



P2P Advisory Council 8.5.2025

DRAFT NOTES

LIFE Center for Independent Living (CIL) - 2201 Eastland Dr # 1, Bloomington, IL 61704

In attendance:

Li Mckiniry, Meri Helbig, Kathy Full, Anna Austin, David Kuriniec, Angela Wetmore, Shannon Tarkowski, Meg Murphy, Chun-Lung Lee, Christina Irland, Jim Knauf, Brittany Boston, Aimee Julian, Dalton Byers, Antonio Gomez, Heather Long, Darlene Ladd, Tony Fuhrmann, David Strauser, Kevin Irvine, Nikki Ditchman, Jessica Sipovic, Kris Murray, Sarah Sinner, Nicole Birri, Casey Burke, Eun-Jeong Lee, Beth Bendtsen, Concha de la Cruz, Briana Neurohr, John Kosciulek, Robyn Lewis

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Aimee Julian welcomed the group. Attendees introduced themselves, and expectations for the project were reviewed.

WELCOME TO LIFE CIL

Meri Helbig and Shay Tarkowski welcomed attendees to the LIFE (Living Independence for Everyone) CIL. They serve De Witt, Livingstone, and McLean Counties. The P2P Project is also being carried out in Ford County.

CIL primarily provide the following services:

- Information referral
- Peer mentoring
- Advocacy
- Independent skills training
- Transition

LIFE CIL also has several grants to specifically help blind customers, as well as an equipment loan program. They also focus on getting customers out of nursing homes and train personal assistants (PA). They employ 9 full-time staff and two part-time.

David Kuriniec thanked attendees for joining after a successful annual review in Champaign.

DATA REVIEW

Dr. David Strauser presented a data overview, which has been shared with RSA and Mathematica. Data is reported through March 31st, 2025. This information will be available on the P2P website.

A few Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- CIE placement
- Placement in postsecondary education
- Quality of life
- Collaboration of centers
- Quality of life
- Interagency collab
- Implementation
- Knowledge Translation
- Sustainability

Youth/children served:

- Children's annual target: 135
 - o Actual: 51
- Youth annual target: 1,000
 - o Actual: 449

*These numbers are impressive for just getting started in January

Number of individuals served:

- Children who used project services - target 67

- Actual 20
- Children from underserved communities who used project services – target 30
 - Actual 20

List your partners, their roles on the project, and the specific activities they completed:

- Goal 18
 - Actual 21

The number of youth services professionals who completed professional training through the project:

- Target 22
 - Actual 32

Who reported training as being high quality:

- Target 17
 - Actual 32

Number of children who completed a career assessment:

- Target 60
 - Actual 5

In terms of employment, numbers are low, but that is expected, as the project is just launching.

Project accomplishments

- Pre-ETS curriculum (currently three versions) is being implemented
- In ISBE, we heard success stories in writing/video
- IIT held training for service providers, and they have done a good job
- Transfr has been our secret weapon for VR

Data collection using QOL (quality of life) -zone

- Still in the negotiation process with the developer

Will be reporting baseline data

- Secondary RSA-911 data for Illinois DRS customers
 - Demographic info
 - Specific services
 - Key outcomes
- Most current indicator 14 post-school outcomes

The floor was opened for questions.

Tarkowski asked if the information had been compared to any other grantees?

- Chun-Lung Lee and Kuriniec indicated that they do compare data to other states. They are meeting with GA next week. CSAVR also does a monthly community of practice meeting. There is also a project directors' conference in September.
- Strauser clarified that internships and WBL experiences count towards employment outcomes.
- Meri Helbig suggested merging the CIL report with the federal quality report. Kuriniec indicated that that hadn't been accomplished yet.
- Helbig further asked what the role of the CIL is once individuals graduate from high school, as opposed to DRS's role. Kuriniec responded that that is a case-by-case question. The idea is for the CILs to provide consistency. He indicated that they would work on some documents.

LUNCH BREAK

APPRENTICESHIPS IN MADISON COUNTY

Tony Fuhrmann and **Darlene Ladd** from **Madison County Employment & Training** gave a program overview of their apprenticeship programs for individuals with disabilities. Ladd previously worked for a CRP for 18 years.

They explained their journey towards these apprenticeships:

- In 2021, a couple of things were happening in Collinsville. A local high school was working with the city, looking for some land to build a life skill center where students in the STEP program could have co-op opportunities.
- The state of IL started pushing apprenticeship programs

Three different apprenticeships with disabilities were started for the first cohort:

- Convention center housekeeping
- Event set-up removal
- Grounds keeping

Timeframe:

- First meeting - September 2021
- Signed documents created apprenticeships during National Apprenticeship Week - November 2021

Initial problems:

- Didn't realize that apprenticeships had to be a full calendar year
- For participants, this is their first time back since COVID - generated some anxiety and behavioral issues
- Participants weren't job-matched
- A lack of job coaches meant that teachers had to be job coaches

The first apprenticeships:

- 2 terminated due to employee infractions
- 2 did not meet competencies
- 1 unable to complete due to disciplinary action at school
- 1 apprentice completed

The solutions:

- Planned times to check in with employers – created Honest Round Table Meetings – checked ego at the door
- Regular communication with supervisors
- Curriculum developed for staff – Job Coaching for Success
- Student Worker Handbook
- Meetings to define work expectations

Who are the partners?

