

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) convened a virtual meeting via ZOOM on Tuesday February 18, 2021.

Attendance

Council: Dora Easterling, Denise Wardle, Sandi Klink, Clarissa Williams, Jack Spencer, Edward Mitchell, Nicole Craig, Rhonda Crenshaw, Grayson Jennings.

Public: Beth James, Brandon Brown, Katherine Moore, Janie Hadley, Cindy Miles DRS Liaison, Lisa Cepparello as sign language interpreter, Kathy Foley, Brooke Rodgers, Mark Woolfall, Ben Schwartzman, Cheryl Zuckerman VR

Welcome

Chair Sandi Klink called meeting to order at 9:04 am Central time. She welcomed attendees and thanked them for attending virtually. SILC Council roll was taken, and visitors recognized by Chair call. Dora Easterling introduced guest speaker Ben Schwartzman from Vanderbilt.

Ben Schwartzman facilitated a questions period with an open conversation with entire group concerning youth transitions. He explained he has been awarded a one-year grant from ACL through Vanderbilt-Kennedy Center to look at current transition models and practices. The goal is to create whole community transition models. Specifically looking at ages 14-25 with concern in transition from High school to employment or post-secondary education, from living at home to living in the community and from pediatric to adult health care. Ben had 3 questions to gather info from our group.

Discussion Question Notes – SILC

1. Transition Barriers

- What do you see as the biggest gaps or barriers in your local communities that are preventing smooth transitions to adult life?
- Transition guidance/trainings developed for parents and families
- Families don't always know how to let go; encourage independence, to make their own decisions and develop their own goals
- Transportation; difficult especially in rural areas; difficult to use, have to make arrangements far ahead of time, does not support employment;
- Housing; lack of affordable, accessible, and safe housing, particularly in rural areas; consumers afraid to live in particular housing situations due to safety
- Community leaders opposed to transition housing
- Lack of job opportunities
- Restrictions on job coaches, limitations on number of hours job coach is able to work, inclusive work settings
- Lack of communication and collaboration between agencies and the school system; some agencies not able to get foot in the door in school system; not a high priority for school to share independent living resources/philosophy
- Lack of communication between VR in high schools and what SILC centers do in high schools; potentially duplicating their services
- Lack of trust between parents and agencies; parents think independent living is trying to take their children away;

- Lack of room for failure for individuals as they're learning to be more independent, not able to learn from mistakes
- COVID making communication/collaboration more difficult
- Pre-ETS program credential requirements (master's degrees) seemed to exclude services CILs could provide; CILs that are involved with schools are not compensated for it, comes out of their own funds; laws in Tennessee more restrictive about credentials than other states
- Systemic problems at the top-level; collaboration between state departments, are not knowledgeable about independent living services and importance
- Families that depend on the SSI income from individuals living at home; think CILs work will take their check away

2. Transition Solutions

- What could be done in local communities to help overcome some of these barriers?
- What are some ideas for new supports, or ways to improve already existing services, to help individuals with IDD and their families experience smoother transition?
- Live out loud academy
- Providing trainings for families in transition
- Collaboration between agencies, partnerships at the state level, and at the local level
- Follow through on initiatives
- TRC Smyrna – as an exemplary resource for learning independence skills, then model was changed
- Educating youth and changing culture to help individuals understand their worth and value
- Independent living awareness campaign – to educate the public, success stories, via social media
- Communication and collaboration have been improving; aim to collaborate with both schools and local community resources, establish new relationships, work on it constantly because of the consistent changing of staff
- Student nights, transition conferences – as ways to educate community and build collaborations; once a month they attend transition fairs/parent nights to get to meet the community and increase public awareness
- Educating (early) parents about what independent living is; get message out as early as possible; STEP works on parent communication with students about their goals, helps parents get on the same page with what their students want
- STEP is a great partner, statewide, have good relationships with school systems and VR, trusted relationships with parents and families – Karen Harrison at STEP
- Incentive for parents/families to actively participate in helping children live independently; instead of waiting until it is too late; some sort of transition income/fund for the family as child moves toward independent living
- Increase access to assistive technology; a ton of money out there right now from MCOs for assistive tech
- Educating parents about benefits, pay from work being more beneficial than the SSI check
- Educating families/everyone about supported decision making being the first choice, not conservatorship, as early as possible
- Dream building – what's important to you, what supports do you need to reach your goals

- Next Steps Conference being virtual; moving forward making more things virtual increases access
- Transportation – promoting mobility managers and increasing their presence in the state, social media campaign, myths about transportation not being safe
- Increased Assistive technology could reduce need for transportation

