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

Presented by Matt Cain and Sarah Jo Jorgensen  
August 13, 2019

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Tim Fuchs with the National Council on Independent Living. I want to welcome you all to today's IL‑Net webinar "Get to the Core of It: Peer Support." It's brought to you by the IL‑Net project of Independent Living Research Utilization. It's a partnership among ILRU in Houston, NCIL in Washington, D.C., and APRIL in Little Rock, Arkansas. Support for the project is provided by Community Living at the US Department of Health and Human Services.

I want to go through some housekeeping items and tips before we get into today's call.

So first of all, we are recording today's call so that you can access it on ILRU's website, where we archive all of our IL net trainings. We are currently in presentation mode. So your lines are muted, but you will be able to ask questions during our Q&A break.

The easiest way to do that is on the Q&A tab right here in Zoom. If you haven't used Zoom before, you can find the Q&A tab in the menu bar at the bottom of your screen. That does have a tendency to auto hide itself. If you don't see that menu bar, you might just run your cursor over the bottom of your screen and it should pop back up, if it's hidden.

There's a couple over ways, if you don't want to or cannot access the Q&A tab for any reason, first you are welcome to email me questions during the presentation. I have got my email up and I'm happy to voice them for you, especially for those of you that are only on the phone today and not using the webinar.

Second, today's webinar is of course fully captioned and you can turn the captioning on in the Zoom options at the bottom of the screen, that same menu bar.

You can use the arrow on the captioning on the right‑hand side of the captioning box to manipulate the size of that box. It will make it larger, but if you want to manipulate the size of the font or the contrast of the captioning, I would recommend that you all use the full screen captioning at streamtext.net. So that link is a little too long to read out, but it was sent to you in the confirmation email that you received. So if you want to make the captioning larger or change the font or contrast, you can do that there.

I wanted to let you all know that anyway, but speaking of questions, there is a chat feature on that full screen CART. I'm logged in there as Tim Fuchs. You can submit your questions on that Streamtext chat box, and I will voice them during the Q&A, all the same.

And kindly enough, Sharon from ILRU posted that link in the chat. So you can see it there. Let me just mention a couple of other things. First of all, at the end of today's call, there's an evaluation form, and when you ‑‑ when I close the webinar at the end, that will pop up on your screen.

So I would like to ask you all to please take a minute or two to fill it out. It's short. We make it as easy as we can to complete, but we really do want our feedback on today's webinar. The link for the webinar was also included in the confirmation email. So you can access that link there. Please do tell us what you thought. We use them as conversations in how to improve our webinars.

I think the last thing I wanted to mention, there's also a chat feature. So if you enter ‑‑ you know, we like to encourage you to use the Q&A tab to submit your questions but if you accidentally put it in the chat, no problem, we will find it. The chat is really helpful if you want to talk to other participants, if you want to submit a comment that is not a question or if you have technical issues. That's a great place to let us know. If you have any technical problems during the call, let us know there and we will help you troubleshoot them while we are connected here. All right.

That's the end of the opening announcements. I want to introduce our presenters today. We have Sarah Jo Jorgensen and Matt Cain. I want to thank the time they put for preparing today's presentation and sharing their expertise with us. Matt and Sarah Jo are both from Independent Living Choices from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Matt has been with the center since 2006 and since that time, Independent Living Choices has undergone a name change. They have more than tripled the people of people they serve each other and expanded their office locations from four to ten.

Sarah Jo is their program ‑‑ excuse me, peer support program coordinator, and referral coordinator. And they have done a great job pulling together a summary of what they ‑‑ how they run peer support at their CIL. And I'm going to go ahead to slide three now and talk about some of the objectives that they have put together for today's call.

So first, we will learn the types of mentoring, program start‑up and delivery structure and the background and the philosophy of Independent Living Choices 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, enhance, and expanded interaction within peer support groups.

And finally, examples of independent living choice's interactions with tribal nations that develop volunteers and promote cultural competence in peer support.

We have a packed agenda. Here on slide 4, Matt and Sarah Jo have been kind enough, or foolish enough to offer their contact information. The only thing missing is my contact information. Luckily my email is very simple, it's just Tim@NCIL.org.

That Tim@NCIL.org. Whether it's on today's live call or a follow‑up question, you can always reach out to me and we'll make sure to get you some answers. That's everything I wanted to do on the intro. I will go ahead to slide 5 and turn it over to Matt and Sarah Jo to take over.

