**Expanding CIL Capacity through Youth Transition Services:**

**Collaborating with School Districts and Vocational Rehabilitation**

**Part 2**

**July 17, 2013**

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**>>** CAROL EUBANKS: Welcome, everyone. I'm your webinar facilitator at ILRU, Carol Eubanks, along with our technical assistance specialist, Sharon Finney. This webinar is presented by ILRU's New Community Opportunity Center. The center assists Centers for Independent Living to start and grow new community programs while securing resources to fund those programs. We present on location trainings and webinars like this one. Today's webinar is expanding CIL capacity through Youth Transition services: Collaborating with school districts and Vocational Rehabilitation. Today we'll be taking questions through the webinar platform and over the telephone. On the web just type your question into the box shown on your screen. Those typed in questions will be answered throughout the webinar. We will begin to take telephone questions later on in the webinar. Patricia, our operator, will make an announcement when we're ready to take your phone questions. At that time, press star pound on your telephone keypad to let us know you have a question. When the presentation concludes we will ask you to complete a very brief evaluation. The link to the evaluation is on the final slide. All of you also have a link to the evaluation in the registration instructions you received by e‑mail earlier this week. Your evaluations are valuable. We use them to make our programs better and more useful. The hosts for today's webinar teleconference are ILRU's Richard Petty and Utah State University's Jeff Sheen. Richard is director of the new community opportunity center here at ILRU and Jeff is project director at Utah State University's center for persons with disabilities. Good afternoon, Richard and Jeff.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Thank you, Carol. And welcome from Jeff and from me and especially welcome to our guests. Today they're from Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and our guests are Amy Beck who is director of the center, Seth Hoderewski and Joe Michener. And the folks at Lehigh Valley operate an excellent program, a youth transition program, along with the core service independent living program, and we sought them out because of their reputation for the youth transition program and what we'll be able to hear from them today will be very valuable. So, again, Amy, Seth, Joe, welcome. And let me begin by asking Amy if you will tell us a little bit about Lehigh Valley CIL.

>> AMY BECK: I'd be happy to. We're talking to you today from Allentown, Pennsylvania, which I believe most of you have heard of. We are the third largest city in Pennsylvania, and we operate in a two‑county region primarily for our core services and throughout about five or six counties in total for all of our services. We're one of the 18 CILs in Pennsylvania. We are 23 years old this year. We share our anniversary year with the founding of the ADA and signing of the bill. We were founded by a grass roots organization called operation overcome who as many of you are familiar with this type of story operation overcome was a group of people with disabilities and their family and friends who had a way of getting people to embrace inclusion even before the law required them to do that, and through our founder Carl, our agency was born in 1990.

Fast forward 23 years, and we have 32 staff. I believe it's 23 funding sources this year. And a wide variety of programming. In addition to the core services and ADA information sharing, which I'm sure all of you know about, we also serve hundreds of people a year in housing services, that is, for people who are nearly homeless or who are homeless. We do that through community development block grant programming and through a Veterans Administration program called supportive services for veterans families. We also operate a 24‑hour‑a‑day interpreter referral service, a large community access program and several programs in strategic community building to hear the needs of people with disabilities in Pennsylvania. And you'll be hearing a lot about our transition and Career Path services through the rest of this call.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Thank you. You really have grown over 23 years. I'm going to ask all of you this, but, Amy, if you would begin, would you tell us a little bit about yourself, how long you have been at the center and how you got involved in independent living.

>> AMY BECK: I'd be happy to.

The first thing that's important to say is that a webinar makes me sound 20 pounds heavier than I really am, so I want to say, just like TV, I'm thinner than you think.

But I like to think of myself as the mother of LC CIL was I was the incorporating board present, so in '90‑94 I served on the board and then I was off the board for a few years, and in 1998 I came back when our founder had passed away. I came back as Executive Director. I think it was the passion of our founder who got me involved in independent living. I've been a person with a disability. I found out about my disability when I was 17, and it seems my entire career has focused around services for people with disabilities. So it seems like a good fit here for me.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Well, Seth, what about you?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: Well, I've worked in the field of people with disabilities for about 19 years now and in different capacities, whatever they may be, and a number of years ago I was always traveling further to work, you know, to work in the field, and I always had something for the youth. There was also something that came back to that, and then when I saw here at the Lehigh Valley CIL there was an opportunity to work with youth in transition, that was just thrilling to me. Besides it being 10 minutes away from my house, to have that opportunity to go and work with young adults was just right up my alley. I love the idea of the open thinking we have here, the ability to communicate, the working together, the creativeness that our group brings to the table, especially when it comes to working with young adults.

>> RICHARD PETTY: And, Joe, what about you, how long have you been there?

>> JOE MICHENER: Hi. I've been here for about two‑and‑a‑half years, but I've been providing vocational services in some form or another for more than 10 years. I actually got my start in a program that provided supported employment and very early on in my career I identified young adults as a very neglected demographic in the adult service system. So a couple years ago when I saw the advertisement for my current position here at the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living I was very excited and very excited for the opportunities to provide vocational services to young adults with disabilities who had recently graduated or who were nearing graduation.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Great! Seth, could you tell us a little bit about how you're involved with the local schools and with Vocational Rehabilitation?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: Yes, absolutely. That comes in many ways. You know, schools and teachers have really used us as referral sources for many of the programs that we have here. It's really come out of the great relationships we've been able to form with them in this regard. Schools and teachers have invited us into IEP meetings an plan meetings as community experts and advocates. We've gone into classrooms to speak about CIL services, about transition, anything that our CIL is doing. We've held many transition conferences here in the Lehigh Valley with schools in mind working with them, making sure that they are present. We've also contracted with schools to provide school‑based services, individualized services and have gone as far as working ‑‑ doing work‑based assessments for them. And school personnel will often call us just looking for general information. They want to find out about what community options are out there for their students.

As far as OVR goes ‑‑ well, our VR is our primary referral source and our funder for our vocational services, specifically Career Path. We work hand in hand with VR staff to support young adults in our program to explore careers, prepare for employment, obtain and maintain jobs. But even before the Career Path program started a couple years ago, that relationship had already been developed by Amy Beck, our Executive Director here and the wonderful relationship we have with our local VR office is really what the platform was for us to get everything up off the ground as far as our vocational services.

>> RICHARD PETTY: You know, those sound like really solid working relationships, but how did you first get started ‑‑ I guess maybe, Seth, you could begin this, how did you first get started working with the school system and with Vocational Rehabilitation? How did you get to the point where they were reaching out you had to request information, to ask you to be involved in IEPs? How did you make that first step?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: That really came out of the notion here, and that actually started before I got here, too, and with the fact that in the fall the CIL staff members would get calls from parents saying, "Hey, my kid is home, they're done with school, and now they're home doing nothing. What do we do?" So out of that we were able to secure a grant from the Pennsylvania developmental disabilities council to start this program, this program called school to life, where we ‑‑ we shorten it to S2L, school to life. That program just as a brief background it consists of young adults getting together having different learning opportunities, supporting each other throughout the school year and then a very large summer program. So what we ‑‑ what we did to begin that program to really get that going was we really pounded the pavement. We went out and talked to just about everybody we could. We hit places called transition councils. They are common here in Pennsylvania where ‑‑ at our local ‑‑ they're called intermediate units. They provide specialized special education services. They would have special meetings around transition where schools and different provider agencies would go and to talk about transition and what's going on in Lehigh Valley. So we latched onto that right away, began our relationship, started talking to as many people as possible, and really tried to build trust with them and show the good work that we were doing.

