

# IL-NET

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## Empowering Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities: The Role of the Peer Model of CILs

### *Overview of Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL)*

Presenter:

Sarah Launderville

Executive Director

Vermont Center for Independent Living

# Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL)

- “Project Outreach Campaign”—1978
- Asked 750 Vermonters with disabilities:  
What do you need to be independent?
- Responses included: home modifications, assistive technology, socialization, connections to other people who have disabilities, housing, information, personal attendant services, transportation, washing machine

- Founded in 1979 Statewide Nonprofit
  - Original bylaws—people who have physical disabilities
  - Eventually changed to be cross-disability rights
- Today still operate core services of IL
  - Peer Advocacy Counseling
  - Information, Referral & Assistance
  - Independent Living Skills Training
  - Individual & Systems Advocacy
  - Nursing Home & Youth Transition

# VCIL—Additional Programs & Services

- AgrAbility
- Technical Assistance (Disability Related Laws)
- Home Access Program
- Meals on Wheels for people with disabilities under age of 60
- Sue Williams Freedom Fund: Assistive Technology
- Wellness Workforce Coalition
- VT Interpreter Referral Service

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## **Empowering Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities: The Role of the Peer Model in CILs**

### *Overview of Northeast Independent Living Program (NILP)*

#### **Presenters:**

**Ruthie Poole, Transformation Center**

**Justin Brown, Northeast Independent Living Program**

# Northeast Independent Living Program (NILP)

- 1988 Charlie Carr, Executive Director of NILP, hired Pat Deegan, Psychiatric Survivor Activist
- Charlie and Pat got to know each other's stories
- Ruthie Poole and Jim Shaw as activist organizers
- Independent Living Exploration Group for people with Psychiatric Disabilities
- Lawrence Organizing Voices for Empowerment (LOVE)
- Organizing with the Saul Alinsky model
  - Immediate
  - Specific
  - Winnable

- NILP Executive Director recognizes need for “affinity” groups based on “Mad Pride” movement
  - We need to love ourselves before reaching out to others
  - Justice is “love distributed”
- Psychiatric Survivors not alone in need for affinity groups
  - Examples: Deaf Culture, Young Adults, etc.
- Personal Care Attendants (PCA) rate cuts
  - Psychiatric Survivors go to the State House as allies
  - Cross Disability organizing across affinity groups
  - Recognize and support affinity group leadership

## NILP, cont'd.

- Charlie & Pat secure small Department of Mental Health (DMH) pilot grant (\$60,000)
- This grows over time to \$130,000 from DMH Central Office
- Campaign for Written Informed Consent
- Annual No-Surrender Conference (1989 – 2009)
  - People with lived experience from clubhouses and day treatment programs
  - Workshops—discussions about stigma
  - Movie 1990 “Crazy People”—letter campaign
  - Share your talents music, poetry, art (\$5 recognition)

## NILP, cont'd. 2

- Peer-to-Peer Counseling Project
  - DMH-funded \$60k annually
  - Peer Counseling Curriculum
  - Drew Upon Samaritans “Be-Friending” Curriculum
  - 4 hours a week for \$50 monthly stipend
  - Another \$60k for outreach to the Latino Community
  - Bi-lingual and Bi-cultural peer counselors
  - Translated Curriculum to Spanish

## NILP, cont'd. 3

- Recovery Learning Communities (RLC) funded by DMH
  - Request for Response (RFR) for six RLCs statewide
  - NILP is only Independent Living Center to apply

# Recovery Learning Communities

From the Department of Mental Health website

- RLCs are consumer-run networks of self-help/peer support, information and referral, advocacy and training activities. Training in recovery concepts and tools, advocacy forums and social and recreational events are all part of what goes on in a Recovery Learning Community.

# Recovery Learning Communities, cont'd.

From the Department of Mental Health website (cont'd.)

- First and foremost, RLCs create significant culture change that shifts the focus on symptom management to a focus on promoting recovery, resilience, and wellness. RLCs also support consumers to take charge of their own recovery process. Emerging evidence shows that peer services and Peer Specialists speed a person's recovery, a key component of RLCs.

# Northeast Recovery Learning Community

- 52 Cities and Towns in Northeast Massachusetts
  - Covers about 4 CIL areas
  - Six “hubs” (satellite locations)
- DMH Cost Reimbursement Contract for \$575,000
- Eight full-time employees; Six part-time employees
- Peer “bridging” between state hospital and community
- Local peer-to-peer support groups
- “Recovery Through Community” Events
  - Social activities such as talent shows, music, etc.
  - Educational activities such as speakers and workshops

# Northeast Recovery Learning Community, cont'd.

- Resources
  - Handout: The Independent Living Movement and People with Psychiatric Disabilities: Taking Control Back Over Our Own Lives (1991) by Pat Deegan
  - Pat Deegan's Blog  
[www.patdeegan.com/blog](http://www.patdeegan.com/blog)
  - Pat Deegan's Recovery Library:  
[www.recoverylibrary.com](http://www.recoverylibrary.com)

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