



# **New Community Opportunities Center at ILRU Presents...**

## ***Creating and Operating Services to Support Youth in Transitioning to an Employment Goal***

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***Presenters:***

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**Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE)**



**Living Independence For Everyone of Mississippi**

*Dedicated to the Empowerment  
of Individuals with Disabilities*

# LIFE and Youth Employment

As a center for independent living, LIFE does not have a specific focus on employment for youth with disabilities.

- View it as primarily VR's role
- Work collaboratively with VR
- Include vocational/employment goals as part of core independent living planning

# Including Vocational/Employment Goals as Part of IL Planning

- Many but not all consumers have an employment goal
- Being able to work is an independent living goal
- Employment referrals are the responsibility of the Independent Living *Transition* Specialists

## Independent Living *Transition* Specialist

- Has the same job roles and responsibilities as an Independent Living Specialist *except*,
- Provides independent living services to individuals with disabilities under the age of 21
- Part of their salary is paid by the contract between LIFE and the Children's Medical Program/State Health Dept.

# Using Core Independent Living Services to Support Employment: Advocacy

- Teaching self-advocacy skills to youth with disabilities, encouraging them to understand their rights under applicable laws and, advocating on their behalf, when necessary, to ensure that they are receiving all services available
  - This would include ensuring that youth know and understand their rights and responsibilities as employees & potential employees under the ADA

# Using Core Independent Living Services to Support Employment: Skills Training

- Instruction to develop independent living skills in areas such as budget management, personal care management, self-advocacy, and training necessary for living in the community and participating in community activities.
  - Can include training on dressing appropriately in a work environment, how to meet with and speak to a potential employer
  - Discussing with the consumer what supports they will need to be employed, such as transportation to and from the job

# Using Core Independent Living Services to Support Employment: Peer Support

- Counseling, teaching, information sharing and other similar kinds of contact provided to consumers by other individuals with disabilities
  - Peer support encounters often include discussions about consumer's dreams and goals in life, including employment
  - Transition Specialist might share personal experiences with being employed and how they became employed, what they do for a living, how they made the decision to work in independent living, etc.

# Using Core Independent Living Services to Support Employment: I & R

- Providing consumers and their support system with information regarding resources available to them in their community, ensuring that consumers apply for available services & assisting them to follow up on application process.
  - Primarily use this core service in assisting consumers with reaching their employment goals
  - Excellent working relationship with Department of Rehabilitation Services in Mississippi which has the responsibilities of assisting individuals with disabilities to find and maintain employment
  - LIFE staff frequently refer individuals to VR for employment counseling; explain how the VR system works and occasionally make follow-up calls on their behalf

## Relationship with VR

- LIFE IL Transition Specialists are trained on the various VR programs that serve people with disabilities in employment.
- We do not have a formal MOU with VR, however, LIFE staff work collaboratively with the counselors, particularly in their supported employment program
- Referrals are made directly to the counselor serving the consumer's area and then provide follow up
- The Executive Director of LIFE, the LIFE Transition Specialists and staff from VR serve on several various committees together.

# LIFE Offices and Staff

## Six offices throughout MS

- Tupelo (northeast)
- Greenwood (delta)
- Jackson (central)
- McComb (southwest)
- Hattiesburg (south central)
- Biloxi (gulf coast)

## Staff and Volunteers

- 25 staff members
- 20 AmeriCorps members
- 12 Board members
- Approximately 500 volunteers per year





## Contact Information

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# New Community Opportunities Center at ILRU



This program is part of a series of trainings and other activities provided to the IL field by the New Community Opportunities Center at ILRU. The project's purpose is to assist CILs in developing self-sustaining programs that support community alternatives to institutionalization for individuals of any age, and youth transition from school to post-secondary education, employment, and community living.



# New Community Opportunities Attribution

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