>> MATT CAIN: Thank you, Tim.

As Tim said, my name is Matt Cain. I have been with the agency since 2006, and we appreciate everybody joining us today. I will just kind of go over some of the basic information and Sarah Jo, being the brains behind our peer support program, will talk to you a little bit about what we do at our center in South Dakota for our peer support and our different offices. So a little background information, our center was established in 1982. At that time, it was called Prairie Freedom Center for independent living.

And we were established as a 501(c)(3) private nonprofit. It was actually established by a group of people with disabilities, who needed services and were unable to find services in the area, and that is why it was established. That group of people came together, got a board together, and established it as a center.

As Tim mentioned, then in 2010, we changed our name to independent living choices which is the current name. The reason for doing that was to really try and advertise to people more what we do by our name, plus our upfront secretary would always tell me it was a mouthful to answer the phone and say Prairie Freedom Center for Independent Living.

Our current mission is pretty simple. We provide services to people with disabilities who make independence their choice. That mission was rebranded when we did the renaming, and we just wanted to be simple about what it is that we do.

Our agency tag line is: Opening doors for people with disabilities. If you could by chance see our logo or if you ‑‑ you probably can't on this, but our website is www.ilcchoices.org. It's ILC in red, and the L actually makes in a reverse door that is opening, and so it kind of goes with our tag line.

Also, as Tim said, our main office is here in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. I'm sure many of you are not familiar with South Dakota. South Dakota geographically a pretty large state, population‑wise not so big. South Dakota is about 900,000 people. Sioux Falls is the biggest city in South Dakota with 190,000 people and probably about the only other city in South Dakota that maybe somebody has heard of it is Rapid City because it's out in the Black Hills.

We currently serve 54 counties in South Dakota with the main offices in Sioux Falls and then we have nine other offices across eastern, northern, southern South Dakota, that provide those services to the 2,000 plus people we provide services to. A lot of windshield time in South Dakota when you are providing services.

So I will go on to slide 6 and talk to you a little bit about the five core services that you all know by now, advocacy, independent living skills, information and referral, and then peer support, which is why we are here today, and then the newer transition for all of us, which is transition services.

And today, we are going to focus mostly on peer support, Independent Living Choices, peer support program, and kind of how we established that, set it up, the things that worked for us, and the pros and cons. And I will kick that off to Sarah Jo with slide number 7.

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Okay. Thanks, Matt. And thank you all for joining us today. Again, my name is Sarah Jo Jorgensen and I'm the peer support program coordinator here at Independent Living Choices. I have been here since about 2007, so just about as long as Matt. And I would say it was probably between eight and ten years ago ‑‑ I'm not sure when, but I was fortunate enough to have Matt as my executive director. And he was fully supportive of making our peer support program better and devoting a person to that. And so that was the start of all of it.

I was able to attend a training out in Baltimore, and I just ‑‑ I learned so much! And I really hope that I'm able to impart some of that knowledge with you guys. I came into the role. I had a counseling background, but didn't know how to run a program, how to start a program like that. And the training was just so beneficial and I'm so thankful I was able to attend it.

So much of our model is based on the Ability 360 model. They were the presenters at the program. I believe back in the day, they were ABLE was their name, but they have changed it to Ability 360. So the literature I use for training and that sort of thing, I make sure that reference them, adapted from ABLE's peer support program. So feel free to do the same with our stuff.

All right. With our peer support program, we define it as providing opportunities for people with disabilities to talk one‑on‑one or in a group about life experiences. We have both individual and group peer support. We have one‑on‑one peer visitor volunteers, and peer support can be provided by phone, email, social media, or in person. And then we also have groups. And they can be disability‑specific, such as brain injury and Parkinson's. They can be age specific. We have I don't know how many youth groups do we have now? They keep popping up. That's a great thing!

This has Sioux Falls and Watertown and I know added Aberdeen and Mill Bank and a couple of other smaller towns to this list. And we also have cross‑disability groups for all ages.

We can go on to the next slide. All right. So just a general peer support background. You know, it's been a core service of the independent living movement, and the concept had its beginnings in 1939, with the establishment of Alcoholics Anonymous, which believed that persons who experienced the problem of alcoholism and overcome it would be more effective in assisting others who were trying to do the same.

