IL-NET, a project of ILRU presents

Disability, Diversity and Intersectionality  
in Centers for Independent Living

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Review of Day Two  
Presenters: Stan Holbrook, Susan Dooha, Liz Sherwin

STAN HOLBROOK: Good morning, good morning. Has this been valuable to you?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

STAN HOLBROOK: Say that again. That made us feel good. All right, are there any questions -- lingering questions from yesterday that we need to talk about today? You have presenters here and we want to make sure we go over whatever is on your mind from yesterday so we can move forward. Any questions?

Okay, I have a question for you: What did you expect to hear here that you haven't heard yet? Put your hand up and what haven't you gotten that you really wanted to get out of this yet? Mandy?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was hoping to learn a little bit more about how to actually break down barriers in our rural communities. And I don't know necessarily that they're barriers, but like in the town that I live in, I think we're 92% Caucasian, 7% Hispanic and then the rest is non‑white or non‑Hispanic. So, just kind of getting into environments that aren't like ours, and what that would look like and how other rural communities, you know. Sorry, I don't know if I'm articulating myself correctly, but just how to get into other communities that aren't exactly like ours and make people feel comfortable and welcoming and telling them more about our services and how to bring those other people in that wouldn't usually come in through our doors.

STAN HOLBROOK: So, you're speaking of the process of actually breaking ice in other communities you're not familiar with that you can build trust and relationship. If you had some examples of that, that would have been helpful. Is that what you said? You're looking for stuff like that? Okay, we're going to remember that. And I know there were some things talked about generally about partnerships and how they happen and I really do believe within our group there's specific stories that ‑‑ Liz I think has one ‑‑ that could be helpful right now, not only for you, but for anybody else that was thinking about that.

LIZ SHERWIN: We serve, like I said earlier yesterday, a pretty rural population in Illinois and Iowa. And the ways that we've been able to engage the community has ‑‑ we were able to identify churches or key people in the communities that were already respected, and that is how we gained in‑roads into those communities, and were able to serve them. And even with the process of knowing key players and participating in different organizations and events that were going on, it did take a while to gain trust.

It didn't happen overnight. It was several years before we saw the fruit ‑‑ things really popping out. So, if anyone is interested in learning more about how we did that, I know a lot has been crammed into these two days, and it's kind of overwhelming for me, as well.

[ Laughter ]

But if ‑‑ I think everyone has my email address. And also, we have a Facebook page, and we also have a website. So, if anybody's interested in contacting me, I can give you very specific and detailed activities on specific things that we've done, and how we've been able to do that. Thank you.

TIM FUCHS: Before I hand the mic to Susan, I just want to again that broken record thing, right? That I talked yesterday about how this content is up online. Well, that's in addition to a decade's worth of other webinars and trainings we've done including specifically on outreach, to un‑ and underserved communities. Mostly on the CIL side. Some actually on the SILC side and some of that contact is relevant. As you can imagine for the SILCs you can imagine it's more like Susan talked about yesterday. Who is in your state? How do you find them? How do you outreach to them?

SUSAN DOOHA: Hi, I'm glad you brought that up. Usually when a question comes up it means a bunch of people are thinking about it, but not saying it. And I think that you want to inventory what you have to offer. You want to think not necessarily about people coming to you, coming in your doors. You want to think about going to people in a place where they are comfortable, and where you have a relationship with a community leader or a community friend, and they can assist you if you have something of value to the community.

Even with very small percentages of people, if you look at the demographic information and you get some ‑‑ I recommend getting some help unless you're a maven. And frankly there are a lot of people more sophisticated than I am that can use search engines better than I do, but you can look up data by ZIP Code, by tract. And then you look at what's there, what is in that ZIP Code? Is there a Post Office? Is there a barber shop? Is there a church? Is there…

What is there that means community? Is there a school? What is there where people may gather for any reason? And then making your way in and finding out ‑‑ asking a lot of questions. Finding out about people in the community, what they're willing to tell you, which may not be a great deal if they don't know you, right?

But, then, talking about what you have to offer, and how that ‑‑ give some examples of how that can make a difference in people's lives. Ask them if that rings any bells with them, or they know anybody for whom that would matter, and just slowly build relationships.

Are there groups that meet? Is there, I don't know, a Lion's Club, is there any kind of organization in the community where people may gather and may find there's a benefit to something that you're doing that they want people to know about.

Where do you post fliers about how to get in touch with you? Grocery shops are a great place. Think about places that people go often. They don't have to go there because they have a disability. They don't have to go there because it's a disability organization. You just are looking for places where people will notice.

And then be open to what people have to tell you, and be able to listen to and think about what's working about your approach or not, because you may have to work for a while and modify your approach to going in, and we have some plans. We have some outreach plans at my organization, and if people email me, I'm happy to share what they look like.

We seem awfully big, but we really are a city of neighborhoods. And if you want to get into the neighborhood, same rules apply.

TIM FUCHS: I'll have to talk to Darrell, because it's not ILRU.org isn't my website but I would imagine that's the kind of thing we'd like to put up on the DDI web page if you're comfortable with it, Susan. And I'm getting a head‑nod, so great.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think something that we touched on, but I know a lot of these things are going to need to be followed up on afterwards, I think that's when the in‑depth work happens anyway. This is Lorrell from Northwest Indiana.

I think just being mindful of the strength that we have, when we are united, right? Just like when it wasn't all that common and some would say not on par with regulations that non‑federally funded Centers were established and then once the feds turned around, a few different places had just state-funded Centers and then all of a sudden it became okay to have a state-funded Center.

I think the trend spread, not just in a positive way either, I think in a negative way. And I think we've had a negative trend spreading throughout our networks for a while and I think people have been very vocal about it. I think some people have not been in a position to be vocal about it, but I think the strengthening of our networks, the strengthening of our relationships based on what it is we do and what it is we believe in needs to continue to grow so that as a network, we can face these trends. Just like people I've heard voice the fact they've been isolated, that they are isolated, that they don't have necessarily access to these resources because of where they are. I think our support networks will improve that, just like I think our support networks will continue to improve folks who find themselves in unfortunate situations just like we do with the Indiana situation.

And for folks who want to know more about that, it's kind of all over social media, #INsituation. And I brought a whole lot of cards -- business cards. I don't want to take them all back with me. Security might get me, so I'd be more than happy to talk to folks about anything – just building networks, building relationships really with others of us that do this work and may face some of the same challenges.

STAN HOLBROOK: Thank you. Any more items that you thought you'd hear here that you didn't hear?

Okay.

[End of Session]