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Disability, Diversity and Intersectionality  
in Centers for Independent Living

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Creating Supportive Organizational Culture and Infrastructure continued  
Presenters: Daisy Feidt, Reyma McCoy McDeid, Liz Sherwin, Jesse Bethke Gomez

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: So good afternoon, and welcome back, everybody.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: So I'm going to be talking about policies and procedures and infrastructure. Very important topic of conversation. Because as I believe Anita spoke about, we get in the habit of doing these trainings, these team‑builders, these strategic planning sessions, and investing time and energy and that, and then we walk away from that and then the work that we did gathers dust till the end of time, and doesn't necessarily get incorporated into the framework. And my argument is that that happens because the framework itself is creating a barrier, so that's what I'm going to talk about.

But before that, two things ‑‑

We've been kind of talking around -- do‑si‑doing a little bit -- and then briefly we very directly touched on privilege this morning. I want to return to that for a second, if that's okay with everybody. So, I stand before you all and I present as a very highly privileged person. I'm a light‑skinned African American lady, and with that comes the privilege of having proximity to whiteness, thanks to my white mother. And people who look like me have a history of experiencing benefits from our light skin and our more loosely textured hair.

I have had White people very up‑frontly tell me that they feel like I'm a safe Black person simply because of what I look like. So, there's privilege that comes with that. And that privilege comes at a price that is paid by unambiguously Black people who are oppressed by the same thing that gives me privilege.

And so, I fully own that privilege. I acknowledge that privilege, am not ashamed of that privilege, but I am committed to using that privilege to dismantle the system that benefits me and oppresses other people. And I stand before you with a bunch of other privileges.

Thin privilege. Some people might even say I have pretty privilege. I think I'm kind of funny‑looking, but whatever. And various other privileges. And so, that's juxtaposed with the fact that in actuality I'm a multiply marginalized person, so my life journey has been very quirky as a result of that. And so, some of you are wondering why is she talking about that when she's supposed to be talking about policies and procedures? What does that have to do with the price of tea in China? My argument to you is if you're feeling that way, if you're thinking that thought, that's okay, but that's a key sign that what I'm going to be talking about is something that you want to pay special attention to.

Because here's the deal: We talk about diversity, inclusion, intersectionality, all that stuff, as if it's in a silo removed from everything else. And that impacts infrastructure. It impacts strategic planning. It impacts how we approach intersectionality, because we see it as being this tangential auxiliary thing. Now we're going to do intersectionality. And now we're going to go over the budget, as if it's this separate unit.

My argument is that if you really, truly want to get on board with this intersectionality thing, it has to infuse everything that you do, and that might sound kind of exhausting to some people. But I'm telling you from my own experience that it's incredibly liberating, because it frees you up to think in terms of complete and utter inclusivity with regards to everything you do. And isn't that why we're here? I mean, isn't that what we purport ourselves to be -- inclusive? And always in the interest of advocating for disabled people?

Well, this is how you do it better. Through intersectionality.

The second thing, super‑important. Hasn't been mentioned yet and since this is my last time at the mic for this conference, I don't want us to leave without knowing that the person that coined the term "intersectionality," Kimberly Crenshaw, excuse me, Dr. Kimberly Crenshaw, is a black woman. And so, we have a Black woman to thank for this term "intersectionality." The reason why I bring that up is that I just got an email from a colleague who raised the question: Well, what definition of intersectionality are we working off of?

[ Laughter ]

I mean, yeah, which one are we working off of? And can we please use the one that requires me to do the least amount of work humanly possible?

[ Laughter ]

They didn't say that ‑‑

AUDIENCE: But yeah, yeah, mm‑hmm.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: My spidey sense told me that's where they were driving at. So, make life easy for everybody. Let's all work off of the definition of the woman that did the labor to create the term in the first place, Dr. Kimberly Crenshaw.

So, I just want to put that out there. So, 90‑second synopsis of what I talked about yesterday, because it's relevant to what I'm talking about today. So as we all know, CICIL has a long sob story, and in 2015, the organization basically presented the golden opportunity to completely reboot itself. So, the flip side of crisis is always opportunity, and so CICIL definitely seized the opportunity to utilize its clean slate and start over. And that's what we're going to be talking about with specific regard to the infrastructure.

