KIMBERLY TISSOT: All right.

How are y'all feeling?

Overwhelmed?

All right.

Good, good, good.

My name is Kimberly Tissot, and I am the executive director of ABLE South Carolina.

Charlie, want to introduce yourself?

CHARLIE WALTERS: How are y'all feeling?

Doing okay-lunch lull?

Nap time?

I know it has been a lot.

My name's Charlie Walters.

It's a pleasure to meet y'all.

I'm director of transition programs at ABLE South Carolina.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: First I'm going to tell you a little bit about our center.

We serve 23 counties by our Part C funding, but we do serve a lot of, we do provide a lot of services outside of our designated counties.

So we, 23 counties in our state is half of our state.

And then we have a lot of our youth programs that are actually statewide.

So we'll explain those in a little bit.

We focus on one-on-one.

And in South Carolina, if you're not familiar, we are a very Bible Belt state.

We want to take care of people with disabilities, so our organization has taken it upon ourselves, we're going to change the culture in South Carolina.

That is something that we're focusing on in our state.

We have 43 staff members and over 30 funding streams.

This is not where we started.

Seven years ago, we had one funding stream and that was Part C funding and we had seven staff members.

So talk about very fast-paced growth, it can absolutely happen, and it's not that difficult.

It just takes a lot of passion and go getting attitudes.

So thank you.

And before we get started into the services, I want to let you all know about ABLE South Carolina's culture.

We live by our values.

We have our values posted throughout our offices.

We have it posted in individual offices.

This is something that drives our decision making within our organization.

The first value that you'll see up there is empowerment.

We do not reach goals for our consumers.

We teach our consumers how to do for themselves.

That is very uncommon a lot of times for people with disabilities.

We feel that people, we have had decisions made about us, for us,

people have done things for us.

So a lot of times when consumers come to us for they're loving it.

Inclusion.

We advocate for individuals with disabilities to be included in integrated environments in classrooms, employment, housing, leadership roles, and in discussions that impact their lives in the disability community.

Now see that word classroom?

We make sure that everything that our organization does includes all ages.

Independent.

We believe that individuals with disabilities should have the right to control their own lives and make decisions about what's best for them.

We believe every individual can be independent.

That last sentence is something that really makes us stand out in our state.

A lot of the other organizations, they say the word "independent," but they don't really know what that means, and they're not promoting it.

Equality.

We advocate for equal rights and access, not special treatment.

We do not want special treatment.

And the disability pride, we make sure this is ingrained in all of our consumers.

We want them to be proud of who they are and teach them that disability is not a bad thing.

I wanted to just to go over these values because you'll see this throughout our services, and we do not make, we do not create any programs unless they fit our values.

So you will see on here, and I'll explain this.

From 2013 to 2016, we have had a considerable jump in the amount of young adults that we provide services for.

In 2013, we served 135 individuals between the ages of 5-24, which made up about 21% of the consumers that were served.

Remember, this is one-on-one services, and this is the data that was reported on our 704 report.

In 2014, we had 157, which was 26%, and you see that jump quickly from 2014 and 2015.

2015 we served 713 consumers between the ages of 5-24, and that was 59% of our consumer base are youth.

And then in 2016, we did a little slight decrease.

Not sure what happened there, but we served 696 consumers between the ages, which made up 56% of consumers.

So you see we are very youth-focused.

CHARLIE WALTERS: Okay.

So if you have electronic access to these power points, you'll get captioning for the images as we go through an explanation of some of our youth programming, we have included logos.

The reason we included logos, and I'll do my best to try to keep up with describing those as we go.

The reason we included the logos is because marketing is important to us.

The images and face that the programs have in the community is important.

The recognition that we have as a center, as experts in our field is important.

My background is in special education, which I hesitate to say it out loud.

But the reason I say it is because it's important.

We get language about transition.

It's different even from Title I to Title VII.

There's a lot of conflict.

In special education, regardless of how you feel about the field, I have very mixed feelings, transition has been mandated since 1990.