We started ‑‑ we saw with that program ‑‑ we could only work with about 25 young adults in that program, so we thought, well, how can we reach out to other students? How can we reach out to more people who needed the help and support? So we developed a presentation that we call have you thought about life. It's a very interactive program we took into classrooms and anywhere, really, that students would be to give them a little ‑‑ little tidbits about information that they might have to be doing while they're in school or what to expect when school is over. So it's a very fun, very interactive program. It ended up ‑‑ it really is a plug for the Lehigh Valley CIL. And to tell the students that we are there and that type of thing.

And then also doing things like developing our local conference, you know, have you thought about life, with our local spin on transition, with that notion of what the Lehigh Valley ‑‑ what's out there, what can be offered. Really bringing people together, getting that trust, and working with everyone.

At the same time, we were in constant talks with our local OVR office about how else we could be working together.

>> AMY BECK: I think if I could interject about how did we start working with the VR system, and forgive us, you'll hear me say OVR because in Pennsylvania we call it the office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and we have actually always had a close relationship with our local VR, and I think the ‑‑ occasionally there were opportunities to get innovation and expansion grants, and we had experienced that, and so when there came to be a chance to do this type of ‑‑ there came an innovation and expansion grant that could relate to the workforce, and we had already established ourselves as having done successful programming with VR. So [indiscernible]

>> RICHARD PETTY: So to capsulize a couple things, it sounds like the ‑‑ for the youth transition program in schools that one initial early success was a developmental disabilities planning council or just DD council grant, and that for Vocational Rehabilitation and early success was your innovation and expansion money from the ‑‑ from the state agency. Those were both kind of key early points for you, is that right?

>> AMY BECK: That is right, yes.

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: Absolutely. And to take that even a step further, based off of that good work that we saw, we had like a local attorney who specialized in transition who saw the good work that we were doing and saw what was going on with some of the school systems and wondered if we could apply some of those same concepts, some of those same types of services to contracting with schools and working on some things with schools, too. So that was another success that we've been able to accomplish.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Your good reputation got you the patron, I guess.

Amy, a question for you: Your an organization like any center that's run and staffed by people with disabilities. How has that played out for you in working with schools and VR? Has it been a plus? Has it been a negative? What's that been like?

>> AMY BECK: Well, I think that the schools and, of course, VR knows quickly in working with us that we are not in an ivory tower here looking down on people with disabilities and coming up with ridiculous beliefs about services that people with disabilities need. We are people with disabilities, and I think that because we bring a holistic person‑centered approach that has fit in very nicely to VR services and also I think once the schools see that, that holistic person‑centered approach, a lot of times it's an answer for what family of a young adult has been looking for. I also think that people see, just like you all see, that CILs bring extra insights and practical suggestions and we've applied that again and again.

>> JEFF SHEEN: If I can jump in. I want to remind the audience as you have questions about what you're hearing, go ahead and put those into the chat box, and we will work those into the conversation as we can. If we don't end up asking your question word for word, it will be because we've seen several that are kind of the same theme. Just a reminder, if you do have questions as we're talking to the guests, please chime in on the chat room and we'll pull those into the conversation.

Joe, I have a question for you. You have been kind of quiet because we haven't scud a question.

>> JOE MICHENER: I'm here.

>> JEFF SHEEN: This one is for you to start out with. Your organization applies the consumer control in all aspects of programs and services. That's kind of a core value of independent living. Does ensuring and working to ensure the students have power and control over their choices, does that impact your relationship with VR, the schools? How have you dealt with that as you've gone forward?

>> JOE MICHENER: Absolutely. As Amy mentioned before, our very solid relationship with our local VR office has helped us a lot, especially when it comes to something like this. We're very fortunate to work with partners who for the most part agree with consumer control. Obviously we sometimes run into challenging situations, but most of our partners, and specifically from my experience working with VR counselors locally, they really help us to develop and revise the best plans to support our consumers' goals.

You know, specifically in Career Path we are yet to run into a situation where VR counselor did not work with us to help a Career Path participant pursue his or her desired vocation, whether that be by them providing necessary additional training or perhaps assistive technology or recommending [indiscernible] when VR funding is not sufficient.

>> JEFF SHEEN: We're picking up a little bit of an echo. Did you hear the last part? We would just ask anybody on the computer on the phone to mute their computer speakers. That will take care of the echo situation.

>> JOE MICHENER: As I was saying, we're really fortunate to have partners that agree with consumer control and really promote that and support us in that.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Joe and Amy and Seth, let me ask you kind of a related question to this thread we're on now. This is coming from the chat room. Where centers are typically staffed by peers with disabilities who don't maybe have the same training or certification as, quote‑unquote, professionals in schools and other agencies, has that ever posed an issue as far as being seen as equal players at the table?

>> AMY BECK: Well, we really try to make sure that in our services for young adults our staff do have to bring some level of education in there for us to be seen as comparable providers in the education and employment system. Although, we definitely have hired people with disabilities and tried to provide training and resources so that they can work in the field. But it is ‑‑ it is typical that in vocational services or school‑based services that the schools do ask us about the education and credentials of staff. So that could be a potential obstacle for some of our sisters in independent living.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Amy, how are your staff prepared ‑‑ what's their educational background? What is their credentialing?

>> AMY BECK: Typically the staff working in these programs do bring a bachelor's or some college plus experience. We do need to make sure that the staff ‑‑ in fact, all of our staff agency‑wide, because we work with so many youth, we now require every staff person A to Z has to have child abuse clearances and criminal background clearances that we keep on hand here. That's really important. You have to have that to bring to the vocational front and to education. And we also seek out training as it applies to that individual and what they're doing. You know, Seth has taken some graduate classes to benefit us. Joe has had staff who have taken specific trainings on job coaching techniques, or as we'll tell you more about the vocational program, there is an educational element of that and one of the staff brought an education background to help us develop a curriculum and we help her to stay abreast of current training in her field.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Richard, if I can jump in along with one more chat question. You all have mentioned a few specific programs you do, clear pathways and you alluded to a summer program. We have a question from Don about how do you weave the four core services into these different programs? Are you addressing the four core services in these programs in a straightforward way? Do you just kind of weave that in naturally? Tell us a little about that.

>> JOE MICHENER: This is Joe. It is definitely a natural part of what we do. That's the wonderful thing about being a CIL, is we can provide those more holistic services. So because a participant is maybe in the Career Path program, that doesn't mean they're only receiving vocational services. They're receiving information and referral services, peer support, independent living skills training, and it's just ‑‑ it's ‑‑ it's made us very popular among funders as well because we can provide those more holistic services, specifically from Career Path we know that, you know, your job is just one part of your life, and it's very difficult to be successful in a job if you're struggling in other areas. So ‑‑ and I know we're going to get into this more later, but that approach to things has been very beneficial for our programs and for the young adults we work with.

