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Get to the Core of It: Peer Support – Best Practices in the CIL Core Services

August 13, 2019

Presenters:

Sarah Jo Jorgensen

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IL-NET is a project of Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) in partnership with the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL), and Utah State University Center for Persons with Disabilities (USU-CPD)

What You Will Learn Today

- Types of mentoring, program start-up and delivery structure, and the background and philosophy of Independent Living Choices (ILC) Peer Support Program.
- Key program elements that include peer recruitment, training, youth transition, volunteer retention and recognition, and supervision.
- Innovative social media strategies and technologies that encourage enhanced and expanded interaction within peer support groups.
- Examples of ILC's interactions with Tribal Nations that develop volunteers and promote cultural competence in peer support.

Contact Information

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Agency Overview

- Established in 1982 as a private non profit (501c3)
- Agency Name – Independent Living Choices
- Agency Mission – We provide services to people with disabilities who make independence their choice.
- Agency tag line – Opening doors for people with disabilities
- Our main office is located in Sioux Falls with expansion offices in Aberdeen, Brookings, Chamberlain, Huron, Martin, Mitchell, Mobridge, Watertown, and Yankton.

Core Services

- Advocacy
- Independent Living Skills
- Information & Referral
- **Peer Counseling/Support**
- Transition (Institutional Transition, Institutional Diversion, Facilitation of Youth Transition)

Peer Support

Providing opportunities for people with disabilities to talk, one-on-one or in a group, about life experiences.

- Individual Peer Support
 - One-on-One Peer Visitor Volunteers
 - Peer support provided via phone, email, or in person
- Groups
 - Disability specific – Brain Injury and Parkinson's
 - Age specific – Youth/Young Adult (16 & up) in Sioux Falls and Watertown
 - Cross-disability for all ages

Peer Support Background

- Core Service of Independent Living Movement
- The concept of peer support had its beginnings in 1939 with the establishment of Alcoholics Anonymous, which believed that persons who had experienced the problem of alcoholism and overcome it would be more effective in assisting others who were trying to do the same. -**Thomas D. Carter, Jr., Ed.D**

ILC Peer Support Program Background

- Prairie Freedom Center for Independent Living (now Independent Living Choices) began in 1982 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.
- Peer Support became a core service.
- Began with individual peer support.
- A handful of peer support volunteers received referrals from a local hospital rehab unit.
- Eventually started the Sioux Falls Cross-Disability Peer Support Group by collaborating with the same hospital rehab unit.

ILC Peer Support Program Philosophy

- Participants can be helped most effectively by others who have “been there, done that.”
- By sharing how they have dealt with and overcome struggles and challenges related to their disabilities, participants learn, grow, and become more independent.
- Both parties benefit from the opportunity to interact with each other.

ILC Peer Support Program

Two types of peer support offered:

- Individual Peer Support
- Group Peer Support

ILC Individual Peer Support Program

- Volunteers are “Peer Visitors” and those requesting the service are “Participants.”
- Currently 40 volunteers.
- Almost 1,000 participants matched with a Peer Visitor since 2008.
- Offer support, guidance, and encouragement.
- Serve as role models and mentors.
- Contact participants at least once per month via phone, email, or in-person visits.
- Number of participants vary per volunteer (1-30+).
- Report monthly to Program Coordinator.

Peer Support Program Recruitment

- Peer Visitor and participant required to meet in a public setting when receiving in-person peer support.
- #1 Rule of Volunteer Recruitment – ASK!!!!
- Rely on Independent Living Specialists for referrals.
- Utilize area volunteer recruitment agencies/websites (211 Helpline, volunteer clearinghouse, DOVIA, RSVP).
- Other referral sources include local and regional hospitals, counselors, schools, mental health organizations and professionals.
- Include a peer support referral form when opening files.

Peer Support Program Recruitment, cont'd.



Peer Support Referral Form:

Are you interested in a peer support group session? Yes No

Are you interested in having a Peer Visitor? Yes No

Would you prefer peer support by: visit phone email

Are you interested in becoming a Peer Visitor? Yes No

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Email _____

Disability _____ Age _____

Goals you'd like to work on with your Peer Visitor (please check all that apply):

Social Recreational _____ Build Self Esteem _____

Access to Community Resources _____ Self Advocacy _____

Adjustment to Disability _____ Volunteer Opportunities _____

Any additional goals you'd like to work on:

Participant Signature

Date

Staff Signature

Date

Peer Support Program Recruitment, cont'd. 2

- Referral form received from ILS.
- Participant fills out application.