And on a personal note, you know, I have been coordinating this program for many years now, and it wasn't until just a few years ago that I was able to experience it myself. I was rear ended by a bus here in Sioux Falls and I suffered a concussion from it. I could talk to my friends and coworkers and family, and everyone was very supportive, and it was wonderful. But only others who have undergone something like that can truly understand. And so it was so powerful for me.

One of my good friends had sustained a concussion as well, and so we still, you know, talk about, it how it still affects us, and what we do to overcome it, overcome those challenges every day. And so it's just ‑‑ it's such a powerful ‑‑ a powerful program and so I just ‑‑ I really want to inspire you guys to make your programs better for those we serve.

All right. We will go to the next slide. Okay. Did you want to do this one, Matt?

>> MATT CAIN: Sure. Kind of repetition for what we said before on slide 9, Prairie Freedom Center now Independent Living Choices began in 1982 in Sioux Falls. Peer support became a core service. I think when we first started out, we only provided individual peer support and most of that was face‑to‑face. And like with anything, things change, and people change and I think our world has changed to the point that face‑to‑face is probably not real practical for everybody anymore. People like the different options that we have.

One of the newer ones is with our office in Mobridge, we have a staff member who does a Facebook live peer support group, and it seems like that is something that people like.

So what we originally had to begin with was a handful of peer support volunteers who received referrals from a local hospital rehab unit. That's where the peer support got its start and where we had our first group who needed peer support. I remember one of the first people who has since passed away, that received peer support from us at that point, was a 21‑year‑old individual who was in a car accident. Had a spinal cord injury, and, you know, he wanted to know things like, how are my kids going to react to this? How is my life going to change? How is my wife going to react to this? How does life go on?

I remember hearing that and thinking, there's really no way I can answer that because I don't know that. This is how that started and how at least I first understood the impact that that could have to link him up with somebody that has been through that, that could really answer those questions, kind of similar on a different level to what Sarah Jo was mentioning.

So that is kind of how that all started for us on slide 9. And I will let Sarah Jo speak more about that.

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Sure. Okay. So our program philosophy is that our participants can be helped most effectively by others who have been there, done that. And that just kind of goes along with what we were both saying about only someone who has gone through the same thing can truly understand. By sharing how they have dealt with and overcome struggles and challenges related to their disabilities, our participants learn, grow, and become more independent. And finally, both parties benefit from the opportunity to interact with each other. And I hear this all the time, from our volunteers, they always say, I get just as much out of this as the people I talk to. And that is ‑‑ it's just such a great thing to hear. I love that. And it's why a lot of them just keep doing it, year after year, and we're so lucky to have our volunteers.

Okay. We'll go to the next slide. Again, the two types of peer support that we offer are individual peer support and group peer support. So let's do the next slide, please.

Okay. So our individual peer support program. So our volunteers are called peer visitors. I know in some of the other centers, they might be peer mentors, peer counselors, but we have chosen peer visitors as our volunteer name. And then the people requesting the service are our participants. At the time of this ‑‑ when I wrote this, we had 40 volunteers, but I have actually been on a training spree recently and we are currently at 45 volunteers.

We have served almost 1,000 participants with a peer visitor since I started keeping track in 2008, and I looked today and we are at 972. So anticipate that we will serve 1,000 by the end of the calendar year for sure, and possibly by the end of our fiscal year, which is September 30th of this year.

They offer support guidance and encouragement. They serve as a role model and a mentor to their participant. They contact their participants at least once per month and that's either by phone, email, social media, text, or in‑person visits.

And they vary with the number of people that they contact. So I have quite a few that only talk with one person per month. I have got, you know, probably ten that contact five to ten people. I have got a few that contact over 30 people per month. That's ‑‑ that's awesome! And they ‑‑ and I have got a great problem in that I've got some volunteers who are calling me weekly. Do you have any more referrals for me? Can I please have another referral? And I'm a member of a local volunteer coordinator group, and they all just ‑‑ they can't believe that that's my problem. They always say, we don't have enough volunteers! And so that's ‑‑ it's a great problem to have, and we're just very lucky here.

And then finally, they report monthly to me. And they can do that by ‑‑ I send out a monthly email, where if I have additional training, or just additional information that I want them to know, I will send out that email and then they reply to that email and let me know how things are going with their participants.

