Youth Transition: The Growing Role of Centers for Independent Living

Planning for Youth Work at Your CIL

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Needs Assessing

• A need means something that specifically relates to a particular group or community.
  • Do not make a broad assessment.
  - Ex: We need a youth program.
  - Ex: Youth 14-22 years old want/need us to create a skill-based group for youth.
Needs Assessing, cont’d.

What do youth with disabilities in your community need and want?

• Where do you find youth to ask?
• How and what do you ask them?
• How is it the same or different than what typical CIL consumers need and want?
• How is that the same or different than what youth without disabilities need and want?
Brainstorming

What’s the “Dream”

• What would you as an organization like to offer youth?
• What would you like to see youth get out of a CIL?
• What would you like to see youth give back to IL?
• Are there other stakeholders? (VR, transition teachers, employers…)
  • What do they see youth with disabilities needing?
Out of the Box Thinking
BEMNRU
Identifying Strengths/Assets

- Do you already have classes/activities that might appeal to youth?
- Are youth already accessing I & R?
- Do you already have youth peer mentors?
- What advocacy are you already providing for youth?
- What infrastructure do you already have that makes you accessible, exciting, and able to serve youth?
- Who do you know and how can they help?
- Who is already providing the services you identified that youth want and need?
Areas for Improvement

What are you missing?

- *What* does the CIL still need to achieve the dream?
- *Who* does the CIL still need to achieve the dream?
What if I am starting at Square 2?

• Pull out all those Evaluations and start digging in!
• Spend time as a team reviewing and evaluating what you have done so far including what you learn from the Evaluation Data (the youth!).
  • Like about your program?
  • Want to change about your program?
  • Like to add? Like to take a break from?
  • Are you achieving the outcomes you hoped for? Unexpected outcomes to look more into?
  • What identity groups and age groups of youth typically use your services? What groups would you like to see more of?
  • Do your staff feel like they have enough support and training in the program? If not, what do they need?
Programs

- Use evaluations to revise the programs you already have.
  - Add more activities
  - Take out or clarify concepts that are confusing
  - Adjust for barrier patterns (change hours, locations, facilitators, etc.)
- New programs—Expand into more specialized areas.
  - Healthy relationships, Disability pride and identity, travel training, soft skills, job placement, volunteerism, financial planning, problem solving skills for roommates, etc.
Expanding Consumer Groups in Your Existing Programs

- Pull out all those evaluations and start reading them!
  - Some programs will help you synthesize the data such as survey gizmo.
- Adapt your material for youth with ID, or different identity or cultural groups, working with at-risk youth in correctional institutions or foster systems.
- Create a diversity advisory group of youth who want to get more involved to do outreach, expansion, and adaptations.
- Join nonprofit organizations or other community groups to expand beyond typical disability partners.
Expanding into Fee-for-Service or Other Sustainability Plans

• Gather your evaluations and testimonials from youth and other stakeholders to show the need and the value.
• Research programs similar to yours and their price schedules.
• Update or create PR materials.
• Identify partners who could use your help.
  • VR, School Districts, DD Councils, Child Protective Services, group homes, state institutions like prisons.
    • Do they have funding? If you don’t ask, the answer is always no.
    • Are there grant opportunities that target these groups? (ex. Kellogg, Mitsubishi, Darden, Walmart, Motorola….)
Expanding Leadership Opportunities

• Hire youth on staff or offer opportunities for youth to try start-up programs on a trial basis at your CIL.

• Train youth to be active board members.

• Create internship opportunities.

• Encourage youth to get involved with national issues/organizations.

• Start a youth leadership forum with youth staff and planning committees.
Expanding Leadership Opportunities, cont’d.

• Have youth organize a disability pride event for your community, including finding sponsors.
• Help youth find other ways to give back, e.g. have a community give week where youth try volunteering for different organizations.
• Have a youth committee in charge of community awards like a good access is good business award or an Above and Beyond the ADA award.
• MORE!
Lessons Learned Along the Way

• Siloing youth programs.
• Tokenizing a youth staff or volunteer.
• Chasing money for the sake of chasing it.
• Forgetting the sustainability plan in the beginning.
• Forgetting the evaluation plan from the get go.
• Forgetting to evaluate as a team of staff.
• Intellectual property and ideas living in staff’s brains and not in their computers.
• Being everything to everyone… focus objectives.
• Rome wasn’t built in a day. We all started at step 1.
• Policies/procedures for safety of youth and staff.
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