenever I have worked with a teacher on trying to say, no, they can do this, let's at least let them try, they always throw back at me, well, their testing scores are too low. And so, therefore, they don't even qualify for the diploma track. I mean, I can't really fight what a test says. So how do you get your way around that?

>> AUGUSTA: I don't know how it works in your state. But in Mississippi, they rely a lot on those testing scores. But if you as a parent or as an advocate say you want your child on a diploma track, they have to put them in a fully inclusive classroom.

I tell parents that are going into their IEP meetings, if you don't know any other phrase to say, least restricted environment, least restricted environment so they can be placed in a regular classroom so that they can at least be getting those units. And, again, I say if they fail, at least they've been in the class.

(Dog barking)

>> AUGUSTA: What's wrong? I'm sorry. He's asleep, and he's dreaming. He's chasing rabbits in his sleep.

>> CINDY: I'm sorry.

>> AUGUSTA: I think it's kind of cute.

So make sure that even when you get -- and I can't stress this enough, eighth grade. Parents need to know. So we are trying -- that's why Christy was saying yesterday it's so important we need back this transition age up to 13 or 14, because if you think about transition age of being 16, when you're 16 years old, most of your other classmates are planning for what college you're going to.

If go to a student who's 16, you're 16 or 17 years old and now you have to go back and take eighth and ninth grade classes, what are they going to say? Just forget it. And that's why so many of our kids get lost in the system. And it breaks my heart because we're having kids now, young adults -- I use the word kids because they're kids to me. I mean no disrespect. They're just young.

We're seeing them, and they're now 20, 21, coming out of school thinking they're going to be able to at least go to a junior college and they have a certificate. So now they're having to go back and try to take the GED. And I don't know about you guys, but the GED is hard to get. A lot of people are telling these kids, well, you can just take your GED. That is hard. It's hard to pass the GED.

>> RICHARD: Just one answer to the testing question, and this is not by any means a full answer. But one thing is -- and you may certainly already be there -- but making sure that in that testing process that they are taking full advantage of the accommodations that should be provided to them in the testing process. Because sometimes when those test scores are low, it's because people are not getting good accommodations in the testing process itself.

>> AUGUSTA: I'm sorry. There's one more question back here.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. Say, for instance, in our state we have a TPYA class, and it's Transition Program for Young Adults, and it's for the 18 to 21, 22 year olds. Now say they were on the certificate track and they didn't know that, and say they want to go to a junior college, is there a way to help them at that point in their life, those two or three years they can get on a track so they could go to a junior college and kind of backtrack in a way, I guess?

>> AUGUSTA: What I would suggest to you is -- because each state's Department of Ed is different. I can tell you what to do in Mississippi, but that won't necessarily help you. What I would do is go to your Department of Ed Web site, and they have the listing of all the different programs that -- I know in Mississippi they have a listing of each one of the programs and how they can assist students to be able to go back and sometimes catch those units up.

Because a lot of times what they won't tell you is if you have a young adult -- we'll use the word behind. If they're trying to catch up, they might be able to take some of those classes at the junior college or the junior college that might be close to the high school and be able to catch those credits up. So they're going to school in the day and then taking classes at night. That's what one of my kids did. But you have to make sure you check in your state's Department of Ed and see if that's a program you have in your state.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah. But I was also thinking along the lines that while they're in that TPYA program, I guess I need to check the Web site to see if that's an option for them during that time period that they're there.

>> AUGUSTA: I don't know if you can have a dual program, which I think you're asking me.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Oh, would that be a dual program?

>> CINDY: Well, it couldn't be a college, but they can help get money in preparation, and it could be in the IEP to get ready.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes, that's what I'm saying, catching up on the high school that they would have needed to get the diploma.

>> CINDY: Right. They would need to make the goals of being prepped to be able to go to junior college. Because now they could be something lower than that.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Changing their goals.

>> CINDY: Like changing what their goals are. The youth is going to need to be able to say I want this. So when they give you the IEP that's already printed on, you X through the goals and you write down what you want.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: All right. Thank you.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I have another question that may be too long, and you can just tell me. I'll talk to you later, that's fine.

Getting to the high schools, I had to go through the teachers that I knew. And then I've made the same connections that Dave was talking about earlier, just kind of building out and doing that process.

But when I go to those schools, I'm not in IEP meetings unless I meet a student or a parent that says I would like you to work with us, and then they become my consumer and so on. In middle school if I'm trying to catch everybody and get those seventh and eighth graders, how do you find that process to get those middle school students in that bulk of people?

>> AUGUSTA: I do understand what you're saying. That's where you've got to go back to utilizing the people in your center to be able to go into schools and do presentations. We have found that we get a lot of consumers at health fairs. We go in and we just do a presentation at a junior high, and we just kind of throw it out there. Make sure that you're on the diploma track. And kids start to ask those questions.

When you go into PTA meetings or anywhere where you know that you might have a person that has a child with a disability, just ask the question. We have come up with a lot of consumers. I've talked to a lot of people just by asking a question. What track is your child on? And they have no idea what I'm talking about. So then when you start to explain what you mean by diploma track or a certificate track, then they start to ask the questions.

And it's hard. You know you can't get to everybody, but at least the ones that you come in contact with. I'm bad at the grocery store. What track is your child on? What track is your child on? That's going to be my mantra. So you have to make sure that you at least getting to people that you know. We wish we could help everyone.

My best friend is a special ed teacher, and we have battled conversations about this because that's who she is. She wants to make it easy for the kids. She wants to make sure that they're not stressed out. She'll say, well, it's okay for them to be on a certificate program, and I'll say no it's not.

So you have make sure you're at least getting to the kids that you can get to and so that they can transition early enough. So even if it's an elementary school, even if you're going to an elementary school and you're doing speaking engagements, start putting in your parents' minds and young adults heads if you want to go the college.

And we need to stop saying if you want to go to college and start asking our kids what college do you want to go. Stop asking them if and say, where do you want to go to college? Where do you want to go? So it's in their head when they get in junior high and in high school that they need to start preparing for it.

>> CINDY: I've gotten into a lot of schools by connecting with the transition counselors of those schools because they have a hard job. You don't start telling them, hey, I can go to IEP meetings and start advocating, because they're going to be like okay. You just say I can help these children transition. I can help with the resources. I don't mind.

I have days where I spend at half the county just meeting family after family after family because that's my transition counselors are hooking me up. Then once as I'm meeting with them I'm able to say so what diploma track is your child on? Oh, okay. Well, one thing I can do is go to IEP meetings and help you. And they're like, oh, yeah. So you can make connections with the schools. Once you get a transition counselor, they'll get you down the line.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is Joseph Nolan. I'm a Texas transition counselor with DARS division for blind services. Truthfully, I never heard of a certificate program in Texas. We have minimum plan/recommended plan. This is news to me, if you're graduating on minimum plan, you can still go to college, you just couldn't go to a four-year university.

So in Texas it's important to distinguish between minimum, which means you can go to college. You'll just be going to a junior college. You can still go. But if you're not on the recommended plan, you do not have the necessary requirements for the curriculum for a four-year university.

>> CINDY: Can they get an associates or are they only getting a vo-tech?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: They can certainly, in a junior college, they would get an associates and then transfer on after their first or second year to a regular university.

>> CINDY: We used to have that more in Mississippi. I know on the Gulf Coast, a lot of the junior colleges are cutting that out. They have a test where you have to test to be able to get into that. I know it's different in each state. But we're just trying to make sure that our student have the best options, you know, the most.

>> AUGUSTA: It's really important that you guys go back and check your Department of Ed Web site. I would suggest there's a lot of states here. There's like 25 states representing here. So every state's Department of Ed is going to be different. You have a lot of states that have different terminologies for different types of diplomas. So before you start trying to go and go to IEP meetings and help people transition, make sure you know what's offered in your state, and make sure you're offering what's best for that particular student.

Now we're not sitting here saying that every student is going to get a diploma. We realize that. We know that's not going to happen. But if it's an option, make sure that your kids are transitioning to the best of their ability and that they're reaching for what they can reach for and not just settle for what the Department of Ed wants to give them.

>> CINDY: I know it varies by state, but we're just trying to give you the information to let you know what the most options are.

So the options of the school. Let's break it down. Four-year college. So that's usually the typical child that wants to -- do we have a hand up?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Inaudible) age range you mentioned starting at eighth grade. But if your CIL is starting a new youth program, and you're tending to target the older students, how can you handle going all the way back to eighth grade and then having the young adults going all the way up to 20, 25, 30 years old?

>> AUGUSTA: I'm sorry.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: What I'm saying if you're CIL and starting a youth program, I see the importance of going back to eighth grade. But if you're serving students that have transitioned out of high school, maybe the age 17 to 30, or 25 -- 30, that age range, it just seems like a lot to add in the students that are going all the way back to eighth grade. So how do you guys -- what do you recommend a CIL that has a smaller youth program or starting a youth program, how do you handle all of that?

>> AUGUSTA: We are really fortunate that our healthy opportunity specialists do work between the ages of 0 and 21. So they have the opportunity of having younger consumers. I know it's going to be difficult if you're just starting a youth program or if you don't have a youth transition program at all in your CIL.

But just keep in mind that you do need to make sure that you're trying to work with younger adults. If someone is between 17 and 21 and already exiting out of high school, that's when you help them with those adult services, to be able to get them maybe a GED so that they can't go on to further their education.

But if you're trying to back it up, that's going to be your individual CIL, and I would suggest that you have a sit down with your wonderful executive director -- I'm looking at me ED to see how she would handle it -- to how you would sit down with your wonderful executive director to ask how you would be able to -- you're not going to be able to take on everything at once, especially when you're starting a youth program. But just remember when your transitioning people, that that eighth grade to high school is the important year to be able to make sure they get those units.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: So are you suggesting at this point that that would be like the most important place to start the eighth grade versus starting to the later years?

>> AUGUSTA: In my wonderful opinion that only matters now is that, yes, to me if you're talking about education, if you're talking about making sure a person is going to transition from into the eighth grade into high school and making sure they can get a regular diploma, that eighth grade to ninth grade year is very important because that's when the IEP and all those transitional service are on there to make sure the young adult is going to be able to get a regular diploma.

Because once they get into the tenth or eleventh year, it's not impossible to go back and catch those unit stuff. If you think about it, if a ninth grader is taking an average of seven classes their ninth grad year and they're not on a diploma track, by the time they're in the tenth grade, that's another seven or eight classes that they've missed out on. But the time they get to their junior year, they're having to go back and catch up 14 or 15 classes.

That's why we're saying that it's important that they take the right classes their ninth grad year so that they're not behind. They're not trying to catch up. So they won't be behind the other students. That's why it's important, I feel, that it's important.

Because I realize how difficult it is. You're transitioning. You're a freshman in high school. You're already worried about what clothes your wearing. You're transitioning into that high school anyway. So then you don't want to go in and be behind in your tenth or eleventh year.

Because it's really disheartening when you see your peers that you've had from elementary school moving on. They're moving on. They're now freshman. They're now sophomores. They're now juniors, and you're still classified as a freshman. That's really disheartening to kids.

>> CHRISTY: Let me just add, I think if you're center is looking at serving youth and they're looking at the age range of 17 to 21, honestly, by the time they're 17, as Augusta has said, the die has been cast so to speak as to where they're going beyond that. If they're on a certificate track at 17, trying to get those credits on a diploma track is going to be really, really difficult to do.