You know, some people just say, yep, things are going fine. And others send a novel, and that's fine. Either way is fine with me. I just want to hear from them and make sure that they are contacting their participants and they are very good about that.

For those who don't have email, they call or they also have option of mailing in a form, and I'm not sure if I have included that or not. If I haven't, then feel free to email me and I can get you a copy of that form. We call it a visitation report and they can just record when they talk to the person, and just any general information, how long they talk, that kind of thing.

Okay. We can go on to the next slide, please.

Next, its peer support program recruitment. The peer visitor and participants are required to meet in a public setting when receiving in‑person peer support. We just made that rule because, you know, we want to keep everyone safe. We don't want to put anyone in a position where, you know, someone could say, oh, they stole this from me! They hurt me. Anything like that. And so we ‑‑ we ask them to meet in public. I do allow that if they live in an apartment complex, if they have a community room, that's okay. We just don't want them in each other's homes to meet in person.

The number one rule of volunteer recruitment is ask. And this goes for absolutely anything. For my church this summer, I led music for our vacation Bible school, and I had someone tell me, boy, I didn't help this year because I wasn't asked. And so basically, with any type of volunteering, you need to ask.

Again, I have been very lucky in my role where I will get people just calling. They aren't necessarily participants of ours. They will just call me and say, hey, I heard that I could participate and become a volunteer for you. Is that ‑‑ is that okay? And I about do cartwheels when that happens.

(Laughter).

But it's very rare. And so just ‑‑ just make sure you ask. That's the number one rule.

I rely on our independent living specialists for referrals and they are so wonderful. Peer support is definitely a group effort. You know, it takes a village. And so it's so important to get ‑‑ if you don't have someone in my role, just for peer support, it's so important to get those independent living specialists on board. Basically, what happens and I think I have this later on ‑‑ oh, yeah. Yep.

What happens is whenever an independent living specialist opens a file with a participant, I have a form in the file and it asks the person ‑‑ let's see here. It asks them, are you interested in a peer support group session? Are you interested in having a peer visitor? Would you prefer peer support by a visit, phone or email and are you interested in becoming a peer visitor?

And then it gives their name address, phone, cell phone, emails, disability age, and that will be on the next slide. So you will all get a chance to see all of this. I'm kind of running through it. And then it gives six general goals. And those include social/recreational, access to community resources, adjustment to disability, build self‑esteem, self‑advocacy and volunteer opportunities.

Because we realize we are not the only agency in town that needs volunteers, and so ‑‑ or they might just not be interested in our volunteer opportunities. So we want to make them aware of others in the community that are available as well. And so when they open ‑‑ when the independent living specialist opens a file, they go through this form with the participant and that's their chance to indicate if they want to receive or to give peer support. And so that's ‑‑ that's been a huge source of our referrals.

Again, like I said, I get the occasional call from someone who was just on our website and saw that they could participate in peer support. And that's wonderful, but a majority of our referrals are from the independent living specialists. I would also encourage you to utilize area volunteer recruitment agencies and websites. So I am a member of ‑‑ it's called DOVIA and I'm not sure how many states DOVIA is, but it's Sioux Empire DOVIA and its local volunteer coordinators. Pretty much any nonprofit you can think of, their volunteer coordinator attends this.

So it's great support for me as a volunteer coordinator, and they provide training and conferences and it's been very valuable to me.

We also have a 211 helpline center and I'm not sure how many states have that as well. And that's just a local clearinghouse. They provide a bunch of different services, but one of the most beneficial is the suicide crisis hotline, and then they also have all of the volunteer opportunities in the entire city, and they have expanded to other counties in South Dakota. And so for most of the state, they have all of the volunteer opportunities listed. So I'm able to advertise our volunteer opportunity with them. And that's awesome.

And RSVP, retired senior volunteer program, I think it is. It's a way for your volunteers 55 and older to also be recognized. We have a contract with them and ‑‑ and they are just ‑‑ you know, I know a lot of you probably have small budgets for peer support as I do. And so I never ‑‑ I never ‑‑ Matt is saying what?

(Laughter).

It seems like I can never recognize them nearly as much as I want to and so it's so important to be able to refer some of those people to RSVP so they can recognize them as well. It's awesome.