Peer Support Program Recruitment, cont'd. 3



INDEPENDENT LIVING CHOICES
4107 S Carnegie Circle
Sioux Falls, SD 57106
Telephone: (605) 362-3550

PEER VISITOR APPLICATION

GENERAL

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Alternative Phone _____

Highest Level of Education _____ Occupation _____

Disability (optional) _____ DOB _____

Email _____

Person to Reach in Case of Emergency _____

Relationship _____ Phone _____

Have You Ever Pled Guilty To Or Been Convicted Of A Misdemeanor And/Or Felony Offense?
 Yes No

If you have answered "Yes", please fully explain, including all relevant dates, location, and offense in the space provided below. (All information is subject to verification.)

Date: _____ City/State: _____ Offense(s): _____

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Special Volunteer Training _____

Volunteer Experience _____

Hobbies/Other Interests _____

Do you have transportation? _____ If yes, what is your primary source of transportation? _____

Will you be willing to travel? _____

Peer Support Program Recruitment, cont'd. 4



- Interview/explanation of program to potential volunteer.
- A good selling point is that they can participate in this volunteer opportunity from the comfort of their home, when it works with their schedule.
- Training
- Reference checks
- Approval/denial letter sent to potential volunteer.

Peer Support Recruitment — Selection Letter

June 17, 2019

Dear ,

At this time, I am happy to inform you that you have been selected to become a Peer Visitor Volunteer for the Independent Living Choices Peer Visitor Program. I will contact you as soon as I have one or more participants with whom to match you for peer support. Thank you again for your willingness to serve others with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Sarah Jo Jorgensen
Peer Support Program Coordinator

Peer Visitor Training

- Training occurs one-on-one or in a group setting.
- Facilitated by Peer Support Program Coordinator.
- Can occur in-home, at the office, or in a public setting.
- Generally lasts 1 ½ hours.
- Focuses on confidentiality, suicide prevention, active listening skills, conflict resolution, boundaries, program requirements, and disability etiquette.
- Enlist a local counseling agency to provide training.

Peer Visitor Training, cont'd.

INDEPENDENT LIVING CHOICES PEER SUPPORT VISITOR PROGRAM TRAINING MANUAL

Welcome to the ILC Peer Support Visitor Program! We're excited that you have expressed interest in becoming a Peer Visitor volunteer! As a potential Peer Visitor, you may be wondering what you can expect when you are matched with a participant. The following information will help acquaint you with our program.

What is a Peer Visitor? Peer Visitors are people who have a disability and have successfully achieved living independently on their own. They are volunteers who have “been there” and are willing to assist others to achieve their own independent living goals. They have demonstrated effective coping abilities, good communication and listening skills, and are knowledgeable about resources and living with a disability. They are able to make the necessary time commitment and have shown a sincere desire to help others adjust to their disabilities.

What do Peer Visitors do?

Peer Visitors:

- Offer friendship, support, and encouragement
- Are willing to advocate on behalf of the Participant and others
- Act as a guide, coach and mentor to their Participant
- Can be contacted after regular business hours
- Serve as role models and share how they became independent

Are there some things that a Peer Visitor does not do?

The Peer Visitor does not:

- Date the Participant
- Pay for the Participant's lunches, movies, clothing, etc.
- Attend inappropriate social situations with the Participant (bars, casinos, etc.)
- Provide personal care, home maintenance, or run errands for the Participant
- Accept frequent or expensive gifts
- Work harder than the Participant to achieve goals
- Attempt to be a medical professional or therapist

Questions & Discussion

Individual Peer Support Program Delivery

How are matches made?

- Disability
- Location
- Gender
- Age
- Background (interests, hobbies, education, profession, etc.)
- Participant Request

Individual Peer Support Program Delivery, cont'd.

- ILS gives referral form to Peer Support Program Coordinator.
- Review database of Peer Visitors and choose appropriate volunteer.
- Contact Peer Visitor and give them information from the participant referral form. If they do not accept the match, contact a different volunteer. If they accept the match, mail letter to participant requesting the service.

Individual Peer Support Program Delivery— Match Letter

June 17, 2019

Dear ,

The Independent Living Specialist (Amanda) you are working with from Independent Living Choices informed me that you are interested in talking with a Peer Visitor volunteer. I have matched you with _____ from Sioux Falls. He will be contacting you soon.