So your center might as well at this point, don't give up on these kids from 17 to 21, but you might as well start thinking about the adult services that you're going to provide them. My suggestion would be, and I don't know how you all have done this. But I think you might need to consider creating an advisory council specifically on that issue so that you've got some young people and you've got some kids. You've got some teenagers, some young adults that will help the center to decide where the services need to be, and if you need to back it up to the age of 14 or even 12 or whatever.

Nothing about us without us, right? So I would recommend -- and that's how we made our determination. We had that youth advisory council. We had our board of directors, obviously, and we started talking to young people. And that's how we decided the age range we would serve. It helped we were being given money to serve a certain age range as well.

>> AUGUSTA: I think we had one hand up here first, I think. Ma'am?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: At this point, I'd just like to interject a resource that addresses so many of the things we've talked about over the last day and a half. There's a national initiative called the Youth Leadership Forums. And the last I knew, there were 23 states that had active youth leadership forums.

And during those forums, we spent a lot of time -- I know the executive director of the North Carolina YLF is here, and there might be others. But we address a lot of these issues, when we -- each state develops their own age range by which they're going to serve in their forum. But we begin to talk to the youth. We have youth come to our forum that don't know why they're on an IEP. And accommodation is a hotel room. And the ADA is their American Dental Association.

So when we start to work with youth in regard to what their accommodation may be at the age of impression, then we empower them with the skills to go into that IEP meeting and ask what track they're on to be able to state their dream. Because when they leave the forum, they have a leadership plan. They have a resource plan and a commitment to be part of the community.

So those youth leadership fours are an avenue by which you can access a pool of youth. Hundreds of youth go through youth leadership forums every summer across this country. And then they turn around and serve as mentors to be able to learn how to ask those questions.

With mentorship, it's a huge part of Independent Living, and I've been involved for about 29 years. This pool of mentors that we have young people to young people is huge. I think that the YLS can be a huge part of this whole issue.

>> AUGUSTA: I've been to one of those youth forums, and they are amazing. She's correct. If you want to learn about teaching leadership or transitioning young adults into leadership, it's really an amazing network. It's an amazing forum.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Since this is really about people starting up a youth leadership transition program, I'm curious, on average, one person, how many consumers do they have on average if they're 35 hours?

>> AUGUSTA: See, you're starting trouble. Trying to make us say that our HOT specialists are overworked, and they are. Like we said, we cover the state. On average, one specialist -- Cindy, how many cases do you have?

>> CINDY: About 125.

>> AUGUSTA: She has a 125 cases.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm working with eleventh and twelfth graders, and I have eleven of them. That's a lots of work. I find it for somebody starting off that's a lot of work for them.

>> AUGUSTA: Cindy said can she trade with you.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, I'm also an employment specialist full time. This is really a part-time job for me. But I think it's important for us to talk about. To start off, there's so much information. I'm in the eleventh and twelfth grade, and this is something I've never heard of with this, and I'm not sure how Connecticut does it. But just to have that discussion real quick of how much of CIL should be really expecting one person who's full-time, how many consumers should they expect? Because I think if we overwhelm ourselves, it won't be successful.

>> AUGUSTA: You're going to get me in trouble. We really do understand about specialists being overworked and paid so well.

(Laughter)

>> AUGUSTA: What we try to -- and working closely with the HOT specialist, I try to get them to understand that, yes, there are going to be some situations. Like Cindy said, she has 125 consumers. Des probably has more than that because he's centrally located, and he's in the center of the state.

But what we have to realize is each consumer, there might be one that's going to need a lot of your time. Then there might be one that the only thing they need is a phone number. So I'm not saying that one is more important than the other, but they really have to learn how to prioritize their time. Who's going to do what? Who needs what? They have to make sure that if they need some help they ask for help.

We have Americorps members in our office that they can turn to that a lot of times with the follow-up phone calls. They can have other people try to help them with their follow-up. And then when it comes down to the fact that, okay, now we're setting an IEP meeting. Now that specialist needs to be involved. They know the consumer. They know who they're talking to. They know who their person is calling about, but they do have help. When she says 125, she's not calling 125 people every day.

>> JUDITH: Oh, I thought she was.

>> CINDY: I have a lot of calls to make up this week.

>> JUDITH: This is a great discussion. I think we know that as -- that time and effort vary depending on the individual you're working with. And everyone works pretty much, I'm sorry to say, in overload in terms of what we're trying to do. But I also think the point is well taken as people are starting into it, don't just throw them in the deep end and see if they can swim. They're going to need support to.

I was wondering, these have been great discussions, but we have quite a bit more to cover and still have to hear from David. So maybe if you can move into some of the accommodation issues because those are huge changes in post-secondary.

>> CINDY: Okay. I do want to mention the access program. It's on the other page. If you all look at Mississippi state, there's an access program that's a new pilot program. It is for those who did get the certificate, did not get a diploma. They are trying to help them get living skills and skills to become different things other than just working at Wal-Mart. So it's a great program. It just started out, and you all may want to look at it. If you all have contacts in different states, that might be something you want to look at.

I just talked about accommodation changes. Youth do not have an IEP in college, so what do you do then? You are now covered under 504 ADA. So what that means is the youth is in charge. The youth has to dictate what they need. In the IEP meetings, they need to be there. Because if they're not there running the meeting, what are they going to do now?

So that's why I have a lot of youth that come out but don't not what to do because mom always did IEP meeting. I don't know what she said. I don't know what I had. So they don't know the accommodations they got. They didn't know how to ask what they needed. Have your consumer get the last IEP because they can look at that and help when they're discussing with the disability contact at the college.

Again, the youth has to be active. Some community colleges will take the IEP and accept that. Now most of them, they have a form you have to fill out. You have to have a doctor fill it out saying they do have a disability and they do need accommodations. What does that mean? Do it early. Don't wait until registration college time because that student is going to start college without any accommodations. That college has other students with disabilities.

Don't underestimate need. One of my biggest things is we want to be able to do everything. Again, we talked about trying to hide our disabilities. We think we can do it all. We don't want to say we need help. Talk to your youth about saying that they need help. They can always turn away help after they've learned they don't need it. But you don't want that student to start failing college which costs money and then go, well, maybe I should have. Talk to them realistically about what their needs are.

And now she gets the money.

>> AUGUSTA: Everybody always wants to talk about going to college, and we want to give our young adults the opportunity to go to college. Like Cindy said, when you get out of high school, we've all heard free and appropriate education. But once you get to college, there's no longer free and appropriate education. You have to pay for it. We need to make sure that we're letting our young adults realize, yes, we do want you to go to college. Yes, we do want you to be able to experience that, but, yes, it's going to cost money.

So we need to make sure that we're preparing our parents, preparing our students. I have a lot of parents, their kids get to the twelfth grade, and then they say, okay, they're going to go to college. Now what do I do? Well, do you have a college fund? And they look at you with this blank stare.

We need to make sure that we're letting our parents know that if you want your child to go to college, just because your child has a disability, they're not going to get a free ride. We have to push to let parents know and let young adults know with disabilities, you're going to have to pay for some stuff. We get to the point we a lot of times we think about we're going to be able to have people pay for things. That's not going to happen in college.

With the FAFSA forms, if you will look at this, we're going to make sure -- we're going through this so we won't take David's time. Make sure that people have filled out their FAFSA forms. Make sure that you throw in that they have to have done their taxes. A lot of people don't realize you can't get FAFSA if you haven't filed your tax forms. You are responsible. That person is on that family's income or the parent's income until they're 24.

A lot of times kids will think I'm coming out of school, we kind of say, you're an adult, you're an adult, you're an adult. They hear that, but when you fill out those FAFSA forms, they're going to look at that family income until they're 24, and they're going to ask for your parents' tax returns. It does not matter if you live with them or not. They want your parents' tax returns.

So make sure that the student understands that if they want to get that federal aid, we're talking about federal aid, federal FAFSA, their parents income is going to count until they're 24, and they're going to want those FAFSA forms in their application. They need to fill out that application, I think it says on the next slide, the second semester, but you need to make sure the second semester of your senior year, the beginning of that second semester, you're filling out those FAFSA forms and getting them in.

Yes, ma'am?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I just wanted to mention something that people forget a lot of the time. Once they turn 18, to see if they can get on SSI or SSDI because, there's so many work incentives as well as school education, that only if you're on those two programs you can get. So it will help pay for books and accommodations and so forth. So I always stress, I know the importance of going to school. But to get them on those benefits so they get those incentives.

>> AUGUSTA: You can come up here and present with us. That's our next one.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, I'm sorry. I didn't look ahead.

>> AUGUSTA: No. You're good. You're good. We just want to make sure, too, your VR, that is an opportunity to make sure that your young adult is on those lists, that the CIL representative, the specialist, they're making sure that they're part of that. Because they will pay for some college. They will pay for books. But you have to make sure you're working with your transition specialist, that they know it's one of your goals to go to college.

Don't wait until the day before you getting ready to go college and say I need tuition assistance. Make sure if you have your transition specialist or your VR specialist that's working with you, your vocational rehab specialist, that they know that's one of your goals. Cindy and Des can tell you, that's going to be on a goal. So they've already referred them over to VR so that state employee knows that person wants to go to college.

>> CINDY: You already met them in high school.

>> AUGUSTA: You should have already met them. That should be part of your transition team, like Cindy was talking about. They should have been at those transition or those PCP meetings. So they already know what's going on. They already know you want to go to college. So that should already be in play when you're getting ready to start school, that you have books, you have tuition, all that stuff and the assistance that you have already applied for and are going to receive.

Yes, ma'am.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: And I just wanted to provide a resource that I have used that maybe will help some of you that you don't know that's out there. It's called -- I don't know the actual Web site. But if you go online and Google, it's the 4-1-1 disability disclosure for youth. And it goes through everything about disability, disclosure, asking for accommodations. It teaches them how to do that.

I'm bringing that to the classroom to these students. It not only has a discussion point, but it actually gives them scenarios, and they have to interact and learn. And there's also a parent one that goes along with it to teach them different things. I just wanted to provide that resource for you guys. I don't want to use too much time because it's been very useful, and I've used it in two different school areas.

>> AUGUSTA: Thank you so much. The interpreter just told me I was killing him. I'm so sorry. I talk fast with a southern drawl. So I know I'm killing him. Just throw something at me.

So we talked about VR. And, guys, make sure if somebody is mentioning a resource and it sounds interesting, go to that person so you can get that resource so that we can make sure that we're helping our students.

Please make sure that once they fill out that FAFSA form, that they also go to their VR representative. Like Cindy said, they're already at those meetings, so they can get all the benefits, all the moneys they're going to need to go to school. Because we realize with the income levels, college is expensive, and we need to make sure that we have all the resources that we can have.

Work study. We also are realizing that work study is a big part of going to college. We all participate -- well, let me take that back. I've participated in work study. This is one of the situations where as a CIL and as a transition specialist that you have already, hopefully, been working with your young adult about having a job, about being employed. Because if they don't know this, when they get to school and you start talking about work study, which is basically a job, they're going to have to know how to be able to present themselves to go get that work study program started.

So we want to make sure that with our peer support, with our skills training, that they also know how to go and apply for those work study programs so that a person can utilize the whole. And, again, when you're transitioning into college, how many of us have gone to work study and some of the people that we're work studying with end up being our best friends? That's how we build our peer relations to transitioning into another part of life.

So make sure that you have all these things on your transition piece, that it's listed on those goals, that everything that we're talking about is listed so that your VR counselor, your specialist, your transition specialist, everybody is working toward that goal. And work study is an amazing opportunity for people to be able to earn some money while they're in school to help pay off some of those bills. I had bills.