>> JEFF SHEEN: There's something you said, Joe, that I keyed on, and that is, you know, being able to provide these additional core services which is what CILs already do. I think that would be quite appealing to other funding agencies as you go for other grant monies, and you can tailor your program to a specific need but you can also say we'll do this, this and this as part of the program we're running.

>> JOE MICHENER: Absolutely.

>> RICHARD PETTY: This is a question for Seth, and just listening to you lay out this program is just incredibly exciting, and I'm sure, though, that as you have developed this you've encountered some barriers, and I wondered if you could talk a little about the barriers as you've experienced, as you've created and grown the program?

>> Absolutely. This program has been exciting, taken us to places we never dreamed we would go and do, including webinars. But, you know, it's ‑‑ it's ‑‑ some of the barriers have included going from that grant funded type of position to now having to go to a fee for service, and that has been ‑‑ that has created a little bit of a different dynamic. We had to change our structure a little bit, developing a billing format through a fee for service structure. We've had to work with more ‑‑ a variety of funders. It kind of changed relationships in a little bit of ways,, now that parents were maybe having to pay for things more outright. But in the same breath, it also ‑‑ it created some positive things for us, too. The parents really took on a lot. They were challenged by that and they were able to develop some ‑‑ do a lot of fundraising now, both small group fundraising and they're working on some large group fundraising also. Those kind of things have really come out of it. It's changed ‑‑ it has changed the program for the better.

In the same that goes for our school services. We were having to work with schools in a different way before, and now that we started to contract with them and provide service for them, it was a little bit different, it changed some of the relationships a little bit. We like to think we've been able to keep really good relationships with them, but it definitely has changed how we kind of go about things and work with them. As far as the OVR ‑‑ the VR stuff, Joe might have a little more on that.

>> JOE MICHENER: Yeah, we had similar challenges because the Career Path program also started with a grant, and we are now a fee for service program. So that did change aspects for us as well. In the grant period we started working with 25 young adults and we're now fee for service and now working with 90 young adults. So just the sheer capacity of everything and having staff in place.

Specifically in Career Path, just starting a new vocational program in the Lehigh Valley has been a challenge for us. Establishing relationships with employers and with the local community. The ‑‑ the a lot of those relationships were already established based on programs and services created before Career Path started. And just the limitations of funding as it is across the country. I'm sure those challenges ‑‑ we continue to face those on a regular basis and I know that will be a question perhaps later in this webinar, but definitely that has been a challenge for us in navigating and trying to diversify our funding.

>> JEFF SHEEN: A couple follow‑up questions. When you talk about Career Path, there's a question about just context. Where is that program delivered logistically? Are you out in the schools? Are you doing groups at the center? Is there an individual component? Can you just give us a little bit more ‑‑

>> JOE MICHENER: Absolutely. I'll try to be as concise as possible. The Career Path program is very complex. But basically it's based on the best practices in supported employment with some very good twists.

So it is actually ‑‑ we provide an eight‑week skills training for our young adults who are coming out of school, and with the transition mindset of preparing for employment as opposed to the different expectations. That is primarily held here at our CIL with a lot of community work at the same time. But young adults are coming to the CIL three day as week and they are we' going out into the community and doing various different things.

As far as going out and doing actual vocational assessments and going out and trying competitive positions, we are doing that solely in the community. We go to actual employers and try jobs and explore jobs. So it's very community‑based, though the hub, of course, is based here at the CIL.

>> JEFF SHEEN: I think that's helpful for the audience and myself as well.

A follow‑up question: When you talk about fee for service, Seth and Joe, can you just give us an example of kind of the fee structure, just basically what are the fees you're charging, how much typically do you charge, just to give folks a little bit of a context.

>> AMY BECK: This is Amy. I get to field that question.

What we've done and what a CIL needs to do is you have to look at your specific costs and you need ‑‑ you need to know what it costs you for your staff to work an hour. What are all the costs associated with that, their salary, there's benefits, overhead, supervision, travel. I mean, in our programs travel is typically not reimbursed. We have to build travel into our rate. So that calculation is done for each program based on the staff that will be needed and the back‑up staff that are in there. So we actually have negotiated rates for each type of service. It might be a school district ‑‑ we didn't really talk to you as much about yet how students began coming to us for part or all of their school day in their last year, maybe their year when they're 20 years old moving into age 21, but those rates were negotiated based on that student's need and how much of the work could be done in a small group and how much could be done individually. So it's just ‑‑ it's a big math equation. You need a good director of finance, as we have.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Great. Thank you.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Amy, just to expand a little bit on that question, if we could, when you began working with the school district, had they even conceived of this service package or did you come to them with the concept of what you might be doing with them and then did that put you in a position to create the rate yourselves and negotiate it with them, or did they ‑‑ had they done something like this elsewhere?

>> AMY BECK: I'm really glad you asked us that. Because it really happened in a way we never expected. We actually have been working with quite a few of our area school districts to the S2L program that Seth described. The schools were able to refer young adults into the program. It was no cost to the schools. And it only supported the young adult in preparing for their transition. But what ended up happening while we were busy thinking that we would develop a physical transition house, we were contacted through different attorneys saying, hey, we know that you have the capacity to work with this young adult whose school district has fallen down and really done a bad job on their transition planning. Would you be willing to provide service? And suddenly Seth and I are at the table in some very unexpected conversations with lawyers and superintendents and we were really just there saying, yes, we have the capacity to provide this service. And so it was totally unexpected, but then it started leading to other opportunities. Now we have served some students in school districts where we have had somewhat of a relationship and we've learned a lot through that. I mean, that's been one every our greatest learnings, is that you are suddenly ‑‑ you might suddenly be in an adversarial relationship with the school that you've worked very amicably with for quite a few years. And we did not seek that out, but we were able to respond to the school districts and their attorneys when they found us as a way to get out of a due process when there has been a complaint filed against the school.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Jeff, any web questions?

>> JEFF SHEEN: There's some coming in but not here yes. Let me back up and talk to Joe just a minute about a broader question. I know we're going to send more time on some of the details Amy was discussing so we will get back to those.

Joe or Seth or Amy, we have a lot of people on the call that are in the position that they're considering starting this, they maybe have just started a youth program, they're kind of in that beginning or thinking about beginning a program stage. Coming from like the strength‑based perspective, what are the things about centers, about independent living centers, that you think really make them ideally poised to work in this area? What strengths do we bring as a community into this area?

>> JOE MICHENER: This is Joe. I can speak specifically about Career Path, but I think this applies to the entire CIL and to really all CILs.

First off, for Career Path, employment is just a huge part of achieving independent live young in many situations and our CIL has as many others cannot only help support a person with achieving vocational goals but we can provide support in so many other areas. This creates holistic services and, for example, we've helped several young adults in the Career Path program not only prepare for and obtain employment but also helped them research and pursue potential housing opportunities when they were ready to do so. It goes without saying it's just ‑‑ the CIL approach, the person‑centered approach. Along with our focus on consumer control is essential to the young adults we work with.

We are very fortunate to work with highly motivated young adults who have a lot of goals and big dreams, but it certainly helps them be even more motivated when they're working hard to achieve goals when they are truly their goals. I think that's a big part.

