



IndependenceFirst: Programs and Services

Dear IndependenceFirst Consumer:

We hope that you are satisfied with the services that you are currently receiving. We would like to introduce you to some of the other programs and services available to you as an IndependenceFirst consumer. We have attached a list for you to review as well as contact information.

If you have any questions regarding these additional programs and services, please contact either:

Phillip Corona, Information & Referral Specialist, at 226-8377; Email: pcorona@independencefirst.org

or

Autumn Misko, Information & Referral Specialist, at 226-8387; email: amisko@independencefirst.org

Attachment



IndependenceFirst

The Resource For People With Disabilities

Below is a description of the **Programs and Services** offered at IndependenceFirst, to individuals with disabilities. Should you be interested in any of them, please use the contact information given.

IndependenceFirst proudly serves our nation's Veterans.

AODA (Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse) Project for Persons who are Deaf, Deaf-Blind of Hard of Hearing

Staff can help people who need residential or outpatient treatment, mutual support/recovery groups (such as Alcoholics, Narcotics and/or Cocaine Anonymous support groups). Staff can provide coordination of language appropriate, accessible services; provide support and education information, assistive listening device(s) available for loan, prevention resources, etc.

For more information contact: **Denise Johnson, AODA Project Coordinator, at (414) 226-8319 TTY, or (414) 937-5910 V/VP. Email: djohnson@independencefirst.org**

Assistive Technology

IndependenceFirst has information available on products and services regarding assistive technology and adaptive equipment. Over 700 assistive technology devices are available for trial use by persons with disabilities. Gain information about your equipment needs by scheduling an assistive technology assessment. Learn about funding resources available.

For more information contact: **Cindi Pichler, Lead Assistive Technology Specialist, at (414) 226-8385 V/Relay. Email: cpichler@independencefirst.org**

Benefits and Employment Program

The IndependenceFirst **Benefits and Employment Program** can assist individuals with disabilities with eliminating the barriers they face to become employed.

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Project

The IndependenceFirst WIPA Project is available to individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits who are interested in becoming employed. Our primary focus is to assist individuals with disabilities with making informed choices about working.

Employment Program (DVR fee-for-service)

The IndependenceFirst Employment Program provides services to assist individuals with disabilities with obtaining their employment goals. An Employment Consultant can provide a person with the resources needed to conduct a job search, secure a position and successfully maintain employment. Adult and High School Job Clubs are also offered through the Employment Program.

Benefit Program (DVR/DHS fee-for-service)

The IndependenceFirst Benefit Program provides services to assist individuals who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) with understanding how working will affect their benefits. A Benefits Specialist can provide a thorough analysis of the benefits and services received by a person with a disability and the effect that income from employment will have on continued eligibility and the changes it may cause in payments.

Benefits Offset National Demonstration Project (BOND)

The Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND) is a demonstration project through the Social Security Administration (SSA). BOND will test different program policies regarding the treatment of earnings for current Social Security Disability Insurance.

MAPP/HEC Program

A way for people with disabilities not yet employed to enroll in the Medicaid Purchase Plan (MAPP). To enroll in HEC (Health and Employment Counseling) an individual must have an Employment Plan and meet with a Regional MAPP/HEC Specialist.

For more information contact: **Kathleen Meisner-Altman, Benefits and Employment Services Program Director, at (414) 226-8331 V/Relay. Email: kaltman@independencefirst.org**

Central City Branch Office

A central city branch office has been established to provide culturally-sensitive independent living services to at-risk central city residents with disabilities. Training opportunities are provided in the areas of money, home and time management, communication skills, how to build self-esteem, how to set goals and make good decisions, dealing with conflict and anger, stress management, assertiveness, computer training, just to name a few. Staff assists individuals to transition out of nursing homes into the community. Adaptive sports and recreation programming opportunities are available. We assist individuals in hiring a personal care attendant. An emphasis is placed on youth and those who have been the victims of violence.