If you have any questions or concerns about our Peer Support Program, or would like to receive training to become a Peer Visitor volunteer with ILC, please feel free to contact me at 362-3550 or toll-free at 1-800-947-3770. Thank you for your interest in this program.

Sincerely,

Sarah Jo Jorgensen
Peer Support Program Coordinator
Independent Living Choices

Individual Peer Support Program Delivery —What if Match Doesn't Work?

- What happens if a match doesn't work (and sometimes, they don't!)?
- Participant, Peer Visitor or ILS relay the info to Peer Support Program Coordinator.
- A different match is made.



Individual Peer Support Program Delivery

—Reasons for Ending Match

Common reasons for ending the match:

- Hospitalizations
- Personality clashes
- Peer Visitor or participants becomes unavailable due to schedule changes (school, work, volunteering, etc.)
- Boundary issues
- Lack of contact from participant (3x rule)

Individual Program Delivery

- Once the participant's peer support goals have been met, the info is relayed to the Peer Support Program Coordinator by the ILS or Peer Visitor.
- Peer Support matches may last days, months, or years.
- After the peer support goals are met, the participant and Peer Visitor are welcome to continue their friendship outside of ILC.
- Often, Peer Visitors know more than we do about the participants and their needs.

Supervision

- Monthly contact with Peer Visitors.
- If there are complaints, provide additional training for areas in need.
- Offer an option to take a break; most eventually return.
- Grounds for suspension/dismissal include breach of confidentiality, failure to show up for participant appointments without rescheduling, and inability to carry out program and policy reporting procedures.
- Procedures for dismissal include verbal and written warning, and termination.

Retention and Recognition

- Monthly support and additional training
- Hand-written cards for National Volunteer Recognition Week in April
- Utilize other volunteer groups to help create/assemble recognition items.
- Holiday gifts (notecards, tumblers, birdhouses, etc.)
- If your budget is small, get creative!
- Say THANK YOU any chance you can get!!!!!!!



ILC Group Peer Support Program

- Began with one Cross-Disability Peer Support Group in Sioux Falls.
- Has expanded to 30 groups in multiple counties.
- Most led/organized by ILC staff.
- Overall goal for the group is for peer leadership.
- Some groups are disability-specific (TBI, Parkinson's).
- Some are age-specific (youth groups – age 16 and older).
- Most meet monthly, but some meet quarterly or don't meet in the winter, etc.

ILC Group Peer Support Program, cont'd.

- Each group is completely different!
- Support
- Speakers
- Crafts
- Recreation/Activities (especially for youth groups)

ILC Group Peer Support Program, cont'd. 2

- Size varies (2-25 participants)
- Food works! (Thanksgiving dinner)
- If your budget is small, utilize free activities and events.
- Average amount spent on a monthly group (\$5-15).
- If money remains in our budget at the end of the fiscal year, it is divided between all of our groups and they decide how it is spent (craft supplies, bingo, field trips, ice cream social, etc.)

ILC Group Peer Support Program— Starting a Group

- When starting a group, consider specifics such as disabilities (cross-disability or disability-specific), ages, budget, etc.
- Poll your members to determine what the group focus should be (activities, speakers, support, etc.).
- Consider collaboration with other agencies (Family Support 360, hospitals, apartment managers).
- If a member tries to dominate the group, consider using a ball or other object for people to hold when they are speaking.

ILC Group Peer Support Program— Choosing a Location

When choosing a location for your group, consider the following:

- Is there a specific apartment complex in which many of your participants reside? If so, contact the apartment manager.
- Use your center if you have the space.
- Other locations include churches, community centers, senior centers, and libraries.
- Be flexible (ex. Crocus Meadows-Greenway).

ILC Group Peer Support Program—Groups

Independent Living Choices Peer Support Program

The Independent Living Choices Peer Support Program offers a variety of ways for participants to get involved in their community and with other people who have disabilities. Along with individual peer visitor support, we offer various groups that meet monthly in selected areas throughout eastern South Dakota. Peer support groups feature monthly speakers and/or offer a variety of activities. Meetings and most activities are free to participants, but if there is a charge associated with the activity, it is usually at a discounted rate and participants will be notified in advance. **If interested in attending any of the following groups, please contact an Independent Living Specialist at your ILC office for exact time, date, and location information.**

Individual Peer Support Counseling- the opportunity for people with disabilities to give and receive one-on-one peer support with others who have similar disabilities. A person receiving peer support may meet in person with their Peer Visitor or receive support via phone/email. Training is provided to those interested in being a Peer Visitor. If interested in giving or receiving peer support counseling, please tell your IL Specialist or contact Sarah Jo at Independent Living Choices by phone at 605-362-3550 (1-800-947-3770 toll-free) or email at I-l-c@ilchoices.org.