We have been talking about transition and collecting research, and we have decades of research about what separates youth with disabilities who are successful after high school from youth with disabilities who are not so successful after high school.

It's important to be on the cusp of that expertise, the way we market our programs.

The way we speak a language that's in line with IL and also in line with decades of research on best practice and transition.

Quickly, the logo is orange block letters with a chat bubble inside the cube spelling EQUIP.

It is a leadership program for young adults and by young adults, this is very very important, and parallels one of the programs that you heard about from Lehigh Valley.

It's for young adults 13 to 28.

Put aside the regs for a second.

It does not matter.

The programs come first, right?

So we end up serving youth who fall within the regs as transition- aged youth.

We speak about transition though and youth, we're talking about all ages.

In South Carolina, transition actually starts, is mandated in the state to start at 13, so one year earlier than mandated federally.

This is all about peer to peer skill building.

From self-advocacy to communication to goal setting and goal attainment.

There's a bunch of different parts to this program that I am going to get into.

Last year the EQUIP program reached over 9,000 youth and community members from our efforts statewide with the program.

I am going to get into this next slide and some of the components of what EQUIP is.

So it's comprised at the core of peer support, youth with disabilities supporting other youth with disabilities and building on natural skills and assets within those groups.

So regional and monthly hang- outs are occurring all the time.

So we have six different regional hang-outs across our 23 county serving area.

And one online hang-out this is important for rural communities.

A lot of South Carolina is very very rural and transportation is always an issue.

Having an online component that parallels what we're doing in person is very important.

There's a bunch of different entry points for EQUIP.

We find young adults off the street that have more leadership skill than I do, and we find young adults that are just starting out in the process.

So multiple access points to the program is very important.

One of them is the summer series.

One is them is the hangouts and one of them is also a summer series, which is a six-week intensive leadership development program in the summer, we have it in two different locations in the state during the summer.

They are full single days six weeks in a row.

Totals about 25 hours, 28 hours of leadership development over the summer.

Professional development and mentorship.

What we do as a program in EQUIP is we have opportunities for those who want to further develop leadership potential, or further develop their leadership skills to come on board as paid staff.

So we have 15 EQUIP leaders who are actually at our center as paid staff that are responsible for all the goings on of the program.

So the professional development and mentorship of those leaders, that's the crux of it.

Those leaders mentoring other youth that come into the program.

And so we, as a staff of old folks, we're committed to that professional development and making sure that they get mentorship.

That they're enculturated into IL properly so they're speaking the language that we have been speaking for decades as a movement.

So service on boards and committees.

We are up, actually near 20 having young adults serving on different boards, committees and councils, task forces across the state.

The EQUIP leaders do trainings for families, professionals, and other youth.

That is a very important thing.

Self-determination and self-advocacy.

Those skills that we know are so important to develop in young adults.

They mean nothing if we're not giving them meaningful opportunities to practice those skills.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: All right, the Youth Leadership Forum.

This is a newer program for us.

This is our second year running it.

It is a four-day, three-night leadership experience where it's actually an overnight experience at a college.

Overnight experiences can be very fun.

We have a saying in our organization, no YLF babies.

We make sure that we separate the males and females.

It's all good.

All good.

So what we do is we collaborate with multiple agencies.

This is how you get people to apply for YLF.

You have partnerships.

We're going to keep saying partnerships and collaboration, because that is so important to growing programs and your organization.

We collaborate, I think, with about 15 stakeholders with this group.

We have 25 youth that actually attend the forum.

This year we recently recruited and had applications.

We were very worried about our applications, about getting 25 applications in, but we ended up getting 62.

So we had a very hard decision to make with selecting only 25 delegates.

We also formed a South Carolina YLF alumni association.

This is where the delegates come after the actual overnight experience, and they talk about, they plan the next YLF.

And they plan the activities, the speakers, and they also staff the YLF.

It's a program that is led and run by young adults with disabilities.

We also connect them with legislators.