So other referral sources include local and regional hospitals, counselors, schools, mental health organizations, and professionals. And just in the last year, I have really been surprised at where some of our referrals have come from. I have received peer support referrals from counselors at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and just all over the country. And that's awesome to hear that our name and our program is getting out there.

So ‑‑ and, again, I would definitely recommend for just beef up your program to include a peer support referral form when the independent living specialists are opening new files with participants. If we go to the next slide, that is the form that we use.

I see it's very tiny.

(Laughter)

I hope you all can see that. But that's the form that the independent living specialists fill out with the person, and, so, yeah, that's been very valuable for me.

And let's see here. So what happens is the independent living specialists, those of us ‑‑ those of them in the Sioux Falls office will just give me a copy of this form. And those independent living specialists in our expansion offices will make a copy and either scan and email it to me, or send it by snail mail and what happens is I will look through this and then look through my database of available peer visitors and make the match. So I will go into that in more detail later on.

Okay. So we can go on to the next slide, please. When I get one of these forms and ‑‑ and it indicates that the person wants to become a peer visitor volunteer, I will send them an application. And that's either via email or snail mail. We can go to the next slide, please.

And this is a copy of our application. It has their name, address, city, state, ZIP phone, highest level of occupation, disability, date of birth, email, person to reach in case of emergency. Sorry, I'm reading all of this, but I feel like it's really small. So bear with me. Person to reach in case of emergency, asks if they ever pled guilty of a misdemeanor or felony offense, and when and where and what it was.

We ask about their special volunteer training and volunteer experience. Hobbies and interests. We ask what their transportation is and what their source is. And if they were willing to travel. I didn't have room to put the second page. It just asks if there's any specific topics that they feel like they have a lot of experience with. You know, that could be death, grieving loss, managing personal attendants, that type of thing. And then we asked for references. So ‑‑ and then ‑‑ and then just they sign and date and just everything they tell me is true.

Then if we want to go to the next slide, please.

Okay. And then once I have that back, I can either do an interview with them and an explanation of the program, just to let them know what they are getting into. Even with these ‑‑ with the training and the interview and all of that, I still get people who go through it all and say, yes, I'm very interested sign all of the paperwork and then they never contact me. You know, you just never know. But a lot of this is just set up so that that cuts down on that kind of stuff.

A good selling point is that they can participate in this volunteer opportunity from the comfort of their own home. And when it works with their schedule. And so that's what I kind of like to start out with, when I'm talking to someone about becoming a volunteer, is that if you only want to talk to one person per month, that's just fine and you can do it on your own time. It's not like volunteering at a hospital where you have to be there every week from 10 to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. It's very nice because a lot of our participants have mobility issues and transportation issues. And so to be able to get that great feeling of volunteering from our own home, is just invaluable.

And also, you know, some of our volunteers, if they start school or if they start a full‑time job, they have the option to take a break from peer support, and then come back when they have more time. Or if they are snowbirds or something like that. You know, we are very flexible with that.

Next is the training and the reference check and then the last part of the process is I send them a letter approving them or denying them. All right. And then on the next slide is a copy of this letter that you can all see.

It just says, dear whatever their name is, at this time, I'm 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.

So that's kind of our training process. Now I will go into a little bit more about the actual training. So if we want to go ahead ‑‑ thank you.

All right. So the training occurs either one‑on‑one or in a group setting. And it usually lasts about an hour and a half. And I can either go to their home or they can come to the office or we can meet in a public place. I was just visiting one of our groups up in Aberdeen, and no one could make it to the office. And so we ended up meeting at a grocery store in their cafe. And it was about five of us. And so, yeah, we get creative and people are very, you know, easy going and they'll work with you.

So the training focuses on confidentiality, suicide prevention, active listening skills, conflict resolution, boundaries, program requirements, and disability etiquette. And, you know, I feel comfortable doing this training because I have a counseling background, but if you don't, I ‑‑ I would suggest enlisting a local counseling agency to provide training, if that's within your budget. That's what they used to do before I took over this program. We had a counseling center right next door to us, and they would come and provide training. But unfortunately with that, they can only do it, you know, a couple of times a year. So the ‑‑ so the advantage of doing it yourself is that you can ‑‑ you can do it any time you want, and therefore train more people.

All right. We'll go to the next slide. This is ‑‑ oh, they are all so tiny!