>> AMY BECK: I also wanted to add one of the things we found is because the young adults, whether they're young adults who are in school or out of school, they tell us their dreams, their hopes, their wishes. So we are not telling them, oh, someday you'll be good enough to stock the shelves in a warehouse. We never presuppose someone's goal. So if someone brings their goal to us, it's our job to help them find the steps to get to that goal or to get to the place that makes them happy on their goal path, and that is really different than a lot of the thinking that comes out of education. And in some ‑‑ in some vocational providers where there is a lack of consumer control or a lack of consumer knowledge, I think people often try to pigeon hole people with disabilities into some very unsavory jobs.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Along those lines, Amy, do you ever find yourself or have you found yourself running into conflict over the different philosophies from the independent living philosophy of consumer control and direction and the individualized ‑‑ and coming up against maybe VR that has traditionally more of the medical model going on or schools that may be more of a we'll kind of tell you what's best for you model? How have you dealt with that?

>> AMY BECK: We definitely have come into that head on, and I think especially when a ‑‑ you know, a school district truly believes, some are more correct than others, truly believe they are doing a good job in special education services. I'm sure everyone on the call right now is shaking their heads because you know examples where it hasn't gone well. And so schools become very defensive when they have to deal with us or especially in a litigious situation, understanding the CIL is not part of the litigation. We're just there as either an expert or as an expert lending ‑‑ or a possible provider. But what ends up happening is schools are sure they're doing a great job, and it's been difficult to come up with their philosophy. With school it's more, we're doing these few things, we have to check a lot of boxes. In our state a lot of the IEPs are driven through a dropdown menu so there is very little creative thinking going on whereas we like to bring that creative thinking every time. My staff is great at saying why not, why can't we make that happen? So there is a different. Again, we try really hard to maintain a positive relationship as much as possible in that whole situation. So we're making the best of a difficult situation. I don't know, Seth, if you have anything to had there. But there is a ‑‑ there is a difference in our philosophies.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Quick question, Amy, it's come in from the chat room: Last week when we had a conversation with some other folks, with pat Murray, it was about ‑‑ we kind of were talking about schools in this nebulous ‑‑ who is your point of contact typically at the school. I know they said last week it was usually the school counselors they worked with. When you refer to schools, who is the person on the ground that you have the most contact with? Is it administrators? School counselor? Who might that be?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: We tend to have a lot of contact with the special education administrators, especially when it comes to the bigger stuff like contracts and working with that, too, but as far as some everyday kind of things, we also have a lot of contact and work a lot with teachers, and we go back and forth with them where we get invited into their class to talk or there's ‑‑ you know, there's that kind of relationship, too.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Great. Thank you. Richard?

>> RICHARD PETTY: Yeah, this is a question for Amy, and it's coming back to the bus end of things, the contracting, or whatever kind of arrangements you have with schools. So you've talked about how you're sitting at the table, you've had a good reputation in the community, and you've been brought into discussions you didn't imagine that you'd be part of, but there you were, and how ‑‑ over the ‑‑ what were the next steps? At some point they asked you if you had the capacity to do the work that they needed done. What were the next steps, soar of if you could ‑‑ sort of if you could walk us through that of how you made that a more formal arrangement, on or maybe initially it wasn't a formal arrangement, but how you moved into your next phase of working with schools and having an ongoing financial relationship with them?

>> AMY BECK: Sure. Definitely, as we said, we were working in that project started by the Pennsylvania developmental disabilities council, people new knew us and some local transition experts and an attorney knew us and started recommending us. So when Seth and I would be at the table and we were surprised to be asked, you know, could we do this, and you'll find a common theme is that we tend to be very optimistic. Maybe occasionally we've bit off more than we could chew but we knew we could make it work. We knew we had staff who could do this, make a huge difference in the lives of these young adults. So first thing was an innate belief we could do it. Our organization grew enough that I knew I could have staff ready. One of the greatest difficulties ‑‑ the schools, understandably so, they are worried about money and so they are waiting to the very last minute that they have to commit this money, and I don't know, Seth, I think it was like August 27th maybe when we actually last year on some of the students had final word that they were coming one way or the other. So we had to be ready with the capacity, and we knew we could rely on staff who work in our vocational services who are skilled at this. So we knew we could be ready. But I would say we were worried about how it would come together. And then each district had a different process to develop a contract with us. So we had to be flexible in knowing that we had to meet our needs in the contract but that we also would hear from the school what was important to them. Some of the schools wrote a letter of understanding. Some of the schools, it was a contract or a ‑‑ a written agreement signed by us how we would invoice. So it was different each time. That goes back to you need to know what your costs are going to be. So I think we gave some gray hair to our director of finance last fall, and we had actually started the year before that. So we did have some knowledge of what it would cost us, what our costs would be. There was a lot of going back and forth, but you really want to make sure you at least have an e‑mail from someone in authority stating that "I know we're working out this letter of understanding, but we are going to pay you for services that you're going to be providing to the students starting August 29th or September 1." We happened to have an attorney on staff here. We're very fortunate. He works in another program but he has been able to review paperwork for us and look at our liability and also the ‑‑ there's different legal aspects of the contract. So that's really how ‑‑ we had to be flexible for each school, and sometimes the families had developed with the school what they felt a value was. Sometimes that comes out of the legal discussions that we were not part of, where a school has said, this is how much we're willing to put into this. And then we ‑‑ at times it did happen to us where a school district may have said, okay, we have $20,000 to put into the services for this young adult. What can you provide for that? How many hours of group work? How many hours of individual work can you provide? So then again we went back to the whole meshing of the numbers and our programmatic costs.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Have you ever declined to work with someone because they just couldn't offer enough?

>> AMY BECK: I don't think so. We've usually tried to find a way. So, yeah, we've always been able to work it out to this point.

>> RICHARD PETTY: You know, some center directors talk about offering bargain‑basement services, meaning they ‑‑ in order to start a program they've charged less than they actually thought that they should have, and sometimes that's worked for them and sometimes it's caused problems. Have you ever had to renegotiate a rate or come back at some other point and increase a rate with one of your partners, a school or rehabilitation?

>> AMY BECK: Well, we have ‑‑ mostly what would happen for us would be that the school district might limit the number of hours that the young adult would receive services from us each day or over the school year because, you know, one of the things I've learned, and maybe the hard way, is that we want to be a premier provider of services. So we have to be able to make sure that we are well staffed, that we've got backup, that we've got great supervision, and that all of our processes are going to work to empower the young adult, and so we haven't done that ‑‑ I have done that in other projects and pretty much came to regret it because it's very hard to get whoever it is used to moving out of the bargain basement prices. They don't ever really want to pay you the fair rate.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Right. Right.

Jeff?

>> JEFF SHEEN: A couple of questions, Amy and Seth and Joe. Regarding the students that you are serving, first, are you working cross‑disability and then, second, do the services you're providing with the school contracts, how does that transfer to the students' diploma requirements?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: This is Seth. Yeah, definitely we've worked with students with all types of disabilities as far as the school‑based programming has gone, and as far as ‑‑

>> AMY BECK: A diploma.