Last year we took paratransit to the state house and they got to speak with two legislators from our General Assembly and talk about how laws are made and how the importance of youth involvement when making decisions, when legislators are making decisions about disability services within our state.

We also have speakers from around the U.S. come in that have disabilities.

We feel that that whole mentorship within YLF is so very important.

I know that when I was younger, meeting somebody with a disability who was successful in transition meant the absolute world to me.

So that's what we are passing down with YLF.

And then the history of YLF was quite interesting.

It used to be run by a parent organization.

We all know how sometimes parents can actually be the barrier to transition, and they were the barrier of YLF.

They were giving folks these rocks, and they were breaking them up and saying oh, you're like a rock.

You're ugly on the outside but pretty on the inside.

We're like oh, we've got to get this program.

So we ended up having youth share their experience of how that was detrimental to their image and we actually ended up getting the funding for that program later on.

This is our second year doing it and it has been very successful so far.

CHARLIE WALTERS: So as we're talking about this training, we were meeting with regular phone calls to put the training together and I had a limited role in that, Kimberly was at the forefront of that conversation.

I spent months excited about the prospect of coming to be with you guys for the simple reason that there is no other type of organization that is better situated to provide transition services to help support youth in transition than the centers for independent living.

Bar none.

It is one of the best kept secrets out there.

Who knows what I mean when I say best practice in transition?

Who are my research geeks that don't mind reading journal articles in their spare time about effective practice?

When you look at effective practice, it's a short list of things that we know are highly correlated with success after high school.

60 70% of that list are things that are in the DNA of centers for independent living.

Talking about person-centered planning, self-determination skills and the essence of consumer control.

Talking about independent living skills.

All these things that we eat and breathe and sleep daily as CILs, these are the things that are at the core of best practices.

So what I hope y'all will leave here with after a few days with us is the confidence that there is nobody in your community better situated as a partner and as a collaborator in transition to improve post-school outcomes.

So one of the ways that we capitalize on that as a center is we were the first center to start a transition conference in the state, right.

This idea of transition has been around forever.

People are still desperate, other professionals are still desperate for resources.

Other families are still desperate for resources.

It's like every time you get a new generation of transition-aged youth in, there's a huge learning curve on that for families and a huge learning curve for young adults themselves.

We started two conferences.

One of them, Empowering a Future.

The logos are at the bottom.

Orange block letters with blue lines going out the side that spell out the name of both conferences.

Empowering a Future is our one day professional conference where we target any professional working with youth in transition.

It is really funny talking about it.

I'm glad to be in a room of like-minded people because I can speak freely.

But we take people that we know as a profession, you know, from rehab counselors to special educators.

People that we know their profession rests solely on deficits-based thinking in a lot of ways.

And we just blow their mind for a whole day with nothing but strengths based approach to working with youth.

They don't know that we're completely brain washing them but at the end of the day, a lot of them have drunk the Kool-Aid, and that's the whole point.

Mapping Your Future is for families.

We want to do the same thing with families.

Real subtly, we tell them, somewhat explicitly sometimes, we know your expectations are lower than they should be coming into this one-day conference.

The entire point of the day we spend together is getting them to raise the bar on what they think is possible.

Both young adults, for themselves, and families, what their families think is possible.

That's a completely free conference.

There was nothing else going on like this in transition in the state.

Look to your state.

Likely there's a need for something like this.

Okay.

So capable and ready.

This is a really fun conversation because the time is just so ripe for transition everything.

So 15% of Voc Rehab's budget now is going to pre-employment transition services.

I was going to ask for a show of hands on who collaborates really well with vocational rehabilitation, but I am going to skip it.

There are some good hands.

I don't want to put you all on the spot.

It varies, right?

We were talking with Seth and Joe, and South Carolina is completely different than Pennsylvania.

And one of the areas that's completely different is in our relationship with our state vocational rehabilitation department.

We have a really good relationship with the South Carolina Commission for the Blind.

That's the second arm of VR to serve people with visual disabilities in the state.

A really, really good relationship with them.

We work closely with VR.

VR doesn't contract out for anything in South Carolina.