And so, without further ado, I'm going to go through sort of before and after with regards to a few different things that pertain to CICIL. So CICIL's "before" mission statement was: To empower people with disabilities to lead barrier‑free lives.

Now, our updated mission statement is probably going to rankle a few feathers here. But our argument at CICIL is that a barrier‑free life is not necessarily an ideal that's rooted in reality. Life simply cannot exist without barriers for anybody. And so instead of working to support the people that we work with to lead barrier‑free lives, our mission is: To empower people with disabilities to be accountable in controlling their own lives. Barriers and warts and joys and sorrows and all, because that is life for everybody. And trying to support disabled people to lead some kind of idealized facsimile of life is not realistic, nor is it fair.

So that is our mission statement today, and again, yeah, it was revised to call on that truth that life without barriers is not a realistic thing. The other thing is that that statement was crafted with feedback from CICIL clients, particularly those who lead intersectional lives, and experience layers of diversity. And the thing that many of our multiply marginalized clients come to us and tell us is that the more marginalization they experience based on the intersections in their lives, the less the community and other support people see their independence as being a feasibility.

So, vision statement. Before 2015, we didn't have one. And so, when I came on board, one of the first things we did was craft the vision statement that you see here: A community that is inclusive of people with disabilities at every level, including leadership.

So one thing that we experience in Central Iowa, which I know to be pretty universal experience with regards to disability communities, is that particularly with regard to our sister providers who are not Independent Living Centers, we talk about choice and inclusion and all of these terms. But the meanings of the words kind of veer from the intention, and so a lot of disability organizations that are not led by disabled people will focus on inclusion or at least they think it's inclusion, but it's actually tokenization. Let's find somebody who visibly is disabled and add them to our board or let's create an advisory Council of a bunch of visibly disabled people and not actually give them any responsibilities or duties whatsoever but bring them out for photo opportunities. That's inclusion. No, it's not. That why we add "leadership" to our vision statement. Unless disabled people are in positions where they are decision makers, you don't have true inclusion. And that again, that vision statement was born from a lot of feedback we got from CICIL clients with regards to tokenization and the frustration that we all feel when we know that we are being selected for an opportunity simply because of something about ourselves that doesn't necessarily include our skills and qualifications. So now let's talk about policies and procedures. So CICIL had a very rare opportunity. We were able to – we didn't have to revise anything because there wasn't really anything in existence with regards to policies and procedures.

Whether or not you believe that, it's true. For 25 years, this was an organization that did not have policies and procedures.

[ Laughter ]

Whoa!

Yeah. And so, we were able to start with a clean slate, and that actually is a benefit. There's a lot less scratching of the head that one has to do when there's no policies and procedures in existence. A lot of you, well, all of you, belong to CILs, or are in proximity to a CIL, that has policies and procedures, and the policies and procedures may not have been revised in 10, 15 years, or they're outdated. They're not culturally competent and they make you want to rip your hair out, but unfortunately, you probably have a policy and procedure with regards to not being able to just throw them away and start over again. And so, we actually had that luxury, and didn't have to deal with revising anything.

And so, we did two things with regards to policies and procedures. We recruited an HR executive to join our board, and she was instrumental in supporting the organization to draft these documents.

The other thing is, we had an APRIL mentor, Ms. Liz Sherwin, also of Iowa, who was very kind enough to share her CIL's policies and procedures with us. And so, we were able to use those as a template. And then we also reached out to a few other CILs that are similar in size and asked them to share their policies and procedures with us, as well.

And we did that because the HR executive that joined the board and myself at the time were completely brand new to Independent Living. And so, we, in addition to wanting these documents to be culturally competent and inclusive, we also wanted them to resemble what these types of documents tend to look like in Independent Living Centers and so that was incredibly helpful.

And, Liz, I don't know, with regard to the work that you do as an APRIL mentor to new CIL directors like myself, does that line up with the supports that you have provided to other CILs?