Aberdeen Adult Cross Disability Group

When: One Thursday of each month from 1:30-3pm
Where: Independent Living Choices located at 110 6th Ave SE Ste. 101 in Aberdeen.

Aberdeen Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Group

When: 3rd Tuesday of each month from 7- 8:30pm
Where: Rehab Dining Room on 4th floor at Avera St. Luke’s Hospital, 305 S. State Street.

Aberdeen Youth Support Group

When: Once a month date and time will vary (usually from 4-5:30)
Where: Varying locations depending on activity or event.

Brookings Area Brain Injury Support Group

When: 1st Thursday of each month from 3-4pm
Where: Brookings Hospital conference room C 300 22nd Ave., Brookings

Brookings and Beyond Peer Support Group

When: 3rd Thursday of each month from 1-3pm
Where: First United Methodist Church basement at 625 5th Street in Brookings

Chamberlain Peer Support Group

When: 3rd Tuesday of every other month at 1pm.
Where: Community Room at Courtland Apartments at 120 S. Courtland St. in Chamberlain

Freeman Peer Support Group

When: 3rd Thursday of each month at 2pm
Where: City Hall at 105 E. Main Avenue in Freeman.
Note: group does not meet in the summer months.

Gregory Peer Support Group

When: 2nd Tuesday of each month at 1pm
Where: Community Room at Senior Village Apartments at 811 Rice St. in Gregory.

Huron Fun with Friends Group

When: 1st Thursday of each month at 3:30pm
Where: Community/Dining Room at Courtyard Apartments at 1225 Minnesota S.W. in Huron.

Example of Annual Activities for Sioux Falls Youth & Young Adults Peer Support Group

YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT PEER SUPPORT GROUP ACTIVITIES 2019

Only one IL Specialist is currently listed per month, but will need one for every five youth attending each group

Jan. — Winter craft/hot chocolate bar	AL/SJ
Feb.— Ceili dance class	CZ/SJ
March-Board games	MR/SJ
April—Rock painting	VM/SJ
May- Born This Way movie	NW/SJ
June—Moonlight movie at Fawick Park	AL/SJ
July— Fishing at the Outdoor Campus	CZ/SJ
August— Discovery Mime Theater	MR/SJ
September-Bowling	VM/SJ
Oct—Halloween Party	NW/SJ
Nov—Bingo	AL/SJ
Dec—Holiday movie/pizza party at ILC	CZ/SJ

Example Sioux Falls Cross Disability Peer Support Monthly Flyer

ILC CROSS DISABILITY
PEER SUPPORT GROUP



When: Tuesday, May 14th from 2-3:30pm

*Where: Independent Living Choices located at
4107 S. Carnegie Circle in Sioux Falls.*

What: Presentation by Big Paws Canine



ILC Group Peer Support Program Facebook Peer Support Group

- Created a Facebook Peer Support Group in September 2018.
- Closed group.
- Open to South Dakota residents with disabilities.
- Must answer 3 questions in order to be admitted (what is your disability, where do you live, do you receive services).
- Share disability-related info, discussions about living with a disability, challenges (kindness, etc.).
- Especially useful for those in rural areas.

ILC Peer Support Program—Focus on Tribal Nations

- New phase of peer support will focus on tribal nations.
- Many have participated in individual peer support with both native and non-native Peer Visitors.
- Will need to modify traditional group structure and title – talking circles (feather, talking stick).



ILC Peer Support Program— Don't Give Up!

- If at first you don't succeed....keep trying!
- Peer support can be one of the most challenging services to provide, but it can also be one of the most rewarding.
- Consider joining volunteer coordinator networks.
- Good luck!!!!!!!!!!

"Any one of us could be affected by an unexpected life event or illness where peer support will be vital to our recovery and wellbeing"



Questions & Discussion

Final Questions and Evaluation Survey

Any final questions?

Directly following the webinar, you will see a short evaluation survey to complete on your screen. We appreciate your feedback!

https://usu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cwDeWwFcPRo4P2d

CIL-NET Attribution

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