They keep every dollar they get internally.

They spend it all on their own staff.

Commission for the Blind is happy to contract out, and one of the areas that they're really happy to contract out was for meeting this obligation to spend 15% of their budget on pre-employment transition services.

They admitted openly- we have no idea what self-advocacy is.

Help.

We have to serve-the reason it works for Commission for the Blind to contract out is because for pre-employment transition services as Seth and Joe were talking about, we're talking about people who are potentially eligible for Voc Rehab, right.

It's anybody with-the one in five students as opposed to just the students who are receiving special education.

Just the 1.2 in ten.

Okay.

So capable and ready is all about the provision of those pre-employment transition services in the school.

So large group instruction on everything from self-advocacy to work readiness and also providing an avenue for youth to work with us one-on-one for more intensive support as well.

Thank you.

Okay.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: And now the South Carolina Employment First Initiative.

This is something that we're very, very proud of.

A couple of, I guess a little bit over a year ago, not even a year ago, actually, ACL put out a grant.

We saw it two weeks before it was due and we're like this is a great idea.

Let's go ahead and apply for this.

I'm going to talk about partnership again.

If we did not have relationships with a number of organizations, we would not have had this grant.

We were the only nonprofit that has ever been awarded this grant, and we were chosen out of one in six states.

So we are representing South Carolina.

So only one nonprofit, and that nonprofit is a center for independent living.

Yay!

So with this grant, it was actually a requirement that we had a memorandum of agreement with Vocational Rehabilitation, South Carolina Department of Education, South Carolina Disabilities and Special Needs Vocational Rehabilitation, and our University Center of Excellence and Developmental Disabilities which is our youth led.

Before we even started to write the grant and submit it, we had to start the conversation with these groups and talk about, look, we're really wanting to apply for this grant.

We need you all on board.

It took the full two weeks to get everyone on board with getting this big memorandum of agreement but at the end of it we ended up having ten partners within the grant application, which really contributed to us getting this grant.

It is a five-year grant, and we'll talk more about the funding tomorrow.

Do you want to jump into the goals?

CHARLIE WALTERS: So the goals are pretty straightforward, right?

So we're bringing Employment First to South Carolina, who is really, really far behind in the game in employment.

We're still 11,000 or so served in sheltered workshops in the state at this time.

And so there are three main goals for the Employment First Initiative in South Carolina.

Again, draw your attention to the brand.

The logo at the bottom is a blue suitcase with a green boarder, with a silhouette of the state of South Carolina and written inside the briefcase is South Carolina Employment First Initiative.

The branding is really important.

Having a vision for what this was going to look like on the surface, the underside is important, too.

The roots of programming is so important.

But being able to convey that vision to a public audience and to other perspective partners is critical as well.

So with this project, we're aiming to, one, equip high school students and those recently exited from high school to enter competitive employment.

Who knows what the number one predictor of employment success is for students with disabilities?

The number one predictor of employment success?

Employment.

Right?

If you work competitively in high school, you are four to five times more likely to work competitively after high school.

It's a no-brainer.

But it is not happening.

In South Carolina we have no idea statewide what kind of outcomes there are for competitive work experiences for students while they are still in high school.

So this is a big part of that project is to change that and change the culture around what we think is possible for youth with disabilities.

So a lot of different parts of this project.

We're going to talk more about this, too, as we go on.

Please, as a reminder, use your post-it notes if you have questions.

I know this feels really braggy.

We don't want it to be braggy, but we want to start conversations.

As you get ideas about the pieces of this that you can maybe replicate or talk more about, write it down on the post-it notes so you don't lose the important thoughts.

The second goal of that is to accomplish cross system implementation of employment first principles.

We're talking about policy alignment and employment first.

We are talking about training.

So our state Department of Disabilities and Special Needs trickles all of their services through local disabilities and special needs boards, so that's where all Medicaid waiver services are channeled through.

At the state level they put out an employment first directive but its the local boards that are still running sheltered workshops.

It's a bizarre case where people need to be trained.