- Employer
- Student-apprentice
- Support/family/guardian
- School district
- LWIA

Model improvements/what was learned:

- Two customers: employer and student
- Apprenticeship job: customized, realistic, employer-driven.
- Developed an apprenticeship application – which included job preference questions
- Madison Co. bridges the gap in communication – what adaptations can be made?

Partner responsibilities – Madison Co:

- Employer reach-out
- Facilitate student interview
- Draw up a contract

- Enroll the individual into WIOA services
- Career specialist provides support for 2 years (1 program, 1 follow-up)

Partner responsibilities - High school STEP and DRS:

- STEP provides:
 - o Job exploration
 - o WBL experiences
 - o Post-secondary ed counseling
 - o Workplace readiness training
 - o Introduction to self-advocacy
 - o RTI
 - o Support for students/employers
 - o Aid student in completing WIOA paperwork

Apprentice responsibilities:

- Attend school for RTI completion
- Work scheduled shifts/days to meet required hours
- Adhere to employer policies and rules
- Communicate

Employer responsibilities:

- Job description
- Work competencies
- Host tours/work demonstration
- Interview potential apprentices
- Develop mentor
- Staff for supervision
- Submit invoicing/progress report for OJT reimbursement
- Communicate with MCETD staff for support/problem-solving

How is this model different?

- Job carving and flexibility
- Meeting with apprentices
- Enrolling in WIOA services
- Providing OJT funding for the employer
- Providing support services
- Team approach
- Resources – referral to WIPA for benefits, providing families Red Book

Resources added:

- Student advocacy
- Training for employers
- Contact sheet for employers – who to call for what

Round 2:

- 4 out of 4 graduated for the second year
- Had a need for bus sanitizers
- Transportation has been a problem, so this year, the program is working with the bus company to have the bus company pick him up.
- Our completer, when he started, realized he needed his license, so he got it. He is now full-time employed. They started him at \$17 p/h.

First private industry registered apprenticeship – West Star Aviation

- Housekeeping registered apprentice
- 1 completer

Granite City High School - 3 apprenticeships:

- Icon mechanical
- Weber Chevrolet
- Scroggins Law Office

Branched out to Bond County

- Supplied Energy
- They were already doing an apprenticeship for an individual with a disability, they just hadn't registered the program

2025 apprenticeship updates

- Continuation of ACT apprenticeship: 1 student will be starting in August
- Supplied energy apprenticeship – apprenticeship completes in October

The floor was opened for questions.

Tarkowski asked if they worked with the Impact CIL

Ladd responded that they had, but that they hadn't found an effective way to partner. Fuhrmann added that they'd worked with Holly's House of Hope.

Julian clarified that the reason that Madison Co. was brought in was that many CILs had expressed a lack of success in job placement, so they thought to tap Madison Co. to get

some feedback on how they've gone about job placements. Fuhrmann added that one of his personal frustrations is that he has spoken regarding their work coast to coast and it has yet to be replicated to his knowledge for various reasons.

Knauf asked what DRS's involvement was. Fuhrmann responded that they funded STEP.

Tarkowski asked for clarification, since all AJCs (American Job Center) have different names, if they were an AJC. Fuhrmann responded in the affirmative.

Helbig asked if they were available for support. Ladd encouraged everyone to reach out to her with questions.

Meg Murphy pointed out that a similar project is [Project Search](#).

DISCUSSION QUESTION: ARE THERE ANY BARRIERS YOU'VE ENCOUNTERED IN TERMS OF WBL?

Tarkowski mentioned transportation. Helbig asked if Madison Co. had any experience with working in rural counties. Fuhrmann responded that Bond County and Jersey County are both rural. Ladd added that transportation solutions vary by case. Family has been the biggest support.

Helbig asked Madison Co. if they had experience working in areas where there isn't a lot of employment available. Ladd responded that they hadn't, but that they had supplied individuals with bicycles to get to the bus station. That isn't the answer for everyone.

Christina Irland asked if they had worked with any faith-based CBOs. What sort of liability coverage would they need? Ladd responded that when she worked for CRPs, liability was a huge concern. For example, they couldn't initiate a rideshare discussion between two individuals, as they would be held liable.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR ORGS THAT HAVE BEEN CHALLENGING TO WORK WITH?

Fuhrmann added that they have found the most success with employer who have personal investments in disability employment.

Ladd stated that orgs with unions present the most challenges. They've run with the message: "If they stay, you'll have another union member."

Ladd also recommended that if an employer begins to make a bias known – especially if that bias is coming from the workers on the ground doing the training – abandon the

outreach. The C-Suite can be bought in, but if the people on the ground aren't, training will be impossible.

Ladd also added that they have found the most success when the participant is flexible with what their career path could be.

FINAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Julian asked that participants send success stories. A template will be created to help give some structure. Knauf added that it doesn't have to be a customer success. It could be an in-road, for example, with an employer.

The next meeting will be virtual on November 18 from 10 am – 12 pm. Tarkowski asked that there be a section on the outcomes from the quality of life surveys. Julian added that if anyone would like other items added to the agenda or to volunteer their location to host, to reach out to her.

Kuriniac adjourned the meeting.