This is the first page of our training manual and so what I have done is just kind of break it up into question and answer segments. The first one, is what is a peer visitor? And it kind of gives them the general description. The next is what do peer visitors do and then just have them listed as bullet points. They offer friendship, support and encouragement. They are willing to advocate on behalf of the participant and others. Act as a guide, coach, and mentor to their participant. They can be contacted after regular business hours. I'm sure most of your centers are opened Monday through Friday 8 to 4:30, but we all know that problems done just arise during those hours. It's so important that if a participant has ‑‑ has something happen, that they can contact their peer visitor on the weekend, or in the evening. So ‑‑ and finally, they serve as a role model and share how they are independent and overcome everyday challenges related to their disability.

Then we review what some of the peer visitors do not do. They don't date their participants. We ask if they meet in public, if they are going to meet or coffee or lunch, it's a do Dutch situation, and they each pay for their own. And we want them to provide their own transportation. Even if one drives and the other doesn't, we don't like them to give rides just for liability purposes.

They don't attend inappropriate social situations with their participant. They don't provide personal care, home maintenance or run errands for the participant. And we have had this happen. We had ‑‑ we had a participant who lived about an hour away from Sioux Falls call her peer visitor who was in Sioux Falls and said, can you come up here to watch my kids so I can go to Walmart?

(Laughter).

Unfortunately, all of the things on here are on here for a reason. So they don't accept frequent or expensive gifts. We do tell them that, you know, a lot of times they become really good friends, and so if they want to give each other birthday or holiday gifts, that's okay. It's ‑‑ we just don't want them relying on each other for necessity items, and that kind of thing. And another ‑‑ another story that I'm fond of telling is that one time, I had the peer visitor volunteer give me a call up and she said, Sarah Jo, my participant is in an abusive relationship and she's leaving her husband. She has two kids, and she has nothing. Is it okay with you, if I leave a bag of necessities with you at ILC to give to her? I said that's okay, as long as it's a one‑time deal. She's not depending on you for a monthly ‑‑ you know, these monthly necessities. She said, yep. It was a one‑time deal.

One the participant got back on her feet and got a job and doing well. She quilted in her spare time and she quilted her peer visitor a quilt. So occasional gifts are just fine.

We ask them not to work harder than the participant, to achieve the participant's goals and sometimes the participants would be more than willing to let them. In the participant tells them, yep, I'm being evicted. I don't know what to do. And if the peer visitor were to say, well, I live in an apartment over here on west side of town and I know there's an opening, I can give my landlord's number, or I can get you an application. That's totally fine. If the participant were to say, could you just talk to your landlord for me, or could you just fill that application out for me? No, that's doing the work for them.

And finally, they don't attempt to be a medical professional or a therapist. Again, I was not able to ‑‑ to include the rest of our manual, but it's got a bunch of different questions and answers. Just, what are my responsibilities as the peer visitor, which I kind of already outlined? How do I become a peer visitor, who are the participants? What are their responsibilities? And they are much the same as the volunteer. They agree to have at least one contact per month with them and work on achieving their independent living goals with their help, to pay their own way in social situations, arrange for their own transportation to be ready and on time for the meeting, and to do the work themselves and don't expect the peer visitors to do it for them.

And so, yeah, that's ‑‑ that's a little bit about the training. I think of after ‑‑ yeah, after the questions, we will go a little more into training.

All right. So do we have any questions so far?

>> TIM FUCHS: Great! Great job so far. We do. Let's start with the first question that came in. Before we read it, I want to remind people about the ways that you can ask questions. So, of course, you can use the Q&A tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen. I'm also logged into the chat feature on the full screen CART captioning at streamtext.net or you are welcome to email your questions to me at Tim@NCIL.org.

So the first question comes from: Carol and ask, are you getting anyone from outside the state join your Facebook peer support group?

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Yes, we have the ‑‑ the staff in our Mobridge office started the Facebook peer support group as I believe it was part of an internship that she was doing for her social work degree and she started it that it was open to everyone. But I have since taken it over, and it is a closed group for South Dakota residents. The rest of our services are limited to South Dakota.

Those who are in are grandfathered in, but now we just have it for South Dakota residents at this point.

>> MATT CAIN: And those people are from North Dakota generally. The Mobridge office, if you are unfamiliar with South Dakota, is right up on the South Dakota/North Dakota border and that tribal nation goes into South Dakota and North Dakota.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Great. Thanks.