LIZ SHERWIN: Yeah, and it depends on the CIL, and what they want. A lot of it has to do with the structure of the center because some of them may have things that are outdated, and they want to bring them in line, and that's specifically what we did with you, but like you said, you had nothing. So that it was really nice that way, so we gave you what we had, and you could kind of look at it and see how it fitted in with what you guys were doing.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Yeah.

LIZ SHERWIN: So actually, I went onsite, spent time with Reyma. How long had you been on the job?

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Maybe 3 months.

I was a baby.

LIZ SHERWIN: Yes, she was a baby. And like you said, new to Independent Living, but I think that it was a benefit for the Center and it was amazing to find out what that particular Center did not have in place, and they'd been operating for almost 20 years.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: So funny story, when Liz came to CICIL and we were at our previous downtown location, and I'd been in the position for less than 90 days, Liz asked: Where are the bylaws?

And I said ‑‑ I don't know. We contacted ‑‑ I contacted the CICIL board president: Where are the bylaws?

What are those?

That is the document that governs the Board of Directors.

Oh, I don't think I've ever seen anything like that.

And so, Liz had the presence of mind to ask if the organization had a security deposit box, a safe anywhere, or anything like that. And so, there was a safe. I found the keys. We went in, and we found the bylaws, by golly.

They had been written in 2008, as you can see there. So, yeah, that was a funny story, and I hope that that is an anomalous story. That's not something that often happens, but again, Liz and APRIL were very instrumental as far as being a support in bringing an infrastructure to CICIL.

Now, I want to stop for a second, because a lot of ‑‑ many of you have brought up the desire to have conversation about: What can we do to make sure that trainings like this and conversations around intersectionality don't get lost in the shuffle. So, this is where we can ensure that this doesn't happen. So if anybody has any questions with regards to crafting policies, procedures, bylaws, standard operating procedures in a way that ensures that you've got an infrastructure that's going to allow for change and evolution and movement towards intersectionality, now is the golden opportunity for us to have that conversation.

So, if you want to raise your hand, anybody?

Okay. Going once...

All right, well, I'll just wing it kind of a little bit. How do we do this? Because it's deeper than making sure that you've got, you know, State or Federally mandated language about equal opportunity employer, that kind of thing, obviously. On a regular basis, I come across organizations, nonprofit organizations, here in 2019 that are still operating with policies and procedures that have absolutely no verbiage around sexual harassment. So, I mean, that's a very basic way of ensuring that you've got an infrastructure that is either going to allow for a healthy organization or is going to open up the flood gates for all kinds of challenges.

So obviously, things like having a sexual harassment policy, very important. But it goes deeper than sexual harassment. Getting familiar with your local and state laws with regards to who are considered protected classes of people. So, in Iowa currently, who knows because we've got a State government that's pretty keen on limiting the rights of extremely diverse people, I'll just put it that way. But currently in the state of Iowa, transgender people are considered a protected class.

AUDIENCE: Wow.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Yeah, that's great. That could fly off the table at any minute, though, and I have a lot of concerns about that. But when we were crafting our policies and procedures, we included a policy with regards to transgender people. We have a policy in writing with regards to respecting people's gender identity, asking questions with regards to what are your pronouns? And that extends beyond personnel into client policies. Making sure that we're asking those questions of our clients, as well.

And then I will disclose that during my first year at CICIL, in addition to all of the other wacky stuff I talked about yesterday, I was also being sexually harassed by a board member. Yeah. He was ‑‑ sorry.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, good.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: He was, let's just say he was very sorry in the end.

[ Laughter ]

But this was an organization at the time that didn't have any kind of policy with regards to what does this organization do when a staff or board member experiences harassment, or participates in harassment? So, making sure that you've got an organization that has harassment policies that cover all of the protected classes of people in the area that you are serving is absolutely key.

And again, I constantly come across organizations that do not have this portion of their infrastructure set, and it's ‑‑ it always does not bode well for an organization, because invariably something happens, and there's no policy in place to provide support to the staff and to leadership with regards to: How should this organization move forward? And you end up with a bunch of people who are just winging it, and that's not good.