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: As far as the diploma, the young adults we've worked with, they have been ‑‑ they have been more so the 20 years old, 21 years old, almost like that last year of school, and they've pretty much fit all their criteria for graduation and it was ‑‑ they were looking for other types of programming outside of school. So that's really where that came ‑‑ that really came for those young adults.

>> JEFF SHEEN: So you're working with that group we call post‑high, still in the school system, probably going to graduate with an alternate certificate or a delayed diploma.

>> AMY BECK: I want to make sure we clarify that in our Career Path services that are funded through VR, they are for young adults who have finished school. Some have even finished college. Occasionally the VR system asks us to work with adults of any age. So there is a division in how we do things, but because the group that we run here, called our skills path group, and that's for young adults to really kind of go through a bootcamp of what's it like to be in a job, how do I get ready, how do I build up stamina for what I want to do, how do I look for a job, those are typically young adults who have just finished high school and we've been able to blend that with some young adults going through our school‑based services who are that 20 to 21‑year‑old post‑high school student. So that has worked together really well for us and that is probably one reason we were able to make everything work, remembering that the schools would let us know the day before school started they were really ready to go with the services.

>> JEFF SHEEN: That's helpful. A couple other questions that have come in that are kind of pertinent this area.

Is there a waiting list for DD services in your area?

>> AMY BECK: A waiting services for which services?

>> JEFF SHEEN: DD services, what a lot of states call developmental disability services, the DD council, typically the population they work with. Do you have waiting lists for state services? Maybe that's not relevant to your role right now.

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: There are waiting lists and things like that for folks for services within Pennsylvania, yes, absolutely.

>> JEFF SHEEN: You did mention that students go out and try jobs during the course of the program or some of the different programs. Are you the ones setting that up or does VR counselors, are they the ones doing that? How does that work exactly?

>> JOE MICHENER: We are the ones setting those up. VR contracts with us to provide ‑‑ we call them assessments ‑‑ to provide those assessments, and that is based on the young adult's interests. So if it's an area or a career field that we don't have a site developed to go to, we basically work our tails off and get that site. Again, going back to that person‑centered approach and making sure that young adult has the opportunity to explore his or her area of interest.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you. Those were chat questions, just to be clear, for the audience. Richard?

>> RICHARD PETTY: This is a question for Joe. I bet you've got some great success stories. Could you share some?

>> JOE MICHENER: Absolutely. I think we could provide a lot of examples from all of our transition programs in the amazing young adults we work with.

To share one in particular that's especially meaningful for me, a young man who was one of the first participants in our Career Path program had actually gone through supported employment services through another agency, and that agency had told him that they didn't think he would be able to get a job and to maintain a job. I think one of the things that helped him be successful here is because our relationship with our local VR allowed us to spend more time with him up front to get to know him, as opposed to just, you know, going out and doing a couple of assessments. The young man went through our skills training and then through assessments, and through that process he just blossomed. He was very quiet when he first came to us and really just kind of came out of his shell when he learned he could trust us and that we were here to support him, and I'm happy to say he's been employed for more than two years in a competitive job and loves his job and loves what he does. So that's one success ‑‑ success story from me. Seth?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: As far as success stories, like I think back to a young adult that was part of our original S2L programming who went through person‑centered planning with his family with us and who actually ended up selling their house to move into another house to live on a bus route, and those parents told us that that was maybe the most single important transition‑related activity they did as a family, because they moved into this house where they had an off place ‑‑ an off apartment for his ‑‑ for their son and he could be more independent and the house was right off a bus route that could take him to where he needed to go. So to get that type of feedback and that kind of success has really been incredible for us.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Seth and Joe, a question that's come in: How would you distinguish your program and the things ‑‑ different programs you're doing with the youth from what other job coaching agencies might be providing?

>> JOE MICHENER: I think going back again, I hate to repeat myself, but that CIL approach, the person‑centered approach, consumer control, makes a big difference in what we do. Also as I mentioned earlier, taking those best practices and supported employment. One of the things that's unique to our program is the eight‑week skills training that we provide up front for the young adults in the Career Path program. And that's a break from the norm, at least in our area, and it's been truly helpful, especially for young adults just coming out of high school and they have ‑‑ they're used to that structure of school and just helping them transition into the mindset of employment. I think that's a big part of it.

Some things that have come out of that skills training that make our program different as well is the bond that the young adults have with each other when they go through that skills training. We've been seeing it throughout the course of the last two‑and‑a‑half years with Career Path where even after the skills training is done the young adults in the program are coming back and volunteering and supporting each other outside of the CIL, whether it be on Facebook or whatever. You'll see a post for a young person who has a job interview and 10 other young adults are going, "Good luck" and those kinds of things. So there's a community aspect as well to it that I think makes it really unique.

>> JEFF SHEEN: I think those are fantastic unique qualities. That natural social piece you have by is having the group go through an eight‑week experience together is fantastic.

This is a question that came up last week and come up now, are you using any particular curriculum? Did you come up with a curriculum for that skills training? I'm assuming there will be a follow‑up that, can people get a hold of that?

>> JOE MICHENER: We do use a particular curriculum. We have one of our vocational coaches comes from an education background and she has done an amazing job really putting together a curriculum that makes sense that works for a very condensed eight‑week program. The big part about that is that we are currently working on formalizing that curriculum and do not have it to the point yet where we could share it. It's usable and functional but not formalized.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Along those lines, can you give a taste of what some of the skills are that you do address in that eight‑week course?

>> JOE MICHENER: Absolutely. It's a lot of soft skill but ‑‑ I hate to soft skill because that can mean so many different things, but it's the change in expectations from what happened in school to what you will be expected to do on a job. A lot of our young adults, we use this example a lot with the young adults we work with, when you were sick in school your mother or father could call the school and tell them you're sick. An employer is not going to accept that. Just kind of going through a lot of those situational things. What do you if you're working with a co‑worker who is not a nice person? And how do you best deal with that so that you can get the positive responses? So we're working on assertiveness techniques and advocacy as well as going out in the community and applying those things and experiencing things, for our skills training anyway, as a group together, and that has made a big difference as well.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you. I think that's helpful to a lot of the participants that were wondering.

Before I turn it back over to Richard, a question for Seth: You guys obviously have a lot of great things that are going on, a lot of momentum, starting with grants, moving to fee for service. You're kind of sustaining this over the long term. You've expanded the number of youth you're working with. As you look forward in the next three, five years, how are you looking to improve or expand what you are doing with the schools and VR?

>> JOE MICHENER: I think a lot of it has come with our great relationship with VR and some of the schools. Like Amy and Joe said, they have been great allies in through all this, and we include them any on a lot of things, including many of our advisory boards for a lot of the work that we do. We're able to actually just recently obtain a few other grants working with OVR, working with schools in different types of ‑‑ different types of projects, including things like employment research and even we're going to be getting into a leadership in schools program. That's going to go statewide here. And looking at academic standards and how leadership can be developed into them for students across Pennsylvania. So we're going to be looking into working with schools a lot more and using the great relationships we've already built but then taking that even further. But we definitely ‑‑ we see schools as a great place for really ‑‑ where really a lot can be done with budget cuts and all that kind of things going on, if there's ways we can work and integrate together, you know, it seems like a great opportunity. And a number of schools in the area are interested in partnering with us, working more together. We'd like to get into schools more, maybe doing work or group empowerment‑based classes or sessions or interest groups. We've even talked a little bit about maybe having community experts or folks that could be at IEPs as community specialists. We really see the possibilities ‑‑ you know, there's just so much we can do.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Joe or Amy?