Everyone at this point, I think a lot of people at this point, when I say employment first, they think that know what that means.

They probably don't.

They probably need training on really what that means.

We're talking equity in employment and financial outcomes for people with disabilities which includes a thousand and one different things.

Next up with is so, part of this, the third goal is to conduct benefits trainings to dispel myths regarding working in benefits.

Kimberly is going to touch on WIPA and some of the how our work with benefits feeds into this and how it's part of this project as well.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: Just a fun fact about the South Carolina Employment First Initiative, we have other goals for this program.

We have a plan to close down all of the sheltered workshops in South Carolina.

A center for independent living, we're going to do it.

So within the five years that is our ultimate plan is to close those shops down, but we also have to assist them with transitioning those consumers into competitive employment.

We also have a statewide campaign that we're going to be doing to kind of change that culture of the way that people are thinking about employment for individuals with disabilities and specially youth.

And we also have a pro-bono lobbyist on our team, who is lobbying for us and we're getting legislation to get us Employment First legislation in our state.

A lot of exciting things that we are able to do with the grants.

CHARLIE WALTERS: And the youth voice is very important.

Youth are serving actively.

All this work is centered around an interagency collaborative called the South Carolina Disability Employment Coalition.

Youth are an integral part of the work that is coming out of the committees of that coalition as well.

Their voice is at the table through all of this.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: Okay, and the next program we're

doing is we collaborate a lot with our Parent Training and Information Centers.

Raise your hand if you know who your Parent Training Information Center is in your state.

About 5% or so?

Yeah.

So this is very important to establish this relationship.

These are parents.

These are parents that think that they know a lot, so it can be very uncomfortable conversations.

But if you do it kindly, I think you can get very far.

With the, our state's PTI, a couple years ago, two years ago the grant came up to be competitive.

And there, our past PTI was not doing very well.

They were telling everybody to get guardianships and just a lot of issues within that organization and a lot of the stakeholders weren't working with them.

So we talked to another family-run organization, and they actually decided to apply for the grant and we assisted them with their grant application and then also had that conversation.

Do we want, as a disability community, do we want parents providing youth with transition programming?

Absolutely not.

Since we are required to provide transition services, I sat down with their executive director, and we formulated a plan that we will provide all of that organization's youth transition programming.

And that is exactly what we do and that's exactly what we get paid for.

So what we do, we provide all of the CIL advocacy training for their youth.

We also have molded that organization has shifted their whole philosophy because of our organization.

They changed their mission.

They used to have the wording "special needs" in their mission.

They have completely revamped their terminology.

They revamped their focus and really promoting independent living within their organization now.

We provide, within our contract that we have with Family Connections of South Carolina, we provide IL skills to all of their youth, and parents are coming in with children starting at 13.

We provide training to parents regarding disability rights and self-advocacy.

We facilitate a parent youth advisory council, which can sometimes get heated with youth and parents going back and forth.

But the parents are listening to these youth, for the first time in this organization has ever done.

We host a workshop with them called "Free to be Me," where families and youth come.

We separate the parents and the youth go into a different session, and we focus with the youth on self-advocacy skills and work with the parents on how to empower independence within your child and how to let go.

CHARLIE WALTERS: So at the parent youth advisory council, one of the first meetings.

So it's six youth and six parents and one of the parents in the first meeting said I think we need to create a resource for other parents with sons or daughters with disabilities to help them cope with the diagnosis of disability.

One of the young adults on the council who is also an EQUIP leader, looked at the parent and said you know what?

I like the idea.

But I think we that should instead create something for parents so that they understand that disability is amazing and something to celebrate if their son or daughter is diagnosed.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: It was very interesting.

They had a whole grieving session like constantly, within their organization and they no longer do that now because we taught them.

You'll grieve for a little while, but let's get past the grieving and move over.

Disability is not a bad thing.

We also provide technical assistance for parents with disabilities.

Parenting is an IL skill.

You should be assisting people with the adoption process, with becoming a parent, whatever their needs are.