3. Current Person-Centered Planning Practices

- How could person centered planning be better integrated across service systems?
- How would you recommend that we gather information about current person-centered planning practices in Tennessee? Both at the state, and local levels.
- CILs could be go-to training agency on PCP; could train state agencies; help professionals understand what it is and what it can do to truly empower individuals
- Partnership with VR would be an important component of better person-centered planning; VR was supposed to require CILs to provide PCP training for individual consumers, but only got a handful of referrals
- PCP is very individualized, some of the processes take time, more investments of time than some people want to make;
- Educating people and providers about what PCP is and why it's important; figuring out how to do that in an effective way to make sure individual's needs are met
- Portland Gathering – focused on person centered planning
- Statewide PCP good goal to have but not realistic; hard to get everyone to function the same way; CILs are able to tailor their services to the culture of the areas they serve
- CILs joining different boards, committees, coalitions, advocacy groups to help change philosophies and increasing PCP; good way to educate the community
- Learning about PCP practices
 - Don't send a survey, do focus groups, include program participants, speaking one on one with people instead of surveys; agencies that want to do it instead of having to do it
 - Examples of good PCP practices: STEP

Minutes

Council reviewed minutes from October meeting. Denise Wardle pointed out Lisa Suttles name was misspelled on page one. Sandi Klink had a comment regarding MCIL report, lunch with the boss is every Monday, not every day. A motion was made by Jack Spencer to approve the minutes as amended and Clarissa Williams seconded. Motion passed unanimously through show of hands with the exception of Council members who did not have a camera and they gave verbal vote.

Treasurer's Report

FY 2021 Budget/Financials

Denise Wardle presented the first 4 months of FY 2021 financials. Denise said that the SILC was on track with most spending, nothing unusual was spent. Denise stated because of COVID-19 there will be travel money to decide what to do with. She said we should be thinking about a plan. NCIL is virtual, SILC Congress was cancelled. Dora stated she would check on APRIL Conference progress. No other questions or comments. Clarissa Williams made motion to approve the treasurer's report as presented

and Edward Mitchell seconded. Motion passed unanimously through raising of hands or member vote in chat.

Director Report:

The SPIL update: Dora Easterling reported on the 1st quarter of the new SPIL that went into effect October 1, 2020. Dora Easterling stated she knows it is a 19-page report but there were so many things to report about the great work the CILs are doing. She stated that she made a shorter version that concentrates on SPIL goals and will show the numbers progressing throughout the year. She also pointed out that as the year progressed, there was a sharp and alarming increase with consumers having issues with food security.

SPIL Monitoring: Dora Easterling stated that Cindy Miles from VR sent out the SPIL monitoring tool. This tool was sent to the CILS and asked if there were any questions concerning the tool.

SILC Insurance changes: Dora Easterling stated that the SILC had to leave the health insurance plan in 2018 when there were no employees to insure. That caused a 2-year penalty for using the State insurance Group. At the end of that penalty time, it was discovered there were law changes in 2015 that no longer allowed the SILC to be eligible for the State Group Insurance. The SILC purchased insurance for the Director through a broker.

DDH: Dora Easterling stated DDH (Disability Day on the Hill) is coming up and would be virtual. She stated she sent the Council information on getting involved with DDH with Tennessee Disability Coalition and The Tennessee Disability Alliance.

SILC Collaboration: The SILC is building many collaborations and is in collaboration with the Disability Policy and Alliance. She said it was very eye opening. She stated she is sending a SILC monthly newsletter to the Council to encapsulate what the SILC is doing and what is coming up. She stated the newsletter talked about the outreach efforts of late reaching out to the entire 112th General Assembly and County Health Departments statewide.

Old Business: The October new business concerned time frame changes for members in the bylaws to meet federal requirements. Voted and approved in October, Changes were submitted to all parties.

New Business: Sandi Klink referred to Dora Easterling who stated that Jack Spencer wanted to discuss the Face of I L. A campaign where CILs could release success stories in a media campaign. Jack also wanted to see if there was any interest in a SILC socialization hour. Denise Wardle asked what a social media campaign would look like. Jack Spencer stated that articles could be on websites, social media, and other areas. Denise Wardle made a motion to start a committee for Social Media with Jack as Chair of committee and also to have Edward Mitchell on the committee. Rhonda Crenshaw and Greyson Jennings volunteered for the committee. Rhonda Crenshaw seconded the motion, and it was voted unanimously to begin the committee.

CIL Directors Reports:

dRC: Katherine Moore reported dRC is still delivering food, PPE, hygiene items to consumers. dRC has a new partnership with Tennessee Wesleyan University. They have master's level II Field Work

Students under supervision of a licensed occupational therapist; can provide therapy to dRC consumers without a medical referral and it is free of charge. dRC will receive 4 OT Masters level students for 3 three months, Jan., Feb. and March. And get 2 OT Master's level students for April-June. Also, through the University of Tennessee Imagine program; dRC has started a youth legislative advocacy committee so that youth can take a virtual Advocacy Workshops along with faculty at UT. They will participate with DDH. With a grant from the City of Knoxville, dRC can talk with special education teachers from the schools and purchase equipment needed in the classrooms. dRC has partnered with Regions Bank, the bank will provide money to start a local disability awareness campaign in Knoxville to educate the community on the I L philosophy, accessible parking, employment, inclusive education. dRC has a YouTube channel and looking to hire a video person to help with educational segments. dRC has a new website in the works that will replace the website that disappeared (Drctn.org). It has an interactive youth blog, dRC will revitalize Access Knoxville Program and have the survey online for people to have. This website will post all positive results. dRC also has a certified CPR instructor on staff, so dRC can start having and charging for CPR classes as well.