With regard to client policies, in addition to everything that I've talked about, because it also pertains to clients, we have a CICIL policy with regards to capturing information with regards to our LGBTQ‑plus folks. Strictly on a voluntary basis. So, as we all know, the 704 doesn't capture any data with regards to gender identity.

AUDIENCE: Right, right. Sorry.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: That's okay. Preach!

AUDIENCE: Yes, yes.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Woo! Or with regards to sexual orientation. And we believe that we can't be culturally competent if we are not giving space for a person's expression of their sexual orientation or gender identity. So, we do capture that information and it's strictly on a voluntary basis.

And, you know, these documents are meant to be living, breathing things, and so we're constantly being presented with opportunities to revisit our policies and procedures when we become aware of a population that we're not serving that would kind of fall through the cracks as far as our policies and procedures are concerned. The refugee immigrant population obviously has become a focal point for the disability community for a variety of reasons, and even in Iowa, that's the case, as well.

And so ‑‑ yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This may be a little bit tangential, but I'm hearing the talking about data collection, and then you just mentioned immigrants and refugees. Do you have a strategy working with people that don't have documentation? And do you put them in the system? Do you not put them in the system? Do you serve them at all?

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: We most certainly do serve folks, no matter what their status is.

[ Applause ]

And we present them with the choice. So we tell them: We can put you in our system, or you can sign a waiver, and we'll provide you with the exact same services that we would otherwise provide you, and we ‑‑ but we won't include anything that identifies you as being a client of our CIL in any way. We do add their numbers as far as our 704 is concerned, because our 704 isn't asking for revealing information about people. But, yeah, and we actually, our local ACLU did a Rights for All training recently, and CICIL staff attended that so that we could become more educated with regards to how to serve our folks who might not be documented.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What's exactly in your waiver?

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: So our waiver is one piece of paper, and it says that a person is signing because they want to waive their right to a life plan, and that all services that they will participate in are ‑‑ they are eligible to participate in any of the services that CICIL has available, just like any other active client or consumer would be able to.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So, when you're serving someone who is undocumented, when you put them in the CIL Suite, I know everyone's favorite word CIL Suite, do you put the individual in as an I&R?

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: An unknown I&R.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay. Thank you.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Yes, ma’am. Like I said, we're still capturing the data, the numbers with regards to the supports we're providing, but we treat it as unknown information and referral data. And we're small. It seems like we're probably the smallest CIL here. We're a staff of 4. We actively work with 127 people, and so those numbers are a lot smaller than what you all are experiencing at your CILs and so we know everybody that we're working with, and so there's not any confusion with regards to the clients that we have who have signed waivers and the clients who have active service plans. Any other questions? Yes.

SUSAN DOOHA: Hi. Really, thank you. And I love sharing ideas about policies and procedures because it's really so critical and so critical that these issues be present throughout all of the policies: Your outreach policy, nominating policy, you know, the whole shebang. We are now at the point of including LGBTQ status, but we're looking at how to convert that for the purposes of our 704 report, without doing violence to how people want to be spoken of.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Yeah.

SUSAN DOOHA: Any thoughts?

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: We're grappling with that, too. And obviously, it's a personal agenda for me since I'm gay, and it's ‑‑ we serve the whole person. I mean, and everybody here wants to serve the whole person, right? And so that's a part of the whole person, and so that's just one of many aspects of the 704 that makes me want to bang my head against the wall, but I have no answers for you, but just solidarity.

[ Laughter ]

Important point ‑‑

Especially if your policies and procedures were written more than 5 years ago. More likely than not they were not written with intersectionality in mind. And so, the reality that the majority of us experience is we're working with an infrastructure that was not intended to be intersectional. And it's not like the people that drafted the documents before you came along were like: How can we make this as unintersectional as possible and just really stick it to multiply marginalized people? Obviously, that's not the frame of reference. But the frame of reference was that there was no frame of reference with regards to multiply marginalized people or intersectionality, when these documents were being made.