Scholarships. Make sure your young adult knows where to go and seek out scholarship opportunity. We need to make sure that we're telling them that they go to the counselor's office, that we educate our youth about scholarships being turned in, the paperwork being turned in on time.

There are amazing opportunities, and I'm sure everyone knows of scholarship opportunities in their local neighborhoods. You can get a scholarship from almost anyone. A lot of people have scholarships that people just don't realize. If you go to your counselor's office, those scholarships are listed in those counselor's offices. So make sure that you're utilizing all the opportunity for funding.

I think she wants David now.

>> JUDITH: Well, I think we want to give David some time. The questions have been great. If you want to take just one minute or two minutes to wrap up, Augusta. There's also some great resources on the other slide. So I hope you'll go over them. You and David can negotiate, okay?

>> AUGUSTA: Just make sure that when you're talking about funding with your young adults that you're utilizing all of the things that you know about. Make sure you tell them to go to their counselor, go to their counselor's office and look on the boards. I know a lot of the high schools they have those small scholarships. Apply for everything. It's better to apply for it and not get it than say I should have applied for it. If you get a thousand scholarships at $50 each, that's money in your pocket.

We also encourage people to apply for Americorps. We have been talking about the Americorps program. Apply for Americorps. A lot of times if a young adult decides that they want to go and get some work experience or get some job related experience before they go to college, some Americorps programs are part-time where the person can go to college and participate in Americorps.

One of the great benefits of the Americorps program is once they finish 1700 hours for the Americorps program, that student then gets an educational award of $5,000 that goes toward that college tuition. It doesn't go to the student. It goes to the college. So that's a wonderful opportunity. If you complete two years of Americorps, that's $10,000 towards your education. That's a great start for somebody that might not have the financial means to be able to go to school. And I know parents would love to be able to say that my young adult has now $10,000 to start school with. Okay.

We're going to let David go. Do we have any questions? We had some wonderful questions, and we kind of got off on other things. But do you guys have any other questions? And everybody that has resources, make sure if anybody asks you, you have those ready to give out.

>> DAVID: It's okay because I can talk really fast to catch up on my -- kidding. I'm kidding. I would never do that.

I'm going to skip through a couple of my slides because I don't want to be totally repetitive. And some of the questions have already been asked and answered. I do want to cover just a few things for MCIL here and how we approach the post-secondary.

Again, as Augusta just said, as we move through this next half hour, 20 minutes or so, if you have questions, please feel free to ask them, and I'll do my best to answer.

Again, just a bit of a review from the previous slides that I've shown you. We have two transition staff members, two CIL core staff members that dedicate time and efforts to transition services.

Our youth transition funding is used primarily used for core service dollars and we do some occasional contracts or grantsmanship. And the contracts would be contracts with individual school districts or we've had some in the past with the Minnesota Department of Education.

We actually had a grant from the Minnesota Department of Education a few years ago. It was a three-year grant. We used some of those funds to actually do a statewide survey of students, transitioned aged students, to basically ask them those four questions -- I like, I don't like, I want, I don't want.

And what we found overwhelmingly in the various -- we went to 15 different school districts -- urban, suburban, and rural school districts -- to ask the students these questions. What was their transition experience like? What kind of services were they receiving? What was their level of satisfaction? And I'll be happy to send the results of that survey to Darrell, and she can put them on the Wiki site so you can see them at a later time. I didn't think about it when we were putting this presentation together. So I'll send it along as a follow up.

The important thing is what we found from the students, what they were staying us as they were preparing for post-secondary transition, was they wanted the school system to listen to them. And that was the one thing that they found to be most lacking was that they simply were not listened to. When they would express those I like, I don't like, I want, I don't want, they weren't listened to. They want the school district in that process to listen to them.

Again, in our team approach at MCIL, as many of you do, it's very cross disciplinary, very cross disability focused, etc. So all the services at the center are cross disability -- cross disciplinary, excuse me.

And as preparing young people for transitioning into post-secondary settings, we tend to consistently involve not only the transition staff but the core IL staff as well as the IL/VR collaboration. And I'm not going to talk a lot about that collaboration right now because that's the next piece after the break. So I'll get into more detail about that then.

Those staff regularly conduct cross referrals to ensure that the students' needs and wants are being addressed appropriately. So that as we're moving through that process with them, that those various pieces, whether it might be pre-employment, whether it might be post-secondary educational settings, whether it might be vocational, whatever it might be that we're making sure that we're taking a cross disciplinary very rounded approach to responding to the needs of the students that are putting in front of us.

This also includes a regular and consistent use of the Disability Linkage Line, which I talked about before, to ensure that the proper identification of available and appropriate resources is managed as well. So that's a little bit of reiteration.

Again, this slide is a bit of reiteration as well. We embed in the specific school sites, and you've heard me talk about that. So I'm going to jump ahead.

One of the things that we do at MCIL, as you see here, that I think really lends itself to post-secondary transition process for students with disabilities is that one of the things that we seek to do on a regular basis is maintain the connection to most of the colleges and universities in our area. And the staff at MCIL are very comfortable initiating new contacts as needed.

So what does this mean? By enabling and maintaining those regular contacts and those relationships with the post-secondary settings around the metropolitan area of Minneapolis, St. Paul, it gives us a tremendous amount of familiarity of services that are available on those individual campuses, how to plug those students into those services should they choose one of those locations, and actually gives us a level of familiarity for students that might be coming into the Twin Cities from outside the area.

It's not uncommon at all for us to hear, for example, from students who have come to the University of Minnesota from out of state. Maybe they're coming from Georgia or Louisiana or Maryland or New York or wherever, and they find themselves, students, at the University of Minnesota and are not well connected or aware of the resources in our surrounding community.

So by our staff maintaining those relationships with the universities, colleges, technical colleges in our metropolitan area, we can make those connections for the students and help them to getting to build some of those relationships for resources.

Our staff are also well known to several of the disability student services personnel. You may have mentioned within the college and post-secondary settings, all the colleges have disability services coordinators. And we maintain a strong relationship with all of those individuals around the metropolitan area so that if an issue comes up, we can easily step in to assist that student or, perhaps, to advise that student on how they might best strategize with that disability services coordinator to get those needs met.

So I've mentioned here just a couple of different examples. We also serve -- we had membership on several of the CTIC committees. CTIC is the Community Transition Interagency Councils. And most of the school districts around the state of Minnesota have CTICs.

And we select certainly, again, because of staffing patterns and we can't do everything and caseloads are large at MCIL as well, Nick, the young man that I mentioned earlier who is the staff member who's actually embedded in the school, carries a caseload of about 250 at any given time, plus managing some of the Web based service we provide.

He also maintains membership on about six or eight of the metro area. We select six or eight of the metro area CTICs that -- he maintains a membership on that committee as well.

Because, again, it allows us to come into those arenas, those spheres of influence, and introduce the IL philosophy into that process. Because as we all know, as we're working through the high school years, the CTICs are largely staffed by family and school personnel. There's not the inclination to embed that IL philosophy into that process.

So we work hard to make sure that, not only are we serving the students by assisting them with individual IEPs, but we're also addressing the transition needs of students with disabilities from the other direction, from the policy side and the practices and best services side as well.

>> CINDY: Who initiated your CTIC?

>> DAVID: The CTICs are actually mandated by the Minnesota Department of Education because all of the school districts around the state receive a certain amount of dollars specifically for transition services for youth with disabilities. So it's mandated by the Department of Education.

We also maintain memberships on committees and commissions and advisory boards, etc., at local post-secondary settings. For example, the University of Minnesota is the post-secondary setting that houses our university affiliated program in Minnesota. And I sit on one of the advisory committees there, as well as we have other staff that are on advisory committees and other metro area based community colleges, technical colleges, and four-year schools as well.

Again, participating from that perspective or from that side of issue, it allows us to influence, with the IL philosophy, the policy of best practices that are developed by those post-secondary settings. We always participate in annual statewide conferences to ensure awareness. So we do it from that said.

Now we also, obviously, participate more specifically with students, as you were discussing. So we try to assist students to conduct resource searches as part of that IEP process or that transition process into post-secondary. So, for example, we might be assisting them to do a more thorough search for loan or scholarship opportunities, identifying community based resources, and things like that in the community where post-secondary settings are going to be located.

For example, we may be working with a young person who resides in the Twin Cities, but they're going to be going to a southwestern state university in Marshall, Minnesota, which is about two and a half hours southwest of the Twin Cities. One of the things that we can do through our service is to work with that young person either through the IEP process or separately to begin to identify resources in that local community that would be available to them once they begin their post-secondary experience. So we want to prepare them for that journey, if you will.

We also provide advocacy assistance in dispute situations. For example, accessibility issues with post-secondary settings. We can work, again, one on one with that student, but making sure that they stay in the driver's seat. They may come to us to help strategize or develop their arguments that they're going to take back to that post-secondary setting.

We strive not to be their voice but to help them form those arguments. We may go with them. So when they have that conversation with the post-secondary setting, we may go with them to provide some rhetorical support or moral support. But we try very much to make sure it's their voice that's being heard.

But we get calls, and I'm sure you folks probably do too. We get calls an a fairly regular basis from young people who are at post-secondary settings that are having difficulty with accessibility issues or some other type of accommodations, and we can help intervene with that and provide assistance for that so that their post-secondary experiences are a little more meaningful and fulfilling.

How are we doing speed-wise? Are we doing all right? Okay? She says, well, okay. All right. I'll slow down a little.

We also can work with a student to provide connections through direct contact with, again, the disability student services at those post-secondary settings.

Again, this is the third time I've mentioned the living well with a disability curriculum. I talked with Darrell during the lunch break. We use this curriculum from a variety of different perspectives, obviously. You've seen it on three of my slides now. But I want to pause for just a moment to ask you folks, how many people here, since I've mentioned it so many times, how many people here are aware or knowledgeable of this particular curriculum? About a third. Okay. About a third.

I want to maybe just talk a little bit more, rather than just identifying some of the chapters here, but give you one of the reasons why we've chosen to use this particular curriculum and why it's been so very, very successful for us. And those of you who are in the room who have some experience with it, please feel free to chime in as well with your endorsement or your comments or whatever.

One of the nice things about -- and the title kind of says it all, living well with a disability. It's a curriculum that's really very helpful in providing information to individuals with disabilities about how to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles, how to live successfully in a healthy manner, in an effective manner with their disability. Rather than just trying to accommodate the disability into their life, but how to live a healthy life with the existence of their disability as well.

And we use it, not only in our transition program, but also in our peer mentor program and in our general IL program to provide this kind of instructional opportunity for young people and for adults with disabilities to kind of reverse maybe some bad habits that they have in their life or some habits that are -- I shouldn't say good or bad because that's judgmental. But habits that maybe are making them less healthy, whether it be physically healthy or relationship healthy or their ability to move successfully in and out of different situations in their lives and community.

So it's really a very valuable tool. It was developed by the University of Montana. And I was not aware of this until Darrell told me. I have no idea why this escaped me. But it is certified as Medicaid reimbursed. So the purchase of the curriculum is Medicaid reversible, and I did not know that.

So, Darrell, thank you so very much. And I know that also I wanted to mention Darrell showed me during the break on the Wiki site there are links on the ILRU Wiki site to the home page for the living well with a disability curriculum. So those of you who may not be familiar with it can link to it in that fashion.

Yes, Stevie, please.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Actually you just answered me question. I wanted to know how to access that. Thank you very much.

>> DAVID: You're welcome. I'm clairvoyant, you know. On the weekends, they call me Claire, by the way.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay. Thank you so much.

>> DAVID: You're welcome. Other questions?