All right. Next question comes from Rebecca. Rebecca asks: Do you keep stats so you can prove the program's benefits? So what kind of outcomes or reporting do you all do on your peer support programs?

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Yep. I keep a spreadsheet of when they have started, when they closed, and all of the independent living specialists when they are getting ready to close a file, they will check in with me and make sure that their participant has been contacted. They will also ask the participant, but every once in a while, the participant might not know ‑‑ you know, they might have a cognitive disability or something like that, or, you know, in that case, they check in with me and I confirm whether or not the person has been contacted.

Sometimes the peer visitor will contact the participant and won't hear back from them. And so it's also a way to kind of double check that. I hope that answers the question.

>> TIM FUCHS: Great. Yeah.

Another question from Rebecca. Rebecca asks: Are there training companies who we can pay to teach us how to train our own peer support groups? I will take a first stab at this and then you all can add anything want to.

So I didn't know of any companies that will train peer support groups, but in addition to today's presentations, we have a lot of content on peer support programs. So one thing ‑‑ this is ‑‑ I actually just shared this in the chat. If you haven't seen it on the webinar.

I just sent a link to the on demand page for peer support resources and again, that's on ILRU's website. The link is a little long to read. I just shared it in the chat. You can click open it there, and then you can go to ILRU's website and look for training and peer support service.

And Sarah Jo mentioned the training that Ability 360 did and indeed we did a few trainings with them, both webinars and on site with them, in their peer support program. The reason shared that, they do have an entire peer support manual, just like Independent Living Choices and that's posted on the web page now. So you could look through that, get some great ideas for policies and procedures around peer support, and ‑‑ including, you know, training for them.

So that's something. And then the other thing I want to remind you all, for everybody on the call, that we are here at NCIL and ILRU and APRIL, everyone on the IL‑NET program, we are not just providing and coordinating training, we are also providing technical assistance. So if there's something that we can help with, please do let us know and we can help to point you to resources or help you as you prepare things.

Okay.

I have a few questions here in the Q&A. Let me go there now. So Lenore asks, do you have non‑volunteer peer mentors and how do the volunteer mentors record notes to show how the participants are progressing towards their goals?

So first question how many non‑volunteer mentors? And then how do your volunteer mentors record their own outcomes?

>> MATT CAIN: I will take the first part of that. Really the only non‑volunteer peer mentors we have now are staff with disabilities. Of course, we are paying them to be staff. Oftentimes staff work as peer support volunteers because they have that natural relationship with the person that they are providing services to.

There are times, however where those staff are providing different services, whether it be IL Skill services training and the person would like to see somebody else for that peer support. And then that's when Sarah Jo matches them up, but other than staff, all the rest, I believe, are volunteer peer support providers.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay.

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Can you repeat the second part of the question?

>> TIM FUCHS: Yes, it's kind of an expansion of what the question was a minute ago. Are there ways that the mentors record their own statistics or outcomes? That's how I took it.

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Okay. Sure. Not really. It's basically just a ‑‑ the visitation reports. They could use that. I also provide a goal sheet for them. That was requested by one of my peer visitors here in Sioux Falls and it has short term, midterm and long‑term goals and I always tell them if you want to use the sheet, you are welcome to. You can write your participants' names next to each of the goals to keep them separate and that kind of thing.

But otherwise, it's just that monthly reporting to me. So by email, phone, or snail mail.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Great. Okay. Anonymous asks. What is a good web service to do a virtual group meeting? And could you talk more about Facebook live and how does that work procedurally and if there are any costs associated with it.

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Sure. We just have the Facebook page and I'm the administrator of it. I just basically post up every day and, you know, just informational things ‑‑ or I ask them, you know, just different questions. And they all respond and ‑‑ but, no, there's no cost to it that I know of. That's just Facebook. I'm sure there are other ways of virtual peer support groups, but we just have the Facebook peer support group, and so that's free.

>> TIM FUCHS: Great. I will plug Zoom as well that, we are using today. There's a feature ‑‑ or not really a feature, but a format in Zoom that's set up more like a meeting than a webinar. So everybody is visible at all times. Everybody can talk at all times, just like a group meeting. And we found it to be very accessible and very easy to use, and very low cost. In fact, we have a paid version because of the nature of some of the national webinars that we do, but there are free and low‑cost versions for smaller groups that could be a good option for CILs to consider.