And so what it probably feels like to many of us here is we're trying to put a Band‑Aid on something, and the Band‑Aid is trainings like this, or strategic planning sessions. And then invariably, we reach the point where we realize that, oh, I went to that training 18 months ago, and we haven't talked about it since. Or we did that strategic plan, like, two years ago, and it's almost time to do another one, but I'm not even sure if we accomplished the stuff that was in the previous strategic plan, and frankly, I can't even remember what we talked about and put into it in the first place.

And so, these kinds of conundrums happen because the infrastructure was not put into place in an intersectional manner, so that's a challenge that many of us grapple with. And the reality is that you're not going to experience what CICIL did, which was basically a forest fire that allowed us to start over again.

So, with regard to that, does anybody have any comments or observations with regards to how to make an organization intersectional after the fact?

Did the fajitas give us food coma this afternoon?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thanks. This is Maureen. I think we worked a lot on this with NCIL. We had a lot of training come in first before we wrote our strategic planning, and we decided it doesn't belong in one goal on the strategic plan. It belongs in every goal on the strategic plan.

[ Applause ]

And the other piece that there might be some components that don't fit neatly within your strategic plan goals, where it can come in in policies and SOPs or whatever you call them in your agency. I think the other piece about not leaving your strategic plan on the shelf is that it is your guiding plan. It should be a part of every board meeting that you have, every staff meeting. It's there on your agenda as a standard item and you review it all the time. All your staff development plans, your advocacy plans, your financial plans, any plan you do ties to your strategic plan.

Everybody is aware of that in your agency and you're all on that same page and you keep using it over and over so it's a standardized part of all of your agendas.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Yeah.

KIM GIBSON: Also, we review our bylaws and our employee handbook yearly, and I ‑‑ and take it to the board meeting and changes and some of the board members are like: Didn't we just amend this last year or whatever? It's like, yeah, but we've got to bring it up to date. One of these days we won't have to change anything. I don't know, because I think that it's always revolving, different things.

Your comment that I guess we take a little bit different view on pronouns. We specifically ‑‑ we say, you know, we just treat the person as a person, and we utilize their name, the individual's name regardless. Just the name of the individual and get away from ma'am and sir, because somebody may not let you know ahead of time and then you just take that factor out by saying "Tim," Kim or whatever, unless somebody specifically comes up to me and says hey, I want you to call me Mr. Gibson, then we do that.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: So just so we're clear, when I say pronouns, I mean she/her, he/him, just asking people ‑‑ surnames, that's not what I was referencing necessarily, but we find particularly with our younger clients, or clients of all age who are transgender, that it is very important to them. And they feel like having that conversation breached with them is a cornerstone of providing effective services to them, and so I'm at the cusp. I'm like Gen‑X, millennial, so I kind of ‑‑ I feel kind of out of sync with regards to a lot of things but I've got enough of a toe‑hold in the millennial generation that I am not completely oblivious to things, and so I appreciate especially when younger clients and stakeholders educate me about the importance of things such as gender identity and use of pronouns and that kind of thing.

And I understand that just because something's not a big deal to me personally doesn't mean that it's not a big deal to them. Yes, ma'am?

SUSAN DOOHA: I was thinking about having a matrix of all ‑‑ what we have is a matrix of all of our policies, and we show what year we revise them. And we cannot go more than 5 years without revising them, but we're constantly scrutinizing what's happening in the State Capitol and at the National level because nonprofit laws are State and they're always changing.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Yes.

SUSAN DOOHA: So, policies on harassment and on sexual harassment are changing. Policies on terms of employment are changing. Inquiries you can make in the interview process, all kinds of things are constantly changing, and so we just keep our eye out for what's happening in our environment that may cause us to change any and all of our policies and our bylaws, and we work with pro bono attorneys to help us make those changes. Because we know what we need in them, but we want to make sure that the language is going to pass muster if someone scrutinizes it or if we get sued over something, or whatever the case may be.

