

New Community Opportunities Center at ILRU Presents...

Creating and Operating Services to Support Youth in Transitioning to Community-Based Living

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Presenters:

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Living Independence for Everyone



*Dedicated to the Empowerment
of Individuals with Disabilities*



Understanding the LIFE Organization

Unlike most states, there is only **one** private, non-profit Title VII, Part C center for independent living in Mississippi (LIFE)

- LIFE has six offices around the state
- All but one office is staffed with at least two Independent Living Specialists
- Four of the six offices have one Independent Living ***Transition*** Specialist

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.

Training

- All LIFE staff receive the same training on hire
 - Focuses on IL philosophy and services
 - Administrative items, i.e., policy and procedures
- All LIFE staff are trained quarterly at staff training
- As opportunities present themselves and funds allow, staff are registered for and attend training specific to their needs. Each year LIFE Transition Specialists attend training offered by the Parent Training and Information Center, the State Dept. of Education, the Institute for Disability Studies and more.



Core Independent Living Services: 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
 - Requires developing a relationship with the individual and maintaining regular contact
 - Sometimes requires skills in gently persuading parents or other primary caregivers to “let go”



Core Independent Living Services: 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.
 - Usually conducted by the Transition Specialist one on one in the consumer's home
 - Occasionally LIFE staff and/or our AmeriCorps members schedule training at one of the LIFE offices and bring in an expert on work incentives or pass plans, etc.



Core Independent Living Services: Skills Training, cont'd.

- Skills Training is a core service and therefore part of the staff members' regular job responsibilities.
- Funded by Title VII funds or travel funds included in the CMP contract.



Core Independent Living Services: Peer Support

- Counseling, teaching, information sharing and other similar kinds of contact provided to consumers by other individuals with disabilities
 - Follows the same guidelines as skills training (sometimes it may be hard to distinguish between the two).



Core Independent Living Services: Information and Referral

- Providing consumers and their support system with information regarding the resources available to them in their community, ensuring that consumers apply for available services and assisting them to follow up on application process.
 - The IL Transition Specialist must have knowledge and understanding of all available resources and eligibility criteria.
 - Specialist should have good working relationship themselves with other agencies and organizations.

The Whole Person

- The most important thing to keep in mind when assisting someone to transition, is that everyone is an individual and what works for one will not work for another.
- This is why a “discovery” process is important. It’s not enough to ensure they have the basics, i.e., housing, transportation, personal care assistance.
- Social networking, friends, community integration – all contribute to a successful transition and a good quality of life in the community. Employment, church, recreational opportunities, attendance at events, dinner and movie with friends – all important.

Why LIFE is Successful

- Our success is due to our having a specific program focused on youth.
- Having young staff members who serve only consumers under the age of 21 allows the staff to concentrate their efforts on youth-oriented services.
- Maintaining integration among the LIFE staff however is what works to ensure integration of the youth into all aspects of the center. All LIFE staff are involved in coordinating and participating in events, thus we ensure that youth are invited to and involved in recreational opportunities, community sporting events, fund raisers, etc.



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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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