Again, the living well thing, these are some of the additional -- yes, ma'am.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can we go back to that Medicaid reversed or reimbursed on the curriculum?

>> DAVID: Yeah. Darrell, can you talk about that for a moment because you can do so more intelligently than I can.

>> DARRELL: I'm going to ask you to respond because my voice is having some difficulties.

>> DAVID: Thank you. They'll give you a more complete answer I think than I might be able to. Thank you, Richard.

>> RICHARD: The model that they have developed has been Medicaid reimbursed in Montana and it's been reimbursed in other states. That means that they have created a path that you can use within your state to go to your state Medicaid agency and arrange for Medicaid reimbursement of the services that you would provide if you were providing this curriculum.

And so it's not absolutely a done deal that you can make this happen in your state. But because it's been done in other states and because it's a Medicaid reimbursable service, it's been structured to be that. Your chances of getting that in your state are probably quite good.

>> DAVID: I just sent a note to my IL manager at our center after talking with Darrell saying are you aware of this. So we want to follow up on it.

Yes, ma'am.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hello. I just wanted to add a note more so than a question. In Kansas City, Missouri, the whole person, we use this course also. What we have done is we have collaborated with the schools, and we have got a lot of -- instead of going after school to teach the class and try to have to worry about transportation and how to get people there and stuff like that, the schools have actually made it a credit for the students to be able to join in on this course through school hours. So that's another thing that we have done to get the cores going and stuff.

>> DAVID: Fantastic. That's great. It's a wonderful application. We've actually at MCIL we've used the curriculum to replace some of our other general IL curriculum because it's so very, very useful. And it mines itself down to some of those basic levels for individuals with disabilities. So I'm glad to hear you say that.

Richard, you wanted to add?

>> RICHARD: Darrell whispered to me that she wanted to make sure we made the point about this. It's an evidence-based curriculum. Craig (indiscernible) and his team at the University of Montana have done research on this with this model. They've tested it in a number of settings, and it's been demonstrated to show real cost savings as far as medical services are concerned. So there are significant benefits to the curriculum and, that is one of the primary reasons that you probably have a very good chance to getting it approved with your state Medicaid agency.

>> DAVID: Thank you for making that point, Richard. One of the things that's important to remember about the curriculum, is that not only is it very, very instructional and informative for individuals with disabilities, but it has a preventative maintenance element to it as well that's very, very helpful. So, yes, absolutely.

I have a question over here, and then I'll come to you. Okay?

Yes, ma'am.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: We've taught it from our center also, and ADRS -- Alabama Rehab Services -- has paid for it.

>> DAVID: Fantastic. That's great to know.

Yes, ma'am. You had a question or a comment or a challenge.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: My question was (indiscernible) the schools come to our center. But I'm having a few problems because we have one or two aides that come into our center with the class. We have people that teach our curriculum. But some of the aides are like, oh, no, he or she can't do that. Oh, no, you can't do that. I'm like why are you judging the curriculum? Why do you think that student can't do that? Allow that student to try. Give them something to do at home. Oh, it's too stressful. No, no, no. And I'm just sitting back watching, wow, they're not even giving them an opportunity.

I'm also realizing some of the schools they have hire and lower learning mixed together, and they put them all in one class, and it's too big. And I'm thinking how are they going to be learning if there's such a big class with different levels. Do you know what I mean?

>> DAVID: I understand exactly what you're saying. I guess the easy answer is to ask the aides to just wait in the hallway while you do the class. You can't do that. I know. That was being flip. I think what you can do is spend some time maybe prior to the instructional period with those staff and orient them a little bit more thoroughly to the curriculum so that when you do bring it into the classroom situation, when they show up in time for the instruction, they're a bit more familiar with it and, perhaps, might be less likely to object it to because they have a greater understanding of it.

Yes, ma'am.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Real quick, David.

>> DAVID: Yeah. I just got my five minutes.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I missed who was talking about the reimbursement, but I was wondering if there was someone who is willing to contact with them in case I came up with problems. I didn't catch people's names.

>> DAVID: It was Richard who was talking about it.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Who's willing to be a mentor for Connecticut?

>> RICHARD: I would strongly suggest that you contact Craig (indiscernible) at the University of Montana. And I think we have a link to that curriculum on the page that's with this training. And the reason we're saying contact them is that they're the ones who wrote the curriculum. They're the ones who developed it, and they're the ones who train you to use the curriculum. So that's why I would say contact the University of Montana. It's their baby, and they do it very well.

>> DAVID: Stevie, I'll come back to you in just a moment. I want to get through a couple of more slides, and then I'll come back to you. Is that okay? Thank you very much.

I just wanted to reinforce a couple of things that were already said, and that is start early. We try to catch kids around the age of 14 or sometimes a little bit younger as well, but the importance of starting early.

Set some goals to achieve, no matter the size. And the reason that I say that has been in response to a couple of the questions that came up earlier is because when we talk about managing those caseloads, one of the things that helps us manage the caseloads is making sure that the young person is actively engaged in that decision making process and managing their own IEP, managing the decisions that are being made during those transition years. That lessens the stress on the staff's part of having to manage that caseload because the student is taking a more active role on their own.

We have to take an active role in promoting that active role for the young person. So that's why I say set some goals to achieve, and no matter what the size of those goals are. And even if they're goals that can be achieved from one IEP meeting to the next or from one gathering with that student to the next.

But get them used to that. It's kind of like saving money. You pay yourself first every payday, even if it's five bucks. You pay yourself first, right? And you get used to that routine, and you don't miss the fact that 5 bucks is going into the savings because you don't count on having it to spend. It's creating that routine with the student of setting those goals and achieving them.

And we also work with them to find out who else can help. Maybe it's VR supports. I think somebody was mentioning before about SSI or SSDI or maybe some other types of VR supports. Maybe it's getting them connected, again, to the disability student services. School based guidance counselors, etc. Other community-based supports that might be readily available to them. Again, that student that's leaving the Twin Cities to go to another community to go to college, is there a Center for Independent Living in that community? Just getting them connected to some of those other supports.

One of the other things we do is really encourage them to participate successfully in the IEP meetings, and sometimes you have to force that. What I mean by that is if you make a consistent effort and turn to that young person and say, what do you think? Don't allow them to develop a passive attitude. You have to pull them out a little bit sometimes. You've got to pull them out of the shadows. And you do that by constantly putting the spotlight on them. Just say, what do you think? What would you like to do? How do you feel about this? People are talking about you, but you're sitting right here. What do you want to do?

Develop a personal file so that they can begin to keep their own records, and that's something that can travel with them when they leave high school and go into that post-secondary setting. They can take that file with them. And it's got, not just their educational records, but all their medical records, a copy of their birth certificate, their social security card, all these different things that are going to be necessary to them as they move from this secondary to the post-secondary setting.

Explore the big questions. This is one of those ways where you really begin to draw them out. What do you want your life to look like in a year, five years, ten years? Beginning to plant these seeds so that the young person starts to think about these things and begins to realize, and your underscoring with them, the realization that they really do have a say in this. It really is my life to plan. If you're going to sit back and let it be done to you, then you're not going to be very satisfied with the outcome. So what do you want your life to look like and what does that picture look like five, ten years from now? What school do you want to go to or what job do you want to have?

When my niece was three years old, we started her in this process. And my mother, God love her, her grandmother said, why are you concerned with her life at 21? She's only 3. And I said because the decisions we make now will have a direct impact.

It's the same with these young people who are 14 and 15 years old. What do you want to do for fun? And who do you want to get along with? Who do you want to take along with you? Start asking these questions so that the students have to start responding to them. Ta-da.

>> JUDITH: Thank you.

(Applause)

>> DAVID: I saw you coming. I didn't even have a cake.

>> JUDITH: Absolutely great panel, and a lot of good information. And maybe, David, if you can talk to Stevie during the break and make sure she gets her question answered.

>> DAVID: Yes, absolutely. I'll be right there, Stevie.

>> JUDITH: This room has gotten a little stuffy. So we're going to try to get a little more air conditioner in it. There's food out there for you. I know you're already hungry. So we'll see you back in 15 minutes. Thank you.

And thank you for everything.

(Break)

>> JUDITH: David is going to start doing something exciting up here to get your attention. I'm not sure what. David says he's been waiting for this session for a day and a half. So I hope you're excited about it too.

The focus here is on transitioning to an employment goal. Again, we have a number of our panel members that have been with us for the last day and a half. We've had lots of good questions and discussions. This last session is just a little bit shorter than the other ones. So I may kind of move the questions along. We want questions, but we won't have a lot of time for a lot of questions. So one or two per presentation is probably great. Okay?

And I don't know if Augusta recognized -- yeah, you need to be up here, don't you? Okay. Augusta recognized -- she said her son was an actor. Well, we know that David is an actor. See what you can grow up to be.

(Laughter)

>> DAVID: And if that doesn't scare you. It's true. In my other life, I am an actor. It's kind of like a little second career I have going. It started out as a hobby, and it's become a second career. So I love it. That's why I enjoy an audience.

Just want to talk a little bit about -- talking about transitioning to the employment goals or to post-secondary employment. We started a project in Minnesota a couple of years ago that has really helped us move this piece forward. And it doesn't just serve youth in transition who are moving into a post-secondary setting, but it serves a broader population, but certainly includes youth with disabilities. So I think that's why Darrell was excited to have us include this. This is the first time I included on one of my slides, we just celebrated our 30th year at MCIL last fall. So I point that out on the --

(Applause)

>> DAVID: Thank you. Very, very excited about that. It was funny because last fall when we had our annual celebration, our dinner and awards ceremony and all that and we were celebrating our 30th year, one of our board members pointed out to me that evening, you know, David, you've been with the organization 21 of its 30 years in one capacity or another. That's kind of a cool realization to have because I was on the board for six years and had been executive director for 15. So it's kind of a cool awareness there.

Let me get into this, though. I want to talk about specifically our special project that we have. We call it or IL/VR collaboration. Now the folks from VR like to call it the VR/IL collaboration. But I can assure you this is the real name, is the IL/VR collaboration.

And it's a collaborative project between the eight Centers for Independent Living in the state of Minnesota and the VR program. I'm going to talk specifically about our project at MCIL because it's evolved a little differently than the other seven did in the state.

Again, as Judith said, we're open for questions as we move through this, but we'll probably limit it a little bit more as we move through.

In 2007, we're going to take a little walk down memory lane, if you'll indulge me. In 2007 in St. Cloud, Minnesota, the eight center directors gathered together with some staff from the VR program, the state VR director, and some of the area regional area managers, or RAMS as recall them, and they're the folks that manage the workforce centers that are located around the state of Minnesota.

And the workforce centers, just by a little sidebar here by way of background so that you understand the context of what we put together here, the workforce centers are one stop shops, if you will. I'm sure many of you have heard that phrase or concept, where individuals with disabilities and other folks in the community can come to have employment related issues addressed, whether they're doing a job search, they're applying for support or assistance for retraining or educational services. It might be doing some job readiness skill preparation, etc. It's one of those one stop centers.

Well, in 2007 - it was June of 2007 -- we gathered in St. Cloud, and we talked a little bit about the historical context of the relationship in Minnesota between the Centers for Independent Living and the VR program. And I'm sure to many of you it comes as absolutely no surprise that a good bit of our relationship over the years has kind of been like this. Because in a lot of locations, that's the relationship between IL/VR is like this. It's very contentious. It's very competitive. It's very hostile, I would say, even in some cases. And it's really unfortunate because both VR and IL play critical roles in the lives of people with disabilities. They're very different roles, but they're both critical.