And we care about what it says, obviously.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: So, with regard to that, our bylaws, which govern our Board of Directors. As we draft ‑‑ revised our bylaws from 2008, we included a provision of a commitment to ensuring a diverse board, above and beyond the federal mandate specific to disability. And so that supported the organization to transition from a board that was, although it was 100% disabled, 100% white, to being the board of today, which includes Black Americans, an Asian‑American, Latinx members, an individual, or two individuals who are parents of disabled children, and various other types of diversity.

And so, we have written that into our bylaws, that commitment. Because we're also keeping in mind the fact that I'm not going to be at CICIL forever and the board's not going to be there. These documents are going to outlive us all and we want to ensure the long‑term sustainability and growth of the organization with regards to intersectionality. And so ‑‑ and then additionally, prior to my arrival at CICIL, the board application process was. You want to be on the board?

Okay.

[ Laughter ]

And that led to just a ton of challenges, and so we created documents that would support us in recruiting and maintaining a strong board that has a clear understanding of what roles and responsibilities are.

And so, with regards to infrastructure, we take very seriously the fact that we are professionals with disabilities serving people with disabilities. So prior to my arrival at CICIL, everybody on staff was disabled, but there was absolutely no training, and there was no recruiting of people with expertise regarding working with disabled people, and that led to lots of challenges that I think I pretty succinctly articulated yesterday.

So CICIL staff of today, we are all very highly qualified. We are all certified to provide customized employment services to our VR referrals. Three out of four of us are certified employment support professionals, as well. We have an individual on staff that is a licensed psychotherapist, although they do not provide psychotherapy to CICIL clients. We don't need that liability at all. And so, we've got just years of education and work and life experience all wrapped up in a pretty little bow at CICIL.

Where we are looking to work is with regards to supporting our sister providers that provide supported employment services, in particular, customized employment. Doing that in a way that is culturally competent, because if you hear the term "customized employment," you think: This is something that is geared towards a specific individual, which is true. But at present, it is not done so in a way that is competent to whatever diversity or intersectionality a person is bringing into their supported employment program. And so, we do a lot of training at the State and National level of sister providers of supported employment services to assist them in that. And with regards to that, how that looks internally is that we have formulated policies and guidelines that ensure that we ourselves are providing that service in as culturally competent a manner as possible specific to race, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity, and everything else.

So, our board completely transitioned in a two‑year time between 2015 and 2017. Several members retired or left to do other things with their time. One resigned, the one that sexually harassed me, and then the one that tried to get me fired was unanimously voted off the board. This freed us up to recruit people to sit in the seats on the bus that would help CICIL to move forward. And we now have an organization that is much more closely resembling of the demographics that exist in our service area. So, I know that that was a lot of information. Questions?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Deji Morgan. I just want to ask a question about employment.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Are you a vendor to VR or a subcontractor vendor of VR organization services?

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Yes, we are contracted vendor to VR. And so, they refer their clients to us for either job development, job coaching, or other job retention services. We were the first CIL in Iowa to pursue that partnership with VR, and now I believe 3 out of the 6 of us are currently doing that.

JESSE BETHKE GOMEZ: Reyma, I want to thank you for your presentation because I appreciate how you’ve been building organizational capacity. That’s not easy work. It's the work I've been doing as a CEO for the last 25 years in building institutions. And my job really at MCIL is very similar building an institution. My great hope is that as we build this organization, I would love to see MCIL led by a person with disabilities. Although all my family members are people with disabilities, for me, the people at MCIL we serve are all my brothers and sisters, so it's the approach. I would refer folks though, I was on this list, on page 64, that I realize the need to come back later to talk about the need of a strategic Human Resource plan. The reason being is that I learned how to do that 25 years ago from the private sector, as a student with the Minnesota executive program for advanced strategic leadership. This is why. To get to a high‑performance organization which I've been part of, which I've grown throughout my years as a CEO, there's three variables that have to happen to get to high‑performance ‑‑

A safe environment.

Freedom of expression.

And fairness.