Through an Earmark Grant, funded from the Department of Labor, employment assistance for qualified individuals with disabilities residing in the following zip code areas: 53205, 53206, 53208, 53210 and 53212, is available.

For more information contact: **Brenda Harmon, Central City Project Coordinator, at (414) 226-8339 V/Relay. Email: bharmon@independencefirst.org**

The Peer Power Program is a unique peer-based program designed to support high school students with disabilities to plan for their lives after high school. Members develop leadership and other skills to become better prepared to transition from high school into the adult world of employment, college and community living.

For more information on joining or beginning a peer power group, contact **Harvey Ross, ILS Coordinator**, at (414) 226-8127 V/Relay. Email: hross@independencefirst.org.

Computer Recycling Program

IndependenceFirst assists persons with disabilities in obtaining a free refurbished computer. Individuals receiving computers are offered basic computer training as well as instruction on set-up of the computer and use of the Internet. Persons with disabilities are eligible to receive a free computer and must meet the income eligibility.

For more information or to receive an application, leave a message at: (414) 226-8141 V/Relay.

Independent Living Skills Training

Training opportunities are provided in the areas of money, home and time management, communication skills, how to build self-esteem, how to set goals and make good decisions, dealing with conflict and anger, stress management, assertiveness, computer training, just to name a few. Staff assists individuals to transition out of nursing homes into the community, or to hire a personal care attendant.

For more information contact: **Marian Ecklund, ILS Program Assistant Director**, at (414) 226-8310 TTY or (414) 937-5909 V/VP. Email: mecklund@independencefirst.org

Information and Referral Services and The Resource Center

Information and Referral is available to individuals with disabilities, family members and to the community-at-large regarding a variety of topics such as transportation, finding a sign language interpreter, financial resources, locating accessible and affordable housing, community resources, and access to other social services. Staff also assists individuals that are in domestic violence or sexual assault situations connect with the appropriate community resources.

The Resource Center welcomes persons with disabilities and the community to visit the numerous community resources. A computer equipped with Internet access is available for use.

For more information contact: **Autumn Misko, Lead Resource Specialist**, at (414) 226-8387 V/Relay. Email: amisko@independencefirst.org

Peer Support Services

Peer support is based on a mentoring concept, where a person with a disability provides information, assistance, support, and/or serves as a role model for another person. Support groups are available.

For more information on receiving peer support or becoming a volunteer peer supporter, contact: **Leah Simmons, ILS Lead Coordinator, at (414) 937-5913 V/VP.**
Email: lsimmons@independencefirst.org

Something to Talk About is a support group for men with Spinal Cord Injuries.

For more information about this group contact: **Harvey Ross, at (414) 226-8127 V/Relay.**
Email: hross@independencefirst.org

Personal Assistance Services Programs

1. **The Attendant Referral Program** provides recruitment and referral resources for persons with disabilities who want to hire and manage their own attendant. Training is provided to the individual and to the attendant. Participants of this program are paid by the individual with a disability.

For more information contact: **Jennifer Peters, Attendant Referral Program & ILS Specialist, at (414) 395-8422 V/VP.** Email: jpeters@independencefirst.org

2. **Personal Assistance Services**, this program provides personal care services for individuals with disabilities with RN supervision and case management for participants. Participants of this program are funded through Title 19.

For more information contact: **PAS Referral Line, at (414) 226-8142 V/Relay.**

Sports and Recreational Services

This program offers integrated and adaptive sports opportunities for children, youth and adults such as basketball, softball, ice-hockey, bowling, hunting, fishing and waterskiing.

For more information contact: **Kathy Mohar, Sports/Rec Coordinator, at (414) 226-8375 V/Relay.** Email: kmohar@independencefirst.org

Quad Rugby is a competitive wheelchair rugby program for adults.