And I always remind folks in audiences like this and in other settings that if you go back and look at the origination of the first Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, Ed Roberts and his colleagues created that first Center for Independent Living, certainly as an alternative to standard VR, but not necessarily to do battle with VR. They established it as a parallel because they understood that VR, with its vocation and employment focus, didn't have the capacity to address the independent living needs of people with disabilities that were of equal importance.

And what we have come to discover in the state of Minnesota is that we had some of that contentious relationship. We have tried different collaborations in the past that just didn't work for one reason or another.

So when we came together in June of 2007, we kind of walked into the room with a little trepidation because we knew that those past attempts hadn't worked and it left a sour taste in many of our mouths. But we had a new VR director, and she had a new vision, and she wasn't going to abandon us like a previous VR director did in the state of Minnesota.

In fact, the previous VR director had actually advised our legislature to cut our funding. She said they really don't need the state funding because they get federal funding anyway and didn't bother to tell us. So we're sitting here at the hearing at the legislature, and this -- you know.

So my point is there was some trepidation. There was some bad blood. But this new VR director said, look, if you're going to be successful and we're going to be successful and we're both going to be able to successfully meet the needs of people with disabilities that come to the workforce centers, we have to do this together. And I think you may recall my saying yesterday what my grandmother used to tell me is, you know, David, we're all in this alone together. And that's really what Kim was telling us, Kim Peck who's the director of VR services in the state of Minnesota now.

So she really challenged us to go back to our local communities for the IL directors to meet with their regional area managers, the RAMS, and to come up with a specific plan for their local region to find a way to meet collaboratively the needs of individuals with disabilities.

So went back to the metro area. Well I have -- most of the centers around the state have one RAM to sit down and negotiate with. I went back to the metro and sat down with 12. So it became an exercise of hurting cats. If anyone of you have ever tried to hurt cats, you know what I mean.

But we sat down and we talked about what was the best way that we could meet simultaneously the VR and the IL needs of individuals with disabilities. And the one theme that the 12 regional area managers, the RAMS in the metro area, the one thing they kept coming back to was there had to be an immediacy of availability; that if a person with a disability came do a workforce center, young person, transition aged, or older come into a workforce center looking for services, that we couldn't say well, okay, we can have an IL specialist here in the days or next week because we'll lose them. They'll lose interest. They're move on. We'll lose that moment.

So the one thing that we became aware of in the metro was we had to focus on that immediacy of need. First idea was, well, okay, there are 12 workforce centers in the metro. We'll hire to IL specialists that can travel around like the old county seat judge who used to ride around and hit one spot and move on to the next. They said, no, that's not going to work. That's just not going to work. The need is too great.

So we thought, well, they can't say no if we don't ask. So we resulted in a collaboration that places an IL specialist in each of the 12 workforce centers in the metro area. So we put together our proposal and submitted it to VR, and it was approved. And that was, as I mentioned, here in past efforts had been unsuccessful. We had done a literature review of past efforts nationwide, and we found there was no other collaboration quite like this anywhere happening in the United States between IL and VR, not with the same qualities that we had. And what we were doing was really very, very different.

So our project staffing right now is we have one manager for this team, if you will, or for this program. We have nine IL specialists. Some of the workforce center sites in the metro area are small. So they don't really require a single placement there. They're almost like satellites. So there are a couple of our IL specialists that actually cover two sites. So I think there are seven or eight of them that have a single person there, and then the others are covered.

So we have the IL specialist assigned to each of the areas of the workforce centers, and the methodology is really designed to simultaneously address both the VR and the IL needs of those consumers. Okay?

Now the funding for the program, again, going back to the VR director, Kim Peck. In the initial process, she put $1.5 million on the table to kick start these projects. And the first three years was done as a three-year pilot project to see if it would be successful.

Well, the model we put together, placing those individuals in those workforce centers, actually kind of became the flagship in the state of Minnesota. The other seven centers did variations where they kind of hired an additional staff person that would take the referrals as they came in. I'm not saying this as a criticism. They just chose a different methodology. They kind of hung out the shingle and waited for people to come to them.

Well, our model generated such success that when we moved from the three-year pilot study to a permanent funding base, the VR program said, okay, we're going to rewrite the RFP here a little bit so that now everybody, in order to get the grant funds, you have to embed a staff person in your workforce center or have a specific person as a designated liaison. So it's not just a hit or miss anymore.

So initially it was, again, a three-year grant. The funding source was vocational rehabilitation program dollars that they drew down federally and then replaced with state dollars. Now, since we've moved beyond that three years, we're now into a recurring annualized grant using the voc rehab funds, and we're now spending approximately $1.2 million a year on this project, and that 1.2 million is divided between the eight centers. My center in the metro area, our share of that, is about $565,000 that we utilize to run this program.

Again, the purpose is to build local service capacity in mutual partnership to advance the employment and independent living of Minnesotans who require both vocational rehabilitation and Independent Living to achieve their goals for working and living in the community. So the project, as you can see, our logic model here of how it works. Let me just get it all up on the screen here. It doesn't all come up together. All right.

So the first goal, obviously, is the collaboration. And you can see, it's in your power point, but you can see the collaboration, the philosophy of integration, resource mapping, et cetera, and how the VR/IL team and our general IL team kind of mix in that.

And then the supports as well for advocacy, counseling, online resources, print information, information referral, and mentoring. So all of these types of services very much mimicking our core IL services are available in this project for participants as well. On the I&R piece, this is another opportunity for us to make really tremendous use of the DB 101, the Disability Benefits 101 tool, as well as the Disability Linkage Line. Okay?

Under systems, we look at -- we have to obviously do the data collection and tracking, communication protocols, publications, policies, documentations and documents, and the evaluation. Now one of the things that we did under system that was an additional deliverable that was not originally requested was that we developed a project specific Web site that allows people to use that specific Web site as a messaging board.

We also post different literature searches and resource material, curriculum material, and things like that. So that no matter where that IL staff person is, whichever site they're on, they can go into that Web site and pull off curriculum material to use in that immediate situation they might be facing with that spontaneous connection with that consumer. So the system piece of it is really important.

The resources. The VR staff themselves are certainly a resource. The MCIL staff are certainly a resource. Community organizations that we interacts with on an ongoing basis regularly to provide services. The academic and research piece of this project, again, we keep a collection of those research articles and literature reviews and things like that, academic studies, on the project specific Web site that people can refer to. Consumers themselves are a tremendous part of the resources for this project. And the online print document and documents and documentations.

And then under the service delivery, it's a variety of format again. We do classroom instruction as part of this. We do one-on-one services. We do crisis intervention, huge, huge piece of this. In order to really assist somebody, if somebody is homeless and they don't know where they're sleeping tonight or they don't know where they're next meal is coming from, it's very, very difficult to get them to focus on other IL or VR goals. So a lot of crisis intervention. And those homeless issues, those always occur at 3:00 on Friday afternoon. Isn't that the truth?

When you're dealing with young people with disabilities who are homeless who find their way to the workforce center in some fashion, looking for post-secondary educational funding or job search opportunities or resources because a counselor at the homeless center has referred that young person to the workforce center and we get connected with them, sometimes the first thing we have to do is deal with the crisis intervention in order to get that critical piece sidelined so that we can begin to focus on the more long-range things. So that crisis intervention is a huge piece of it.

The information referral, obviously. Simulation. One of the things that we did in our project, for example, and this is a real hit with the young people, with the transition aged individuals that we work with in this project, is the simulation activities. We will videotape job interviews. We'll do mock interviews with young people, and we'll videotape it.

And then we play it back, and we walk them through the process of that job interview. And what was successful or what skills they might want to work on. When is the best time during that interview to disclose your disability if it's a hidden disability, if it's not readily visible.

And other types of simulation activities as well. We use our equipment and materials to help people develop meaningful resumes or how to do an effective job search. So they're not just out there willy-nilly sending their resumes. I mean, we all -- Christy, I'm sure you get resumes from potential employees all the time and you sit there and read that resume and you think why are they applying for this job. Right?

So we try to work with the students to hone some of their search skills and not only search skills but the search methodologies, because there are a lot of different resources available out there where they can do job hunts. It's not just looking in the newspaper anymore. There are very specific sites online where they can go. And then, also, giving them tips on how to do that safely. We all heard the horrible stories in the news over the last couple of years of people that have gone out for job interviews and wind up putting their personal safety at risk. So we try to deal with those health and safety issues with young people as well.

The technology piece, huge, huge part of this project is the technology piece. We have, again, I've mentioned the project Web site. We focus a lot of the activities, the Independent Living skills, and, again, really targeting the young people with disabilities, the transition age people with disabilities, who use this service, the communication and collaboration piece. So a lot of the times it's communication skills, especially for that interview process, that going out and talking about your disability in order to engage services you need in your life. So a lot of communication.

Information dissemination. Data collection is part of the technology piece. We use the specific Web site for this project as an information clearing house as well. And then news and announcements so that any of the project participants can get onto that Web site and get updated on news and announcements that are critical that are going on in our states.

So some of the services that we focus on with transition aged youth in this particular project are some of those transition age pre-employment ADA issues and soft skills. And what do we mean by soft skills? Those soft skills are the skills that these young people need to have that are not specific employment skills.

So being to work on time, dressing appropriately, hygiene, huge, huge item, hygiene. And those kinds of soft skills. The interaction, the interpersonal skills to be able to interact effectively with other people in that workforce setting so you don't work yourself out of a job by not being able to get along with your coworkers.

Our target population are people with disabilities seeking services from the workforce center, your rehab services or DEED. That's the Department of Employment and Economic Development where we have services housed in our state, those staff people. The community partners and others as the needs arise.

So we really involve a lot of different populations which, when you think about it, is incredibly advantageous for young people, for transition age individuals, to have the opportunity to be connected with these varied resources and identified populations in the community. So it's really very, very helpful.

The service delivery then, again, is the staff in the center and readily accessible via the 'right now' status. So that whatever that individual shows up at that workforce center there's nan IL specialist right there. And what I've been told by the metro area RAMS is that the IL staff that we hire and place in those workforce centers have become an essential part of the intake process.

In fact, right now as we speak, there's a statewide training program going on, a two-day conference going on, in Minnesota that was primarily put together for VR staff, but the regional area managers insisted with the VR director that my ten staff people be involved in that training because they're considered essential folks in that job site, in that work site. So we really have become that orchestra piece. We've become the string section. If you take us out, you're going to be missed. So we've really proven our value there.

So far between March of 2008, when we actually started the service, and just a couple of weeks ago -- when I sent this slide show to Darrell -- this particular project has served more than 4,000 individuals just in the metro area, not including the projects in greater Minnesota. So we've served more than 4,000 individuals through this.

Again, the service needs that this project has addressed are the school to work transitions and working with young people as they're going through that transition process. The pre-employment preparations. So, again, whether that's those soft skills or developing a resume, developing those interview skills, being able to do an effective job search for young people with disabilities, etc.

Persons served include people with all different types of disabilities, including individuals with persistent mental illness, autism spectrum disorder, and veterans. Huge, huge outreach to veterans as well in addition to young people.

Employment related ADA issues are addressed especially, again, with young people. It's amazing. Here we are 20 years after the ADA, and how many young people with disabilities don't know what the ADA is? And if they're coming from rural Minnesota, they think we're talking about the American Dairy Association.

So really taking the opportunity to provide some education and awareness to young people with disabilities in this transition age group about the ADA and its benefits for them and how they can -- the ADA is actually a tool that they can use effectively as they move into this post-secondary setting, whether it's an employment setting or a post-secondary educational setting or whatever it might be.