>> AMY BECK: I guess as far as how we would like to expand, we ‑‑ ultimately what we want is for students in special education to feel that they're getting a high quality equal education that brings them to a great transition. So I can only see us delving more into our holistic services. One area we would like to get into is to look at how can the system really respond to young adults who aren't college bound, who may not be ready for work? You know, people who want a meaningful life and want to find themselves just like every young a‑‑ themselves just like every young adult does. That's something, I don't know if that's us working with local colleges. We've put out some feelers there and are talking with them. So I think that's an area where we'd like to grow, to help people who maybe aren't ready for work yet but really want a meaningful, full life.

>> JOE MICHENER: I just wanted to add, too, we're constantly looking to expand services just in locality and branching out farther and farther to provide the services. Our Career Path skills training is the only one in the area, and I mean really in the area. So we would love to see that ‑‑ we have a lot of interest from east of Allentown here in the Bethlehem and Eastham area and sometimes it's difficult for young adults to get here to take part in that. Also, we are constantly ‑‑ one thing I love about working with Seth and Amy is we're always talk young about ideas and we've talk about a sustainable businesses as incorporating a sustainable businesses into our Career Path skills training, not as a place of permanent employment but as a stepping stone to just again work on all those skills that are essential to being successful in a competitive employment setting.

>> JEFF SHEEN: So to clarify, the center would establish a sustainable business and you would rotate the youth through that as a foundation as they get ready to go out into other opportunities?

>> JOE MICHENER: It would be basically part of our skills training curriculum. We've got a lot of ideas for that. There are some very successful models out there throughout the country that with certain tweaks we would like to apply as well.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Fantastic. Richard?

>> RICHARD PETTY: In just a moment I have a question for Amy, and after that we're getting close to time to ‑‑ when we can take some questions by phone, but if I could walk back to the discussion about curriculum for just a second, and at least something kind of close to that, and that is, you're working with youth, school‑age folks, behavior problems are probably not unknown for kids that age. Have you experienced that? And how do you deal with it when you do?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: We've definitely ‑‑ we have experienced some of that, and we tried a very practical, very positive approach with that. We've gone out and done some training along with how to work with folks in that regard, too. But we look at it in different ways, and what maybe the young adult is going through, how can we help them, and what can we teach them to help them deal with the situation. Are there different strategies ‑‑ we kind of look at that as independent living skill and how to deal with people, or how to deal with something as it comes up. So we really look at it on an individual basis and try to find the right approach, and may take a little bit of time brainstorm opportunities, brawn storm different approaches that a young adult can take.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Thanks.

>> JOE MICHENER: This is Joe. I just want to add, one of the things that we talk about here at the Lehigh Valley CIL a lot is that we can't do it all, and I think we do take that community approach, and part of our information and referral ‑‑ Amy is asking me, "What are you saying?" Part of that information and referral piece is that ‑‑ if a person needs an additional service that we don't provide is being able to point them in the right direction and helping them find perhaps the support they need so that they could be successful moving forward in whatever their goals are. So we're not afraid to reach out to other agencies to ask for help, too, or other just organizations.

>> AMY BECK: I wanted to say that we give a very clear message to the young adults, even a high school age young adult in our S2L program, in our portion. We definitely say, "You need to realize this is a busy agency. It is a type of a business. Those things that you did in school do not belong here." And we try to explain in a caring way that if there is a real problem here, we're not calling your mom and dad. We're going to have to call the police. Knock on wood, we haven't had to ever do that. We try to help people understand that this is ‑‑ this is an agency that's very important to hundreds of people, and we cannot have one person stop our operations. So we wilily had to look at that.

We have brought in a mental health first aid training for our staff, and I would encourage CILs that when you're moving in this, get training for your staff. Also because I think we set that tone, I know as a director and a long‑time social worker, I am always surprised that we have so few issues, and I think some of that is that we have a high level of staffing and they really know our participants and can deal with things and avoid things before they happen. So we have to be really honest in communication with young adults. Has there been times when someone is having a bad day and we think you need to go home because you've said some things that don't belong here, yes, that's happened but as Joe said, we look fully at everything we can do to support that person. To hopefully let them get to their goals.

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: And many cases it becomes a self‑fulfilling prophecies. They are young adults coming here to become more independent and become more adult, and they kind of take that role upon themselves in many cases. So we ‑‑ we have been very fortunate with that.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Thank you. Now for Amy: Have you had different levels of success with different school districts?

>> AMY BECK: Yes, we have. There's a great example, when we were running one of our transition conferences, which we've opened up ‑‑ have had anywhere from 150 to 350 people attend two‑day transition conferences, and one point a local Rotary Club that really believed in us and helped create a lot of good, positive dialogue about our potential, they were willing to sponsor a local school district to send 10 or 20 students to the transition conference evened with giving the district considerable notice the district would just not bring students. It didn't fit in their mold of, oh, when can we get the buses and, this might change our plans for the day, and I mean, we had every accommodation available, everything possible. We had guest rooms available if someone needed a break, needed some attendant care. We did everything. We were shocked that a district would just be high and mighty and not send anyone. So there's definitely an important learning that we wanted to tell you about.

There was one district that we knew very well, a family, the young adult we knew very well, and they came forward and they said that the school district has let us down on this IEP for years and the school district owes us to get our child into a better opportunity for the last two years of school. And Seth and I went to probably the equivalent of a good 40 hours of meetings with the school district and the school district really tried to play an upper hand. They put us down for articles we wrote in our newsletter. They tried to say they were negative. They were grasping at straws, any reason to fight back at us and we were not their adversary. They had failed this child. In the end after writing document after document and every possible piece of paperwork, and I mean hundreds and hundreds of phone calls, meetings, the family ‑‑ we found out at the last minute the family actually used us as leverage to get their young adult into another program, and in that case the school district had said, we're not putting this young adult into XYZ program in Lehigh Valley, we don't like that perhaps, but we will work with the CIL. So we believed that and worked very hard and developed things. A lot of hours spent on developing IEP opportunities. And what the family ‑‑ once the school district said, okay, we're willing to commit this many dollars, the school district had that in writing and the family said now that you're willing to commit that money, we're just going to take it and take it to the XYZ program you don't like. So we were shocked. So you have to have your eyes wide open. I would like to definitely say if you are negotiating with the school district we will set limit. We are available for one preliminary meeting up to this many hours and beyond that we will have to limit our negotiating time.

But I just wanted to say that the relationship you build with schools is key. You have to show them you're interested. We have always imparted transition councils which are local entities ‑‑ they're probable ‑‑ there are probably comparable entities around the United States but we have to show them that we're interested, that we bring value to the table. As we've all said, the relationships we developed over years has really benefited us.

>> RICHARD PETTY: That's important learning.

Jeff, do we have any web questions ‑‑ web or ‑‑ we're probably close to phone questions, too.

>> JEFF SHEEN: I have got one final question, and it kind of relates to some questions that have come across the chat, and this will be the last question I'll ask and then, Richard, if you want anything else, and then we can go to the phone.