For more information or if you are interested in playing on our team, **The Milwaukee Iron**, please contact: **Harvey Ross, at (414) 226-8127 V/Relay.** Email: hross@independencefirst.org

Systems Advocacy and Self Advocacy

This program offers assistance with advocating for your rights and assistance with advocating with you to eliminate barriers or discrimination issues you may be experiencing. Learn about disability rights legislation and voting in Wisconsin. Want to team up with others to "change the system?" If so, you may be interested in joining a Consumer Advocacy Team at *IndependenceFirst!*

For more information contact: **Diana Sullivan, Disability Rights/Access Specialist,** at (414) 226-8383 V/Relay. Email: dsullivan@independencefirst.org

Veterans Independence Initiative

The purpose of this project is to provide our vets with information and training regarding their independent living needs throughout our service area, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha counties with a focus on independent living skills training, assistive technology and home modifications.

Our goal is to provide the following services to veterans with disabilities: assessment of independent living needs, evaluation of assistive technology, equipment or device needs, and home modification needs such as ramps, doorways widened, bathroom/kitchen remodeling, etc. so that accessibility is improved. Our services are free-of-charge.

For more information contact: **Phillip Corona, ILS Coordinator,** at (414) 226-8377 V/Relay. Email: pcorona@independencefirst.org

Volunteer Program

If you are interested in volunteering in the community look no further! *IndependenceFirst* invites you to check out the many volunteer opportunities available. Make a difference: Volunteer!

For more information contact: **Charlotte Zarnoth, Volunteer Coordinator,** at (414) 226-8114 V/Relay. Email: czarnoth@independencefirst.org

WisLoan and Telework Programs

The WisLoan Program is an alternative loan program for Wisconsin citizens with disabilities who desire to purchase assistive devices or services. Assistive devices include items such as: hearing aids, vehicles with modifications, computers, electric scooters and home modifications such as a ramp or a modification to a bathroom. The program focuses on ability to repay the loan and perfect credit is not necessary to obtain a loan. To apply for a loan you must be over 18 years old, be a Wisconsin resident, purchasing assistive devices or making an accessible home modification and either have a disability or be purchasing the equipment for a person with a disability.

The Wisconsin Telework Loan Program is a statewide, alternative loan program that allows Wisconsin residents with disabilities to purchase computers and other equipment needed to start a home-based business or work for an employer out of their home.

For more information, contact: **Patti Kraemer, WisLoan Coordinator,** at (414) 226-8306 V/Relay. Email: pkraemer@independencefirst.org

Youth Leadership Program

The Youth Leadership program strives to empower young persons with disabilities to reach their goals and live independently through the promotion of youth leadership and self-advocacy. In addition, the program provides guidance and support for successful transition for young persons with disabilities from the school environment to individual educational, employment, recreational and housing goals. Lastly, the program provides information to schools and parents to better help students with disabilities transition successfully and provides support, mentoring and leadership opportunities to young people with disabilities.

The youth program offers **Boundaries & Relationship Safety** classes on the topics of boundaries and relationships. **“Go Ahead, Make My Day”** is a one (1) session class that covers setting boundaries, healthy relationships and community safety. **“Safe Relationships, Safe Places”** is a five (5) part class which covers in-depth – the topics of boundaries, healthy relationships, dating and sexuality as well as community safety.

The youth program offers **GirlsFirst**, a peer/support group for girls with disabilities of any kind aging from 8 – 21. Groups take place in schools and at IndependenceFirst in the summer.

National Disability Mentoring Day is based on the “Take Your Daughter To Work Day.” The National Disability Mentoring Day is held on the 3rd Wednesday of October each year throughout the USA and is coordinated by IndependenceFirst for our service area. Middle school, high school and college students are matched with area employers for a career exploration/job shadow day in their career field of interest.

For more information contact: **Alie Kriofske-Mainella, Youth Leadership Specialist,**
at (414) 226-8112 V/Relay. Email: akriofske@independencefirst.org