And the PTIs are actually required by their federal grant to teach parents with disabilities.

They are not equipped for that.

They do not know modified parenting techniques.

They do not know assistive technology that can be used to promote parenting.

So that is something that we now provide for the PTI, because we are the best organization to provide that service.

CHARLIE WALTERS: So school visits is a big one.

So I think it's right around, I don't know if we gave a number.

I don't want to lie.

I don't think we gave a number.

It changes all the time, right?

We have collaborative partnerships with school districts all over the state.

This is a big one.

We want access to youth who want to learn IL skills.

So developing those relationships with school districts is really critical, right?

And so, you know, before Kimberly took over as executive director, we had as a center, a long history of just having, sending advocates into IEP meetings without knowing what they were walking into just to advocate.

Which didn't necessarily mean that they were doing that in a way that would benefit the skill building of the young adult or child that they were there to advocate for.

So we have taken this approach with school districts, it might not be popular, I'm happy to talk with anyone who'd like to chat more about it.

Our approach is we don't go to IEP meetings unless we're working on self-advocacy related skills with that young adult and us going to the IEP meeting in some way supports those skills.

There's circumstances where we'll go to IEP meetings if it's really egregious stuff.

We want to maintain relationships with school districts.

We don't hesitate to let people know when they need to get in line or they're doing something terrible.

We want to develop and maintain strong relationships with school districts so that we have access to serving students there.

So we know.

As I mentioned, this is where I really geek out and get excited.

We know what it takes to bridge the gap between success and not being successful, right?

Like we know what those things are.

Who knows the correlation between student-led IEP meetings and success after high school?

It's huge, huge, from reducing the risk of sexual exploitation for young women with intellectual disabilities to improving competitive employment and pay rates for people across disabilities after high school.

Self-determination is critical.

Getting with that and being experts in that area so you can speak the language that schools understand and you can provide those services is very important.

So one-on-one skill building, this goes back to core services is a spring board.

Right?

We never get away from IL.

We never get away from our roots.

And that one-on-one skill building and anything IL related is always at the fore of what we're doing.

Okay.

Supported decision making.

Can I see a show of hands, really quick.

We are running out of time.

Getting to our last couple of minutes.

Can I see a show of hands though, really quick.

Who's familiar with supported decision making?

As an alternative to guardianship.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: Charlie, Sierra said we can go over a little bit.

CHARLIE WALTERS: Cool.

So I see five or six hands, out of a group this large.

Who's familiar with guardianship?

Another show of hands?

More.

About 30, 35 hands went up for that one.

So supported decision making is becoming an internationally recognized alternative to guardianship.

So when I say guardianship, In South Carolina, it's different state to state, but in South Carolina, probate courts rule in favor of families getting full guardianship, which is the most punitive civil rights stripping that you can do to any individual.

Anybody, right.

You take away somebodies right to sign employment paperwork when a family is awarded guardianship of them, or when they reach their age of majority.

You take away their right to sign a marriage license, right?

You take away all of their adult rights and privileges in a full guardianship and you transfer them to the guardian.

It's a mess.

We're awarding guardianships at a rate that's three to four times higher than it was 20 years ago.

As we know more and more about transition and what it takes to have successful adult lives for all people, we're awarding guardianships in rates that are astronomical.

A teacher a few months ago, who had a mom of a student with a learning disability and ADHD who was in the process of pursuing guardianship.

Full guardianship, taking away all his adult rights.

This is ridiculous.

And so the supported decision making is a project that we have at our center that's all about changing this culture, right?

Changing that conversation.

Who makes decisions, all of their decisions without support?

We all make decisions with support.

Look, we all make decisions differently.

Just because you can't make decisions in a vacuum without support does not mean that you are not capable of making good decisions.

So we're working to train professionals, families, young adults with disabilities especially, but also adults with disabilities on what implementing supported decision making in their life would look like, especially on the eve of a lot of them actively pursuing guardianship.

Okay?

Can you tell I like that one a whole lot?