The other important component when we're talking about young adults is working with the parents, because these are young adults that have not maybe transition to do complete independence or adulthood. What have you done specifically to get parents involved, to engage with them, and how have you maybe dealt with parents that aren't as engaged as the school and the youth themselves are?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: This is Seth. We work with parents in a number of capacities. Within our S2L, our school to life program, we have a parents group. We realized that as young adults are transitioning, so are the parents and their families. So we quickly realized that it was important to get the parents together, for them to have opportunities for learning and for growth. For some parents, this was the first support type group that they've ever been able to be a part of because their kid never fit into any category. So for them to have someone else to go to, maybe even from a different disability with a different thought and a different process, was very beneficial for the parents. They were able to share information, support each other, learn from each other, and they've taken opportunities ‑‑ taken it upon themselves to do things, too. They didn't want it to be just a place to go and complain about what was going on. They also wanted it to be something very positive where they could be doing things to help their young adults and other young adults. So we've done things like letter writing campaigns, video campaigns that we send out to legislators and the governor of Pennsylvania and that kind of thing, too. So we've tried to really provide for the parents, too, giving them information, giving them support and things that they may need. As far as the Career Path program goes, I think I'll turn that over to Joe because that turns into a little different dynamic with those young adults being usually over ‑‑ of adult age and having to work with the parents through that.

>> JOE MICHENER: As Seth mentioned, the majority of the young adults in the Career Path program are out of high school. They're over the age of 21. So it really is on an individual basis the level of parent involvement. We have some parents that are very, very involved in what's going on with young adults in the Career Path and we have others who have openly stated that they don't want any part of it or a young adult doesn't want them to be any part of it because they're looking to be as independent as possible. So it really is a case‑by‑case basis. We don't in the Career Path program have a parents group. We just haven't really seen the desire or the need for it at this point. And as far as our school based services go, I would say that the parents have been highly involved in ‑‑ in all things. It comes back to person‑centered planning and things we've done for young adults. As that plan going through the school year, and updating that regularly, and myself and other folks in the program, we'd have regular contact with the parents as far as options of things going on and how can we do this and what works here and let's try that. And so using ‑‑ giving them the information but also using them and their knowledge to do everything we could for their young adults.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you. Richard, do you want to ask another question or do you want to switch to the phones?

>> RICHARD PETTY: Why don't we go to the phones but I'll just mention that we didn't make this just real clear earlier, the question that Jeff just asked and several, several of the questions, other questions that we've asked, were questions that you sent in when you registered for the webinar. So we ‑‑ those of you in the audience, we've been wanting to cover all the questions that you asked in advance, and I think we've gotten to almost all of those, and we'll try to squeeze all of them in before we finish, but why don't we see if we've got some phone questions.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Those of you on the phone and would like to ask a question, you simply need to hit star pound and that will queue you up and the operator, Patricia, will let us know when we have questions. We have time for a handful here. So go ahead and hit star pound if you have a question, and then, Patricia, I'll ‑‑ are there any questions that have come insofar?

>> OPERATOR: And I'm showing no questions in the queue at this time.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Okay. While we're waiting for those to kind of queue up, I'll give Seth, Amy and Joe kind of a final round of advice column stuff. For those centers just starting to think about this whole process, you've given some good advice throughout this conversation. What would be one final piece of advice you might have for those centers?

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: I would say it's all about those relationships. Building relationship, partnering with the right people, showing them that you're trustworthy, willing to work hard, finding the right people in the schools and other areas, finding ‑‑ like for us, it's finding those teachers who are the champions than kind of see things more like we do and that are that are willing to put themselves out there more, and for us, that has been ‑‑ that has been key. It really has been. Finding the people for us, too ‑‑ for us too it has been finding the people around the state. Folks from the Department of Education or even there's a group here called the Pennsylvania youth leadership network and partnering with them and finding other people who believe in us as we believe in them and working with them closely to help things ‑‑ help things being done.

It's really interesting, we've been told that we've really built a culture here at the CIL, and for us, that has been a real important piece.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Amy or Joe?

>> JOE MICHENER: I was just going to add and I think Amy might be saying something similar here, but going to the school districts, to VR with really innovative ideas. I'm speaking for Amy because a lot of that was done before I got here but we continue to do that on a regular basis, being as creative as possible and taking the approach and as Seth said, building those trusting relationships. That's what I've experienced since I've been here at the CIL and that's probably where a lot of my earlier comments came from because I see the positive results of all the established relationships that at the ‑‑ that the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living as created.

>> AMY BECK: Joe is being modest. He has brought dozens of relationships that benefits the young adults in our programs. I would just throw out that I think that I don't you have to be positive, be aggressive in looking for opportunities. We not only have the grant from the Pennsylvania developmental disabilities council, we had a small grant to help us start doing the transition conferences. That we got a grant from a large insurance corporation to help us supplement what we were doing in the Career Path. There have been several others. We had a Rotary Club, as I mentioned, a Rotary Club believed in us when we first started our services for young adults through the S2L program, and they helped build some excitement about it, create a buzz, and that helped us to get funders interested. We heard that the Rotary Club is behind you doing a fund‑raiser, and it just all led to good. Even up through now when we had a local motorcycle club approach us wanting to adopt our program in a fund‑raiser, who knew that we would have a group like that approach us, and it leads to good things. So we try to stay open minded and we ‑‑ often Seth will say it's all going to come back to good, and I really believe that.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you. I'm going to check with Patricia and see if there is anybody queued up on the phone.

>> OPERATOR: There are no questions in the queue at this time.

>> JEFF SHEEN: I have a couple that have come in from the chat if I can.

When you've got young adults involved in your program, as part of that are you having them sign independent living plans? Once you answer that, the follow‑up question, are you working with or collaborating with the search projects in your area?

>> AMY BECK: Can I start with the first part. We offer each of our consumers the opportunity to have an independent living plan. It's their choice. It's not a requirement. So once we explain to people the independent living philosophy, there are a substantial number of people who decline having that plan. However, if you are going to be in our Career Path services, you do have a lot of goals, and they come through the VR system. We collaborate on those goals. So it's kind of a backdoor yes on that, and I'll let Joe follow up.

>> JOE MICHENER: I believe the second part of that question was about Project Search, is that correct.

>> JEFF SHEEN: That is correct.

>> JOE MICHENER: Yes, we have actually ‑‑ the Project Search in our area has only been around for about three years, maybe a little longer, four years, but we have just recently become the provider of their job coaching services for one of their new sites that they have just established and, again, that goes back, they wanted us to do it based on the reputation of what we were doing in the Career Path program. They were very keen and interested on the person‑centered approach to things and so far that relationship is going well. Again, that goes back to what Amy was talking about diversifying funding and looking for opportunities. Our local VR office cannot provide 100% of the funding for the services that many our young adults need. So we've gone, as Amy mentioned, to private sector grants and fundraising and even connecting with our county, our local county offices, to supplement the funding from VR. It seems to me, and I imagine this is a trend across the country, that you can't just have one funding source. It's really not the way to sustain yourself or to grow.