We talk about non-vocational skills that are necessary for successful employment, again, those soft skills and any of those that come up as needed; again, the crisis intervention that we talked about earlier.

The stakeholders in the project, obviously individuals with disabilities seeking service from those workforce centers. We have services counselors because of the collaboration. They're a stakeholder in this as well. And I got to tell you when we first started this a couple of years ago, I was -- I had lot of trepidation because knowing what that history was, not only in our state but historically and traditionally, the history of relationships between IL and VR, I really thought we were going to have that first year of real uphill battle to get people to accept or presence and to really view us as a valuable resource for them to utilize.

And I have to tell you, we started in March of 2008. We used January, February, March of 2008 as preparatory time, and we actually started delivering April 1st. And in that first few months of April through December of 2008, we served over 600 people in our metro area project alone.

So the acceptance was almost immediate. The barriers that we kind of anticipated might be there, there were some. There was a little bit of push bag. What do you mean coming in here and telling us what to do? There was a little bit of that, but it was not nearly the level we thought it would be.

Because we went in and did some pre-service orientation with the VR staff, and we were very, very clear to present this as a resource, that we're here to provide a resource to the cadre of services they already had available. We were not there to tell them how to do their job or to tell them they were doing their job badly or to tell them that they weren't being successful. We're here as a resource. Add us to your tool kit. And it was very, very successful. So we were very gratified.

Again, more than 4,000 individuals served in the metro area since April of 2008. Last year about 5 percent of the individuals were between 18 and 22 years of age. So it's not a huge cohort, but we're working to expand that. And we know that that's going to expand, and we've got a foothold. So that's great with young people.

But one of the things that's happening in our VR community in the state of Minnesota is there's a growing desire to place more emphasis on youth with disabilities in their programs as well; so in a particularly well position to be a part of that expansion as well. So we're very, very excited about that.

We have a 57 percent -- actually this was updated just last week. So that's why this number is wrong. I was in a meeting with the VR director last week, and this number was actually updated. It's actually a 67 percent success rate of successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities who participate in the collaboration as compared to a 46 percent success rate for individuals who use voc rehab but don't participate in the collaboration. So it's working. We see that it's working. When you think about the investment, $1.2 million -- again, that's not walking around money. None of us has that in our pockets. Well, maybe a couple of you do. But in the greater scheme of things, it's not a huge allocation when you see the return that's being provided for those dollars.

Again, the service availability, the project layout. The IL staff is assigned to each of those 12 workforce centers. I've said that a couple of times. Each of those individuals, each of those IL specialists, have a cell phone, and they're accessible by cell phone and laptops with anywhere e-mail. So those are materials that we provide to them.

So if they're at one of their other sites or off-site for whatever reason and somebody arrives at the workforce center, the RAM can get them there immediately. They can place a call on that cell phone, and they can be immediately on their way. The laptop is so they can access the database to get information, resource, forms. They can input data into CIL Suite, our data collection tool. They can access other related information. And they all have portable printers that travel with them everywhere they go as well. So they're a mobile office no matter where they are. And, again, it's that understanding of the immediacy or the 'right now' availability of the service.

Again, just in summary, the purpose is to advance the employment and Independent Living of Minnesotans who require both IL and VR to achieve their goals. The funding originated as a three-year grant from the rehab services program, and now it continues with a funding using program dollars.

And, again, the past efforts, yeah, we've tried and we've tried and we've tried, but we learned. And we've found a better way. One of the things those past efforts -- some of you in the room maybe recognize the name Molly Ivans. Molly Ivans was a wonderful columnist. She was actually based here in Texas. She was one of my favorite, favorite writers, absolute favorite writers.

But she had what she called her first rule of holes, her first rule of holes. When you find yourself in one, stop digging. So what we found in some of our past experiences in trying to develop an IL/VR model was that it wasn't working. So we stopped digging. We found a better way. And this process that we're involved now really seems to with working, and we're serving significant numbers of individuals. So we're very, very pleased about that.

And we have to remind ourselves it's a collaboration, not a competition. Our presence in the workforce centers, again, we're a resource. We're an additional tool to help them meet the needs of their clientele and the individual seeking their services. We're not there to compete with them. It's a collaboration, and it really has evolved to be truly that.

Again, I'm happy -- before I turn it over to these guys, if you have a couple of quick questions, I'm happy to take -- Stevie, I knew I could count on you.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's actually not a question but a comment for you guys, just a suggestion. I know a lot of you are probably young in here and have worked with a VR counselor. Just like David was talking about that we need to collaborate with them. Your best resource, and it was very helpful to me, is to go back to the VR counselor that helped you through your process and establish a partnership with them. Once you establish that, because they already have known you since high school, and then you can reach out to the other VR counselors to the other high schools, and it can branch out to possibly the other counties your CIL may serve.

>> DAVID: I think that's an excellent point. Stevie, one of the things, just to dovetail off that point, one of the things that's really made this particular project so successful and the impact that it's had on transition age youth with disabilities, and I know we're going to continue to grow that population in this project.

But one of the things that really assisted in making this project successful was from the very beginning we had a buy-in from the director. Because the director recognized -- was brought along to a point to recognize that we couldn't continue the way we were with kind of that open hostility and so forth. And they really bought into it. So having that buy-in from the top down has really, really, really helped.

And what she's hearing from all of her staff now is this cannot go away. You cannot let this go away. So now we find ourselves collaborating in other buried activities as well, whether they're legislative agendas or outreaching to new populations in the community, etc.

And it does, it takes me back to, I know I've mentioned this earlier, but it takes me back to a lot of lessons that I learned at the feet of Ed Roberts and the fact that we have to take a holistic approach, and the fact that IL and VR were never meant to do battle, but they're meant to be complementary. They're meant to be parallel services that occur concurrently. And I think that's one of the things we're doing now is living out another part of that IL philosophy to the benefit of young people with disabilities.

So thank you for your comment. Yes, ma'am, and then I'll come over here to you.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm asking a Florida question, believe me.

>> DAVID: Okay.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: What happens when the consumer comes to your embedded guy and says my VR counselor is not going what I want. Do you have to keep your mouth shut?

>> DAVID: Oh, no, no, no. My staff are a lot like me. They're not very good at keeping their mouth shut. But one of the things we do counsel our staff, when those kinds of situations occur is that you have to employ tact. So rather than -- your first step is rather than going and attacking that VR counselor that you make it a team discussion. You bring the team together, and you have a discussion about what's working and what isn't working.

And, again, you encourage that consumer to be expressing it so they're not hearing it from us. They're hearing it from the consumer. And maybe what that young person, especially if they're a transition aged individual with disabilities, what they might need is somebody sitting next to them for moral support.

And that's what gives them the ability or the encouragement to speak up and say, well, you know, last week this happened, and I wasn't really happy about that or you're not listening to me. I'm telling you what I want to do, what direction I want to pursue, and you're telling me -- I mean, my peer coordinator went through VR, the one I told you wants my job.

You know, when she first went to VR, they said, well, you know -- and she was looking for assistance for her post-secondary educational setting. And they said, well, you know, you're really not college material. No dear, you know what you should do? You should be a Wal-Mart greeter. That's what they told her. The woman holds two masters degrees and she's after my job.

Those kinds of situations are going to occur, and we just have to meet them head on. And we try to do that with tact and with keeping the consumer in the focus so it doesn't become a battle between us. It's the consumer's desire and making sure we're sticking to their plan. So good question.

Yes, ma'am.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm not really sure how to ask this. I know it's a collaboration. Do you ever feel like you're doing DVR's work?

>> DAVID: No. But that's a really, really good question because that's one of the things we worried about in the beginning was we did not want to be subordinated. We didn't want to subsume their responsibilities.

So we made that very clear when we came in. We're not coming in to do the employment piece. We're coming in to do that parallel IL piece simultaneous to your activities on the employment side. And my staff are really good about saying, well, you know what? Not my table. Here's what we can do to help support that activity or that goal, that crisis intervention or an ancillary service or that service that would be parallel. But we made that very, very clear from the very beginning.

And, again, the buy-in from the director. Don't treat these IL staff as your personal assistants. That's not why they're there. They're not there to be subordinated. So good question.

Stevie, I've got to move us along. But if you'll hold your question --

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's just a comment to go with hers.

>> DAVID: Oh, okay. Go ahead. Real quick, please.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's just a comment to go with yours, what a good approach would be to offer a presentation to them and just say -- and then it's their choice whatever you offer them, and then they can pick -- you know, you offer what you have -- present what you have to offer to them kind of thing. Go with that approach, if that helps.

>> DAVID: Thank you, Stevie. Toaster have you. I'm going to move us along to the next presenter. If you have other questions, jot them down because there will be a general Q & A time tomorrow as well. So if you have other questions. Thank you.

(Applause)

>> ANNIE: Okay. Again, I'm Annie Kim from the Ability Center. This should be pretty smooth because our story is very similar to what Dave presented. About three years ago, we also entered into a project with our VR agency, state VR agency. There was a proposal made, and we were granted or accepted one of three agencies in our community that were accepted into the project.

And the structure was -- is different. There are some similarities, but it was also different as the counselors were actually based in our agency. So they weren't embedded in the vocational agency. And we were actually -- the IL/VR counselors actually did do the job of the BVR counselors.

Going into the project, we were more under the impression that we would be providing more of the IL side of it. Once it got going, we realized that the counselors were actually going to be writing plans and providing services and authorizing services and were literally VR counselors.

So it was kind of a rocky start. We were a little surprised as to the direction it took once we got into the project. There were a lot of successes with it except that halfway through, the state had to go to a waiting list. So they had to implement an order of selection.

And I don't know if any of you are familiar with that. But basically a lot of people that would have been eligible for VR services were no longer eligible. There were two divisions, one MSD, Most Significantly Disabled, and then the other category was Significantly Disabled. So if you were considered SD, you were not eligible for those VR services anymore due to the waiting list.

So that really changed the focus as well. So, again, we went through a rocky period. A lot of people were very upset because they weren't getting services. Teachers were very upset, obviously. We were very upset because a lot of our youth that should be receiving those services were not able to receive those services.

So we made it through the three years. And after the three years, and then we decided not to renew the grant and take a different direction due to the order of selection. We felt that there was really -- people were falling through the cracks. Our youth that needed these VR services were no longer getting them. So we thought our money would be better spent if we could provide those services to those individuals.

So we kept a very similar structure as the VR agency did as far as developing a vocational goal, doing interest inventories in order to get to that vocational goal, doing career exploration, job shadows, some volunteering, and also some job placement services.

The way we're able to do that is we were able to absorb one full-time position to focus --

>> JUDITH: Annie.

>> ANNIE: Yes.

>> JUDITH: You need to be advancing your slides.

>> ANNIE: Oh, I'm sorry.

>> JUDITH: You're doing a great job.

>> ANNIE: Oh, thanks. Here we are.

So once we ended our three years, we used the one position that we were able to absorb to start a program that we called Big Dreams New Horizons. And it was created really as a way to continue providing similar services as the VR agency was provided, but able to serve those that were not eligible for VR services.

Again, these are the services that we were still able to provide -- the interest testing, career exploration, informational interviews, job shadowing, volunteer experiences, job seeking skills training, social skills training, and job placement.

The way we were able to continue providing all of those services, it could not be done without collaborating with someone, because like I said, we only had one full-time staff person that we're able to utilize for these services.

So we collaborated with our local university, the University of Toledo, and started collaborating with their human resource program and are able to provide internships to students to work one-on-one with our young adults that are transitioning from high school to work.