It's my favorite.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: We are a sub-contractor for our states work incentive planning and assistance program.

So benefits counseling for young adults is essential for transition.

They need to know what will happen to their benefits when they go into employment.

This is a crucial service that we provide.

We have individual, we have three full-time staff members on this program, but this is something that we go into the schools and talk to the teachers so that they can send their young adults to us to be able to provide this benefits counseling.

This is the key to transition a lot of times.

Because you don't know what will happen after you go to employment with your Social Security benefits, your Medicaid.

So we teach them about the work incentives they can get.

And we provide them comprehensive written review that is from Social Security to show them how much they can actually make and keep their benefits.

Or transition off of their benefits.

We also provide a program called the Community Leadership Academy.

This is something that I think all centers should be involved in because we're always wanting to promote, we always want to get more people in the community who have disabilities on boards, councils, committees, to be able to speak on behalf of individuals with disabilities and use that disability voice.

So we provide a pretty extensive six-week leadership training to young adults and adults on how to serve in a professional role in a leadership role on these boards and committees.

We teach them about Roberts Rules.

And we teach them about professionalism.

And we teach them, this is the most important thing we teach them, how to use their voice to make change for the disability community.

CHARLIE WALTERS: Okay.

So professional development and technical assistance.

We're going to talk about this as a revenue, potential revenue source at your center.

This is important.

It all goes back to the idea of staying rooted in IL, staying rooted in core services, but becoming subject matter experts.

Kimberly and our assistant director recruited me out of graduate school.

As someone who was wanted more of what IL was doing, was not buying into the special education or the other disciplines that were looking to work with people with disabilities.

Plucked me out so that I could be a subject matter expert when it came to education and transition.

This is important.

I don't say that to talk about myself, as much as I like doing that.

Just to say that it's important.

It's an important part to have that subject matter expertise and not just make it up as you go along.

This only can serve to bolster your center in the programming and the funding that you can go after and the programming that you can have at your center.

We do a lot from the professional conference that I spoke of earlier, Empowering the Future, to technical assistance.

Actually getting schools to pay us to come in and do trainings on student-led IEPs.

Do trainings on supported decision making.

Do trainings on disability sensitivity and disability rights.

Providing consultation on accessibility, right?

So doing ADA accessibility assessments on school grounds.

Schools pay for that kind of thing.

Serving on transition teams.

We have a state-wide transition alliance.

Becoming a voice on anything that is going on in your state pertaining to transition, this is critical.

All of our staff members are required to do at least 18 hours annually of professional development.

We believe in being professionals, right?

We believe in not stopping that learning process.

We get really, we have the, there's a risk of getting really insular in IL and what we know about transition is that it's inner-agency, right?

It's cross discipline.

It's this really robust, messy undertaking, and the more we know, the more we become the subject matter experts in the area, the better we're going to end up supporting youth.

KIMBERLY TISSOT: And with the 18 hours of professional development, that's actually put into our strategic plan and measured annually during annual reviews.

We want a professional staff and we want them to be the best experts at everything that is going on that is disability related.

And just a few other ABLE South Carolina transition programs.

We are also a state affiliate for the Southeast ADA center.

We are currently, some of our milestones right now.

We are developing disability rights training for schools throughout our state.

I really love Community Leadership Academy.

It's on there again.

I'm going to skip over it since I already told you about it.

We also host a South Carolina Disability Employment Coalition which is made up of over 30 stakeholders from around South Carolina.

VR on there, Commission for the Blind, our employment agency.

Just everybody that you can imagine that's connected with disability in some way.

We are looking to change the way that South Carolina is looking at employment again for people with disabilities.

And specifically, we're focusing on creating a bridge that transitions to careers for youth.

But within the coalition, a lot of exciting work is going on, and we'll be able to talk a little more about that tomorrow.

So I hope we did not overwhelm you.

We completely know how exciting this work is.

We all, I think, all of you guys as connected with a CIL, we all can do this together.

We are always available if you ever need to call us.

You can call or e-mail us any time.

We're here to help.f