>> JEFF SHEEN: There is another question that's come in, and this is a question that's probably not ‑‑ its own series of webinars more than likely, but when you're talking about getting grants, the question is about how does a CIL get a grant. I would rephrase that for this webinar: Do you have grant writers on staff? Have staff received any grant writing training? What resources have you used to help yourselves? If you're a small center and never written a grant, what advice would you have for someone in that situation?

>> AMY BECK: Well, my advice would be to start by getting to know local funders in your area. Go to events where they are. Go to things they sponsor. Get to know if you can visit or get involved in a service club to learn about organizations that make grants, that would be very helpful.

CILs are required to be looking for diversified funds, and we do have a grant writer, he's our director of development, and actually we honestly call him G money. His name is Greg, but his job is so tied to finding resources for us we call him G Money, and it's a constant thing for us evaluating a grant. Greg a lot of the grant writing here but we do work as a team. We work as a team to develop the ideas. It happens both ways. Sometimes we're looking for a grant to fund an effort. Other times we see a great opportunity and know we can provide that service because it aligns with what we're doing. So it's a two‑way street. Developmental disabilities council in Pennsylvania does give out smaller grants for grass roots projects that might be a great way to start in grant writing, but I would recommend that you look for grant programs as far as learning to develop grant writing skills. We see them offered through the federal government at times. We are a member of some listserves that send us grant opportunities. And also there are trainings through the association of fundraising professionals that you can ‑‑ there may be a chapter in your area. You may even be able to attend a few of their meetings and get valuable information. I believe through ILRU or similar organizations we've seen opportunities about grant writing workshops. So they are very, very much worth it. Greg did bring a background. His education really is in communications. So he is an excellent writer. And I think we bring together a team with excellent ideas. We have a very strong fiscal person that really helps you get a great grant together.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you, Amy. You mentioned several great resources in your response to that question. I appreciate that.

One final check. I know we're getting ready to wrap up in the next 10 minutes or less than 10 minutes. Any questions on the phone, Patricia? Patricia, is there anybody queued up on the phone with questions?

>> OPERATOR: There are apparently no questions in the queue.

>> JEFF SHEEN: Thank you. Richard, I'll turn it back to you, then, to let you wrap this up.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Okay. Just one question to step back, for those who might not know, what is Project Search?

>> JOE MICHENER: This is Joe. Project Search is a nationally recognized program that works with young adults in their final year of high school. It is an internship model. It was developed, I think, in Cincinnati ‑‑ right? Cincinnati at the ‑‑ one of their hospitals there where a small group of soon to be high school graduates would spend their last year in school working in the hospital in different positions. They would do internships through a rotation. So they had various options there. But because of the success of that program, it has been applied to all over the country and there are Project Search programs in a lot of areas. We as a CIL do not run the Project Search program but we have partnered with them to provide the services after the young adult graduates from high school. We then help with searching for, obtaining and maintaining a competitive position once that process is done.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Great. By the way, another excellent resource for grant writing training is the foundation center, and you can find their web site by Googling it, and get on their mailing list and they will announce trainings ‑‑ they're not necessarily as close to you as the society of fundraising professionals. Those may be in your own communities or at least within your region. But there may be trainings in your state or close by from the foundation center, and they're an excellent resource.

A question for Amy, and this is back to what you would recommend for someone wanting to start either working with schools or working with Vocational Rehabilitation or really, I guess, any program, starting any new program, and I may ask you to think back not when your center was much smaller and when you were a board chair and even when you had other roles. What would you recommend as some of those first steps for that uncomfortable time when maybe you're just doing core services or maybe you're doing core services and just another ‑‑ maybe another small program? That's a hard time to make that move into the next step. Do you have any pointers that you would offer for a center in that situation?

>> AMY BECK: Well, it may sound corny, and you didn't ask me to say this, but when I was a new Executive Director I did participate in some ILRU trainings. There was a local rep who kept in touch with me and really helped me, and I also went to NICL's conference and I heard some points there, it was my first couple years, and I never forgot some of the things that I thought could move the agency forward, and I've had plenty of moments where I can tell you I have been typing grants and crying at the same time because of the pressure I felt, and I ‑‑ but I think what it all really comes back to is people in leadership at the CILs really understanding what your consumers need in your region and whether that's getting consumer input, asking your staff, and, again, our staff had said, I would like to ask staff periodically at team meetings, "What are you hearing?" One year the staff said to me, "we're having a lot of people who come through the doors who do not have money for food." It led us to start thinking, what can we do, how can we have an opportunity? We have a small emergency food outreach program. I think it's staying in touch with the consumers in your area. That's the way we honor our consumer control roots. So don't give up. Just keep plugging away. Get to know legislators. I really like working with our state associations of CILs, PICL, and they've shown me opportunities and the other CIL directors have helped me time and time again. We want to say we would be happy to have you contact us through our web site. You can follow us on Facebook and Twitter through our web site. Or you could easily contact any of us through that, through our web site, which is WWW.LVCIL.org. We've got to be in it together because we're nothing if we're not united in being the best CILs we can be for people with disabilities in the United States.

>> RICHARD PETTY: That's a very empowered approach, which coming from a center is a good thing. So I appreciate the way that you saw opportunities and a way that you could become involved and do something useful and important in an area that might be outside of a center's normal range of work when you started the food outreach program. So that's very interesting.

Amy, Seth, Joe, any closing comments or remarks that you'd like to make as we wrap up?

>> JOE MICHENER: I just wanted to say thank you for the opportunity. We really enjoy what we do, and as you can tell, we have a lot of excitement and a lot of energy for what we do and to be able to share that is a lot of fun and very meaningful for us. So thank you.

>> SETH HODEREWSKI: Yes, this is Seth also. I just want to thank you for opportunity. It was a lot of fun. Thanks so much.

>> AMY BECK: Yeah, we were thrilled to share. Thank you so much for the chance. We hope to hear from some of you.

>> RICHARD PETTY: Well, all of you, thank you. You have just done a fantastic job, and it's been very interesting to learn about your excellent program and we look forward to hearing more about it from you. So it's been a great experience and great job, everyone.

Carol, if you'll wrap us up, please.

>> CAROL EUBANKS: Sure. Thank you, Richard, Jeff, Amy, Seth and Joe. Before we conclude we want to recognize ILRU's Darrell Jones, Sharon Finney, Marge and Don, all of whom had important roles in making this webinar teleconference possible. We also recognize Dr. Judith Holt and others at Utah State University who are partners in the new community opportunity center. As Richard said earlier we very much need and appreciate your evaluation feedback. Please take a few moments to complete the evaluation form for this webinar. It is, we promise, very brief. It will take just a few minutes. We use your feedback to improve our work and to make our training more useful for you our customers.

The link to the evaluation is on the final slide that's on your screen now. All of you also received a link to the evaluation in the registration instructions you received by e‑mail earlier this week. Those of you participating by phone can use the e‑mail link. ILRU's new community opportunity center is funded through the Rehabilitation Services Administration under Federal Grant H400B100003. Their endorsement of the content of this webinar should not be inferred. On behalf of all of us at ILRU, this is Carol Eubanks. We encourage you to watch for future announcements of other ILRU webinars and training. Watch your e‑mail inbox and check our web site often at www.ilru.org. Good day. This concludes our webinar.