So our full-time transition specialist does kind of the preliminary stages, as far as the interest testing and identifying of vocational goal. They are then paired up with a human resource student to work on the career exploration, the informational interviews, the job seeking skills training, which are a lot of those soft skills that Dave mentioned, the resume development, dressed for success, applications, that type of thing.

And then they're actually going the extra step to help them look for a job once they're ready and are at that point, and then helping find a job. So it's been a really great collaboration. It was a way for us to continue providing those services to those that are no longer eligible for VR services.

We do also serve individuals that are eligible for VR services. And our role in that case is to support that individual. Anyone that's familiar with state VR understands that it's a very confusing system. There are some time periods where you're waiting for certain things to be done. You're working with lots of different people. So it can be very confusing. So in that case our transition specialist serves as a support to those individuals to help them navigate that system and make sure they're also connected to other agencies that they may need to be connected to.

We also partnered with the university's HR Fraternity, and they are helping with providing workshops, weekly workshops that go over different topics, soft skill topics like resume writing, dressed for success, interviewing. We do mock interviews and those types of services.

We also get our mentor project involved in this somewhat. I mentioned earlier our mentor program mainly focuses on identifying a specific goal for an individual and then assisting them in achieving that goal. So for those that are identifying employment as their goal, their mentor then is helping assist them to achieve that goal.

And I think that's all I have. Does anyone have any questions about that?

>> JUDITH: That was great Annie. I was just wondering, what kind of resources do you devote to this? You don't have the VR grant anymore; is that right?

>> ANNIE: Right. The project was actually a match. So it wasn't entirely a grant. We put up money, and that money was matched in order to provide services. So the money that we had put up we were able to utilize for this full-time staff and then to provide those different resources.

>> JUDITH: That's really a great way of something -- you didn't keep digging a hole that wasn't working. But you saw the need, and you kind of re-purposed that money. So that's a good idea.

>> ANNIE: Any other questions before we move on? All right. It's all you.

>> CHRISTY: Okay. Thank you.

The short story behind Cindy and I being up here is Darrell said we want you to give us a couple of slides on employment. And I said we don't do employment. Really. We're a Center for Independent Living. We don't do employment. But that's really not entirely true. We don't have it as a specific program, to be honest with you. But we have to do employment because, obviously, that's what a lot of our consumers want when they transition into the community or whatever.

So I want to reiterate what David had said earlier. We also had a very contentious relationship with the Department of Rehabilitation Services in Mississippi for many, many years. In fact, the vast majority of the people who currently work at the center or have worked at the Center for Independent Living in the past, we were actually fired from the Department of Rehab Services, and we're proud of that. She had no idea what great things she was doing for us.

We do have new leadership, obviously, over there. We currently have a very good working relationship with the Department of Rehab Services and with the vocational rehabilitation team. It was years in coming. But we continue to work hard at it and have reached a point where we do have a very good collaborative relationship and have a couple of different programs that, of course, that we work with them.

The employment is not necessarily one of them, although we do have a good relationship with their VR counselors for the most part and can pick up the phone and call them when we want to. Often we are told we can't discuss that with you. And that's fine. We have a good enough working relationship where I can pick up the phone and call the director and say please ask your counselor and such and such county to discuss this with our consumer or whatever the case may be.

With that said, regarding employment, the only thing I want to say on the subject before I turn it over to Cindy and let her tell you what she does in her transitioning with consumers, I just want to reiterate again, and we've said this before, but I have to give it another plug.

Our Americorps program -- again, we have an Americorps program with 20 Americorps members statewide. We focus on selecting members who have disabilities. We try to get young people with disabilities to fill those positions. That would be our employment program if you could call it employment.

It's really not considered employment, but we have the opportunity with 20 people at the beginning of each year to work with them. We're doing skills training with them all year long, not just in teaching them what they need to know to transition people out of nursing facilities or to keep them living independently in a community, but we're working with them on a personal level talking about the way they're dressed, showing up to work on time, the soft skills as David was referring to earlier.

And we're constantly working on that, and we provide them with the training that they need to do that. And we'll help them with writing their resumes and that type of thing.

For a long time, the vocational rehabilitation counselors would not even considered providing service to our Americorps members because it wasn't considered employment, and it's really not considered employment. But we did -- I did manage to finally bring the director around a little bit.

So now they will provide services to our Americorps members if they need some type of a reasonable accommodation that we as a Center for Independent Living simply cannot afford. I, of course, will provide them with a reasonable accommodation if it's something that is within my means to do it, but we often will turn to VR to help us with that. Again, if we really had a strong employment program, it would be the Americorps program.

So that said, I'm going to turn it over to Cindy and let her just talk to you all a little bit about the type of work that she's doing with the consumers to get them ready for employment.

>> CINDY: Like Christy said, we do have a wonderful working relationship now with our transition counselors throughout the area. I do a lot. What we do is, like I said, we work with the schools. I always have to go back to the schools. The schools are a great connection. You might transition counselors there. When I do meetings with them, they'll have VR there too. So it's like wham bam when we're both there.

And to get past that whole I can't talk to you thing, my counselors now have LIFE printed on a confidentiality form so they decide that they can talk to me. Because it's an issue sometimes. Sometimes they can't quite -- they can't say it in a way for the consumer to understand, so they want me to help. Because the consumer is comfortable with me but not quite -- because the hands up the VR person. So they are very happy to talk to us now.

So what we do is about the second semester of junior year in Mississippi is when they can start to work with our consumers. So I'm always -- if I get a consumer before that, I have it down, and I keep an eye on that consumer. Second semester of junior year, we'll be having a VR meeting and they know.

So we'll have a VR meeting. I will work with them. We talk about what they need. I explain to the consumer that this is not an overnight thing, because we want to make sure that the consumer understands what's available, what's out there, and how it's going to work. Sometimes a lot of our consumers don't understand that it's not an overnight thing, especially in Mississippi.

So while we want them to be passionate and be excited about working and excited about getting stuff done, we want them to not get burned out because it didn't happen overnight. So that's something that I try to help, also, because then they're not going to get annoyed with the counselor, and then that will mess up stuff. So we try to help with that.

Like I said, we don't have anything formal, but I will stay. I will meet with the consumer because sometimes wording is not always said in the best manner. So I'll try to help mediate at times. But we have a wonderful relationship. We get things done.

What we try to do, if everything goes as I would love it to, we try to do an evaluation the summer between the junior and senior year. That way senior year we can start focusing on what they can do and what's good. And then after senior year they can either go to college or get a job.

So it seems like things have been great in certain areas. They're really strong in other areas. I'm building them. But it's really just about getting out there and making those connections and like we've said before not being adversaries. We want to work together.

Now don't get me wrong. My counselors that I work with know if they try to start to say something can't be done, I go why? And they know that they have to have an answer because we want it to go the way it needs to go. I understand that things can't always be done, but I need to be able to help explain to the consumer why that can't work out and what can we do to maybe as plan B. So that's really what we do. It's nothing formal, but it's great.

>> CHRISTY: One thing we do that is a little bit more formal that is not mentioned in these slides, and honestly I just didn't think about it and think to put it in there. LIFE of Mississippi serves as the Americans with Disabilities Act network affiliate for the ADA resource center in Atlanta, the southwest ADA resource center, which is one of the eight or ten funded by NIDR. Did you all follow me on that?

So we service the network affiliate, and as a result, we do a lot of training. We have certainly provided training to vocational rehabilitation counselors, particularly their supported employment counselors on the Americans with Disabilities Act, particularly the titles that deal with employment. We've done two or three trainings, and they have us booked to do a couple of more.

One thing that we are planning to get into, I also serve on the executive leadership council for the ADA resource center out of Atlanta. One issue that we've had a problem with in Mississippi over the years is that our vocational rehabilitation staff will not ever discuss the Americans with Disabilities Act or mention it to employers. They do not discuss it. They don't talk about it. They don't mention it.

The previous VR director would have said to me, Christy, if we mention it, it scares them and we lose any potential or possibility that we might have had of getting somebody employed there. So clearly the attitude among VR staff was ADA is something to be scared of and is not necessarily a good thing. So that obviously was their attitude, and, therefore, they would not discuss it. We have seen a little bit of change there, and we're still working hard to make that change.

And we have some training scheduled with them to teach the vocational rehabilitation counselors and their management the importance of the Americans with Disabilities Act and how to focus on the benefits of the act for employers and to make sure that they understand that employers have rights and responsibilities, just as the consumers do as well.

But that has been a big issue in the state of Mississippi that we've been battling for a number of years, is that VR just would not discuss the Americans with Disabilities Act with our employers because they were afraid it would scare them off.

>> DAVID: It was how they were discussing it.

>> CHRISTY: It was how they were discussing it. That's exactly right, David. It was how they were discussing it.

And the last training I did with the supported employment counselors, and the training I did was focusing on the new amendments. They were going to quarterly meetings, apparently, that are set up by the Mississippi Employment Security Commission. And they had attorneys holding workshops with titles like the ADA, what you need to be afraid of, that kind of thing.

So that's the battle that we had in our state at this point when it comes to the Americans with Disabilities Act. We are making headway. So I don't want you all to think that we're real backwards, but we are. But we are making some headway, and we'll continue to plug ahead with that.

Just something else I wanted to throw out that as another collaborative relationship with VR that we're trying to change their attitude, and I think it's working regarding the ADA and it's importance to us.

So that's really all that we have. So I guess we'll take questions for any of the three of us at this point. I'm not sure how much time we have left. We've got about 15 minutes Judith says.

>> JUDITH: Yeah, yeah. Go ahead. Ask questions.

>> CHRISTY: So we're happy to take any questions for people for any of the three of us. Just tell us who you're directing your question to.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: You.

>> CHRISTY: Me?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I know some information about Americorps. But I wanted to know, did you guys set up your Americorps program or was it something that you applied for and the structure was already set up?

>> CHRISTY: Our Americorps program, we actually started back in the late '90s when Americorps was first created. We didn't start off with our very own program and 20 members. This is something -- I'm glad you brought this up because I wanted to mention it to you guys.

We started out as a partner. We too have partners in our Americorps program, but we started out as a partner. The Metro Jackson Human Services Coalition at that time had an Americorps program, and they had 25 members in their program, and we were one of their partners.

And so we paid them like a minimal amount. I'm talking like maybe $5,000 a year. And for that $5,000 a year, we got three members -- am I saying that right, I guess? We had three Americorps members housed in the Jackson office. That was our first foray into Americorps.

And we hired -- we selected members who had disabilities. They were housed in our Jackson office. They worked with us and our consumers on housing issues because that grant, the Mississippi Human Services Coalition, that particular Americorps program was focusing on housing issues in the Jackson area.

So we paid $5,000 to them. They gave us three members that we got to select. And those three members worked with our consumers who worked in the Jackson metro area to help them find housing and to modify the housing and to find the partners that we needed.

So that was or first experience with Americorps, and we saw that it worked really well, and we were excited about it. So we applied for our own grant. And the first grant we got was actually a demonstration project, and it was just about $50,000.

And what they did with that demonstration project, they gave us that 50,000. It allowed me to hire a manager, a project coordinator or manager for the program and an assistant. We didn't have any members. But what we did was we took those two positions, and we created the concept for our Americorps program and exactly how it would work. We tested it using our Independent Living specialists.

Of course, we were focusing on nursing home transition. We spent that year looking at the various curriculums and the different ways we could transition people. We ended up going with ADAPS. And just sort of created and firmed up the program, and so that when we were ready to apply for the following year to actually receive Americorps members, we were ready to hit the ground running the first day of the grant.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: You're saying that Americorps gave you $50,000 initially to hire people for you to do the research so that you could apply the next year to get the grant?