So why strategic Human Resources is important is because it's the way institutionally we assure those three variables are present, so to give you an example, our strategic Human Resource plan, yes, it has an employee handbook that's updated every year to comport with federal and state laws, but it also has benefits, retention, training and development, performance management, culture, and work‑life balance. So, our bond with our employees is trust. The basis of that trust is our commitment through that employee handbook of assuring people are treated fairly, that they have that emotional breathing space to be and express, that they're treated fairly, that there's a sense of safety, and again that freedom of expression.

That's the job I see in the Centers that we have the opportunity to take to the next level, is understanding the functional area of Human Resources to work towards a framework and a template to help you whether you're 4 staff persons or 100 staff persons or a $25 million Center is to understand the nature of how Human Resources has ‑‑ you have to live and breathe it. Your leaders have to train on it all the time. 100% of our staff attend our employee handbook training every year, no questions, no exceptions asked. 100% of our staff attend all of the harassment trainings where we bring in employment lawyers to teach and train so that we're constantly working to nurture an environment: Freedom, safety and fairness. That's the next level we've got to get to for recruitment and retention of our employees. Notably in environments like mine it's a multicultural, multilanguage. It just is a very rich environment. If we're going to recruit and retain and get people to refer their friends that they want to work in our Centers so that it can be the best place that they've ever experienced to work at. That's what our goal is and that's what my goal is and that's what on page 64 we'll come back to that perhaps later and figure out how to bring that to our Centers for Independent Living throughout America. Thanks.

LIZ SHERWIN: I just wanted to add since Jesse and I are supposed to be supporting the two presenters, and I don't know really how to get into this, but just listening to the discussion going around the room and how the Centers operate here, I've found that my Center operates entirely different. We have a different management structure. We are what I call team‑based. And our system is based on our teams. We have 4 teams that govern the operation of our agency.

We have our admin team, a direct services team, a community education team, and a resource development team. And I am Director, and the most staff know that. But if I'm on a team, I have no more authority than anyone else. The communications and how we operate is based on consensus, and this was a very painful process for us, because we worked prior to my becoming Director in the situation where we had management, we had mid‑level, we had all of that, but we changed to this team structure, and I think at that time several other Centers tried to do that, but they were not successful. It wasn't a good process for us internally, because there were people that left. The mid‑managers didn't like their positions, but it has made us a better and a stronger organization.

We have to serve two states, as you know, with varying regulations, but with us working on the team structure, mainly admin deals with resource, deals with Human Resources. The direct service deals with issues that are related directly to consumers. The community education, they go out and constantly talk about what's going on in the community, how we are impacted by that. How the community is impacted by it.

We also have the resource and development and they look ‑‑ engage in the community for opportunities for us to generate more income. They're responsible for what we present to the community in terms of our newsletter, our Facebook page, our website, and all those kinds of things. So, we are team managed literally and that's how we operate.

So, if for some reason I did not make it home, there are people on the admin that could carry out my job at least until they hired someone else, so that's kind of the way we work. We don't have this hierarchy in our organization, but just sitting here listening to the discussions here, that's when I realized we were totally different from many organizations, and we have been operating as a team‑managed organization for over 20 years. What happened was we were not a good organization. We actually had a consultant come in and tell us what we looked like or identified from community individuals, that we were not very good. We were not serving people appropriately. We had a horrible reputation.

And I think I'm not sure who I told this story, maybe earlier, about the Iowa legislator that had his opinion of what people in Centers did, and that impacted funding, and I believe it still impacts whether we get funding in Iowa or not, because... So those are things that in your community or wherever you're at, you're going to have to create an image that is of the community and that you're participating in the community and that the things that you do are important to the community. And that not only means that you're serving people with disabilities, but that you're looking at your community and seeing ‑‑ seeking out how you can help that community, whatever the situation may be. Thank you.

REYMA MCCOY MCDEID: Thank you. So, I'm over time. I want to pass it on to Miss Susan, but if you take one thing away from my presentation, please let it be this, besides remembering that let Dr. Kimberly Crenshaw be the voice of authority with regards to what intersectionality looks like, that.

Also, as you are scrutinizing the infrastructure of your organization, that work cannot be complete unless you're also scrutinizing yourself. So, thank you.

[ Applause ]

[End of Session]