Empower Tennessee: Brandon Brown reported the Empower Tennessee is continuing to focus quite a bit on technology because the need is showing up on their Consumer Needs Assessments. People need access to internet services, laptops, and tablets. Empower Tennessee with secured funding in different areas inclusive of CARES dollars have been able to respond. Empower Tennessee continues service coordination, system navigation with consumers with resources that exist and filling in the gaps where there is not a resource available. Empower Tennessee is finishing up the planning stages for the youth leadership academy, dates and applications forthcoming. It will be a statewide event. Empower Con was last year, and it went well with people from across the country joining in. Empower Tennessee has already penciled it in again for next October. Empower is hoping for a live and virtual event for greater participation. The CIL is also continuing to focus with housing issues, (inclusionary housing) and looking to secure funding to help with those efforts. They hired a new I R coordinator (Roxanna) who has been a fabulous addition to the team. Empower Tennessee is targeting to reopen the office this summer if science dictates it is safe.

TARP: Denise Wardle reported that TARP is continuing to work satellite from their homes. There is one person in the office everyday to take care of handing out DME, PPE, and food cards. TARP has had 246 new consumers this billing year and they had almost 1000 goals, they have met almost 900 of these goals. There have been 550 assistive technology requests which there have been 476 provided. TARP has given out over 200 food cards, PPE bags, assistive technology to keep people connected. TARP has started on emergency preparedness with COVID information. TARP has started targeted outreach mailing out 300 Spanish handouts with COVID information. Staff who wanted received COVID vaccinations. TARP has done many virtual events (recreational, life skills, peer support) TARP is partnering with JCIL and that is expanding relationships.

JCIL: Beth James reported the some of the events that have been partnered with TARP includes book clubs, Thanksgiving cooking class, Christmas movie night, air-fryer class, biweekly Fitbit classes. This will be a 3-month class to encourage activity. JCIL had an Easter Wreath class with great success. TARP and JCIL will do a virtual tour of Jerusalem. JCIL will have a virtual Spring into Spring with Master Gardeners. JCIL is working with local Emergency Management to have online trainings, JCIL would like to video those to share in the future. JCIL is usually the spot for Down Syndrome summer camp. But the board has not opened the building, so this year they are going to an actual camp. JCIL

will be providing tablets to the campers so they can have virtual trainings. JCIL has been busy with CARES dollars giving out 504 food cards, almost 400 wellness kits that include thermometers, O2 meters, gloves, etc. (\$100.00 value). JCIL has given out over 300 kindles and iPads (the majority have been iPads) and computers. JCIL is also looking into partnering with Bridges for online GED classes. JCIL invites all to join in and be a part of what is happening. Beth states she is looking forward to making these opportunities statewide. She also states that staff have gotten their first round of COVID vaccinations.

MCIL: Sandi Klink reported she has been busy with admin things that had to wait for her. She says one of MCILs great successes is a statewide program entitles Navigating Your New Normal. This is a 7-time class event and the first meeting had 33 participants from across the state. Edward Mitchell from JCIL is helping. The classes are every Wednesday for 2 hours and covers a great amount of information with great resources. Sandi Klink reported that in their Monday Lunch with the Boss meetings they have discussed the many ways to support the SPIL and use virtual tools to do outreach and share skills with others. Hope Johnson from Empower Tennessee will be doing a social security workshop.

DSU Membership Report, DSE Report & Update:

Cindy Miles stated everyone is so busy and is so wonderful to hear the wonderful initiatives and services going on across the state. She also thanked CIL Directors for turning in quarterly reports to her and stated she does read them. She said the work the I L Network is doing is certainly impactful across the state. Cindy Miles said that the nominees are still in the review process and if there is any word, she will notify the SILC of any changes.

Paula Knisley has retired, and VR has hired Julie Johnson who came on board 1/19/2021. Cindy Miles read her bio and stated she would pass it on to the I L Network. Clarence H. Carter is the new TN Dept. of Human Services Commissioner. Mr. Carter also started 1/19/2021 and she read his bio.

Other VR numbers:

VR applications: SFY: 2,335 individuals apply for VR services FFY: January-379

Active customer count: currently 7,618 individuals participating in VR services

Average Caseload size: Region 1-9: 115 & Region 10-11: 87.6

Successful Closures count: SFY: Since July 827 individuals achieved their employment outcome

Average wage per hour: \$ 13.06

Average hours worked per week: 32.04

Announcements/Public Comment:

Jack Spencer stated his are has a new police chief and a new sheriff and stated he will continue in the role of accessibility consultant. Jack is going to join Board of Henry County Arts Council and they have asked him how to make arts program accessible.

Edward Mitchell stated that JCIL and TARP have started the Fitbit group and anyone who has a Fitbit can join by emailing him and he will add. Dora Easterling thanked everyone for coming and participating today.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 11:29 a.m. CST. Edward Mitchell made the motion to adjourn. Nicole Craig seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.



Jack Spencer SILC Secretary

4-26-21

Date