>> CHRISTY: Yeah. But it wasn't the National Corporation for Community Service that gave me the 50,000. The National Corporation for Community Service, they give discretionary funds to the states. Our discretionary funds flow through the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service. And so it was the Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service that gave us that demonstration money.

And that's how we got it that first year because they believed in what we were trying to do. And so they said here's a little bit of money. Develop your idea, and we'll see what happens from there. So it was the state's discretionary money that was originally used that first year.

Does that answer your question? Okay. Other questions?

Just to bring the whole Americorps concept back around to transition, just remember that we do everything we can to recruit young people with disabilities right out of high school. Cindy is a prime example, as is Desmeon.

Cindy started as an Americorps member with us when she was 17 or 18 years old. She was right out of high school. She was real green. She's not anymore. See, she's come a long way in eight years. So it's just really -- I couldn't have picked two better examples to come to the conference than Cindy and Desmeon as to what Americorps can do for you if you're interested in applying for it.

Look, we don't mind sharing. We're more than happy to -- I might not hand over the grant to you, but I'm more than happy to help you look at it. Any other questions? Are we really that good? I know David is and Annie.

Yeah, Michael.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Inaudible) what you're talking about, but it's about transition. Your people seem to be very busy. Transition, certainly youth transition. But there's another transition all of us are involved in as well, which is the nursing home transition. And so do they also do that too?

>> CHRISTY: No, no, no. They have enough to do working with our youth. Now if we find a young person -- the bottom line is our HOT specialists are working with people under the age of 21. If we find someone under the age of 21 who's living in a facility and is ready to move out, yes, they're going to be Cindy's consumer or Desmeon's consumer. But we also now have a new program that's working on transition. So we would have the Americorps members and the project manager for Americorps to help as well.

So, no, I don't ask them to also do that type of transition into the community necessarily. Usually that's going to be referred to another Independent Living specialist. And they are quite busy.

Augusta was trying to be polite earlier, but the bottom line is they're overworked and underpaid. But most of us are, aren't we? We certainly don't do this because of the money. I don't. You do it because it's your passion.

I wish I had a lot more money. And the bottom line is that even if I had enough money to put two more full-time independent living specialists in all of my six offices, it still wouldn't be enough. Because the more people that you put out there, the more work you're generating, and that's okay.

Any other questions? Guess we're going to finish up early then, Judith.

>> JUDITH: Well, we have a couple of more little things.

(Applause)

>> JUDITH: This panel has been wonderful. And the thing that I'm kind of -- there's a lot of takeaways here. But one is, you know, we need all the partners we can get. And I know some of you have had some rocky times with VR, but I was really pleased today to see the number of approaches that have been -- that have worked and that are working. And I would encourage you to think about these approaches. And I love David's comment about if you're digging the hole, stop and find another approach. So thank you very much.

A couple of quick things. There's been some discussion about -- some people in the group have indicated that they would like to continue connecting with each other after this meeting. So Richard has a few comments on the subject.

And then Carol is once again going to try to work a miracle here, and we're going to show you -- I have to ask you. How many of you have been to the ILRU Wiki page about this conference? Thank you for those that did. And for those that haven't, we're going to demo it for you because it has a lot of resources. I would also ask you if you have a resource that you'd like to share, get it to me or to Carol or to Darrell, and we'll be glad to get it up on that Wiki page because that whole idea is to share the resources.

Okay, Richard.

>> RICHARD: Okay. What I wanted to thank David for remembering Molly Ivan. She grew up 15 blocks east of here in River Oaks. Is a Houstonian, and David has probably told the only repeatable story that I can think of. So certainly look at her readings elsewhere. You'll probably enjoy them. Certainly has Texas humor down.

Some of you today have mentioned to us that you would like a way of continuing learning and continuing connections with other folks who are here at this conference. We would love to facilitate that.

Some straight talk though about it, and that is in other cases we have had -- in other conferences we've had that same request. And, unfortunately, we haven't found the way that people can stay connected and will want to stay connected.

We have offered list serves, group lists where people can exchange e-mails on the topic. We have created work groups where people from the training have stayed in contact and, unfortunately, either because of our failing at ILRU or because of the time that people have and the priorities that start pressing on them when they return to their work, people have dropped off.

So we would be very interested in exploring that with you. So I guess, one, I'd love to know how many people in this room would be interested in staying in contact. But think real hard when you say that you would because it would mean a commitment of time.

And the other thing is we'd love to hear some ideas about what would work for you about staying in contact, what would be a meaningful and useful way to continue to learn and to continue to explore these kinds of programs in your center.

So I guess first question would be how many people would be interested in staying connected to this group or a group that includes people here and others who are interested in youth transition and creating those programs in your centers.

Judith, you can take a count of a show of hands.

>> JUDITH: I have a visual impairment. So I'm not really good. I think we've probably got a dozen, maybe 15, maybe 20. Depending on the level of commitment, right? Five hours a day. No. About 20 or so, Richard.

>> RICHARD: Okay. What would be your ideas about how you would like to stay connected?

>> KIM: I don't know about you guys, but I'm on Facebook almost every single day. So the easiest thing for me would be to have a Facebook page where you can read it. You can comment if you want. You can post things to its. You can always go back and visit. I think that's kind of modern.

>> JUDITH: Kind of modern, okay. We're getting a lot of head nodding, Richard, that Facebook seems -- will most of your centers let you access Facebook while you're at work?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes.

>> JUDITH: Okay. This is good.

>> RICHARD: Okay. For those of you with visual impairments, does Facebook present an access issue with you? Or are you comfortable with that?

>> JUDITH: Is Facebook accessible for those with visual impairments? Pretty much.

>> RICHARD: Pretty much. Okay.

>> JUDITH: Okay. I think there's a comment here, Richard, right in front of you.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: My question would be I have staff that do this also. And a manager up under me that I would be managing over this particular program, does it have to be us, per se, to keep involved with this or does it just have to be someone from the CIL that will be involved with this?

>> RICHARD: I'm not going to answer that. I think that's a group question.

>> JUDITH: Let's see. We have another comment, if you'll get the mike from Richard.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was just going to say I know that JAWS is not accessible to Facebook. So if you use JAWS, that wouldn't work, but Zoom Text is accessible to it.

>> JUDITH: Are you using the mike, please?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm a JAWS user. If you use Facebook Mobile, so like you put m.facebook.com instead of the www, then Facebook works pretty well with JAWS.

>> JUDITH: Oh, okay. Good to know.

So it looks like, Richard, maybe a Facebook page would work. I would think that if you're interested in it and you have staff that are interested, if we're going to be discussing transition issues, this might be a good thing. So, Richard.

>> RICHARD: Okay. I guess the question that I would ask is would you like it to be simply an open forum? That or would you like content pushed? Would you like -- how would you like it to -- what would you like it to look like? We can create the -- we have one Facebook page on transition, but we probably would create something especially to come out of this training. But I guess if you have a vision for that, or we can just create the space.

>> JUDITH: So you said you were interested. So now do you want content? Do you want discussion? What would you like?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Both.

>> JUDITH: Both. Some people just want their ice cream and cake, right? Okay. If you have comments, can you use the mike? At least on the discussion.

I don't think there's a strong opinion on which one, Richard.

>> RICHARD: Okay. All right. Well, we're happy to do a Facebook page. And we're also always happy to entertain other options because we certainly see it as part of what we do to find ways to help people learn and connect.

>> JUDITH: Okay. Thanks. This should be fun.

What I've asked Carol to do for just a few minutes, and Carol's going to walk you through it, is show you the Wiki page and the resources so you can get a sense of other resources you'd like to add. Or if you haven't accessed this resources, how you can. And she'll just take a couple of minutes to do that.

Carol.

>> CAROL: Okay. Very good. Can everyone hear me? Okay.

What you see on the screen, and it's going to be hard to see the details. So I'm just going to hit the high points of this. And I want to put into context the link that you were sent with your registration materials. Okay. So we're going to get to that link. I want to show you where it's embedded in our Wiki page. Or another word for Wiki is just a Web page.

So what we have now is the main page of the IL NET Wiki. So we have some different sections of things that are new and things that are coming up. Then we have Centers for Independent Living resources. We have Statewide Independent Living Councils Resources and some other things, like laws and regulations and our Directory of Centers and SILCs.

But I'm going to open the CIL-NET Resources for Centers for Independent Living. And on here we basically are trying to organize it, and we have the two big subsections. We have managing operating and funding a Center for Independent Living. And within each of those, we have several different sections, like background on the IL movement, financial management, etc.

The second section is programs and services in Centers for Independent Living. You have things like ADRC, advocacy, IL skills training. And down at the very bottom, the last one in there in alphabetical order, is youth transition. So I'm going to open that one.

So within that, we have them by resources for CILs and the transition process and college and careers. So the very first link up here under CILs and the transition process is the Wiki for this training that we're at today, building an effective comprehensive CIL youth program training.

So for those of you who may have looked at this already, this will look familiar. But this is all the resources for this particular training that we e-mailed to you and so forth with your registration materials.

And what you'll find on here are there's so many resources. The presenter's materials, they've been very kind to share some of their documents that they use at their centers on their youth programs, some of their grant proposals, some of their job descriptions. So you have all of these materials from ACT, from LIFE, and from MCIL. And also you have some resources on the National Youth Leadership Network.

So if we go down to, also, resources, the actual resource -- that says resource, these are the outside and supplemental materials too. So you can see that we have a whole lot of those as well. A couple of them I wanted to point out.

You might have heard Dave talking about the living well with a disability curriculum. So there's one link on here that says cost effectiveness of living well with a disability. This link is actually the research, the empirical data research on the cost effectiveness of the curriculum and so forth.

And then if you go down -- I'm going back to that page. And if you go down farther, there's one here -- let me find it. It's called living well and working well with a disability. This is the actual Web site of the RRTC that gives you, at the University of Montana, that gives you all the questions that you might want to find out about the curriculum, the program, how to register for it. You do have to pay for it, of course, but it's been very well received.

Let's see if there's anything else here that I wanted to point out. As you can see, though, if we go all the way back to the youth transition, there are a lot of resources that we've had previously. We had a training in Atlanta back in May of 2010. We have the video recording for that and all the resources for that. So there's just tons of materials here.

And, actually, going back all the way to the main page, there's lots of things for everybody here. So the best way for you is to just get involved with it, jump into it, explore it. I think Richard has a comment.

>> RICHARD: Just a couple of things to mention. One is that you have the direct link to this Wiki page in your packet, and you received a link to it by e-mail before you arrived. So you can look back and find the direct link. You won't have to go through the other pages.

The second thing is that probably in a couple of weeks to a month, the page will look significantly different because we'll be adding the video from the presentations that were here. And it will look like very much like the same agenda, but the video segments will be there by the agenda title so that you can find those along with the other content that's there now. So that will be an additional resource.

And then, eventually, within a few months, we'll be pulling out different segments for tutorials and other training that you can use with your staff for orienting and training them when you begin programs. So we'll have all of those resource for you in pretty short order.

>> JUDITH: And, again, we're always happy to have your resources. So please feel free to forward them to us. This is a process where there's a lot of information out there. And if you can find a lot of it in one place, it's helpful.

Since I'm the time keeper, we have 20 minutes left. You know, I come from Utah. It's cold. The snow is melting, but it did snow last Saturday. So I really feel morally obligated to say enjoy Houston. We'll see you in the morning at 8:30.

(Applause)