Okay. The center in Toronto is wondering if participants fill out any forms. So I know you talked about this a couple of times Sarah Jo, but anything that the participants fill out?

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: No, just the first referral form. You know, just stating their goals and that kind of thing. And then they will also talk one‑on‑one with their independent living specialist when it's time to close their file. Occasionally, a participant will give me a call as well if they have a concern or something like that, but otherwise, nothing to fill out.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. All right. Thanks. Deborah asks, what if a participant can't get out of their house. How can they receive peer counseling if they want face‑to‑face meeting, but they can't leave their home.

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: That's a case where we can utilize Zoom or that kind of thing. I'm not well‑versed in social media myself. This Facebook group is my first foray into that world, but I'm not ‑‑ you know, they could do ‑‑ I'm not ‑‑

>> MATT CAIN: Skype would be another option.

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: And I'm not sure you can do Facebook live like ‑‑ yeah. We need a social media expert for that.

>> MATT CAIN: And, you know, if it really came to that, I don't think we have had that situation probably.

>> TIM FUCHS: Yeah.

>> MATT CAIN: If it really came to that, on that situation, it was somebody that really needed that face‑to‑face peer support, we would definitely make sure that we could make some type of accommodation for that. It's just like when we serve a participant, I'm sure you have participants that maybe had legal issues or unsafe or other situations and we go in in groups at that point if it's somebody that can't leave their home. Just make sure that, you know, we are putting our staff in a safe situation.

>> TIM FUCHS: Right. Okay. Good.

Well, we have borrowed the full ten minutes for this Q&A break. I have five or six great questions sitting here. What I will do is I will get back to the PowerPoint and we'll continue and then when we take our final Q&A break at the end of the call, I will be sure to start with these questions that we got and the order that they came in. So with that, I will go to slide 22 and turn it back over to you all.

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Okay. Great. The next part is the support ‑‑ the peer support program delivery. How are the matches made?

I usually try to match first on disability, and gender and, you know, age, I do ‑‑ I do try to match on that, but I found that we have no problem with 22‑year‑olds calling 82‑year‑olds. Sometimes that's the best match. You just never know. So age is ‑‑ you know, I try to match on it, but ‑‑ I try to match on, it but it's not one first things I look at. Again with location too, unless they want to meet in person, that's not really a big deal with the advances in technology and social media, and cell phones. We don't have to worry about long distance anymore. It's obsolete there.

I also try to match on background. You know, I might find out from an independent living specialist that someone really likes to read. Then I will go through my list and if I have got someone with the same disability who enjoys reading, then that could be a possible reason for the match. And then finally participant request, a lot of times will have ‑‑ and I'm sure all of you in your Independent Living Centers have the same thing. We have repeat customers. We close the file and then six months later, they will need another service.

So we reopen them and they request peer support again. They want to talk to the same person that they wanted to talk to before because they established such a great relationship for them.

That's how I make the matches. All right. We'll go on to the next slide, please.

So, I kind of covered this already. I receive the referral form from the independent living specialist and that's either ‑‑ they scan an email or give it to me in person or I receive it in the mail. And then I will review my database and make the match on those criteria that I just mentioned. And then what I do, I will contact that peer visitor that I choose. And I ‑‑ most of them have email. So it's usually by email, but there are some that only have contact via phone. So I will give them a call and now I actually just trained some people who want it only by mail. That's something new for me. So I will actually be sending them their referrals via snail mail.

So anyway, what I do is I contact them by one of those forms and I give them the information that was on that referral form that we covered a while back with the goal, the participant's name and address and phone information and that kind of thing. And they will let me know then if they want the referral or not. It could be that it's someone in a very small town, and they already know this person and they feel awkward providing peer support, that kind of thing.

It could be that they are too busy and that's just fine. I have one guy who we have got the Sioux Falls Canary, the baseball team here and he's in charge of all the umpires for the Sioux Falls Canaries and the baseball association, and so this is his busy season. And so, you know, I send out my monthly email. He's like, yep, I'm still in the midst of baseball. It will be winding down next month. So I know for next month, I can start giving him matches. But for now, just hold off.

So what I do then is if they ‑‑ if they decide not to accept the match, I thank them anyway and I always tell them, don't feel bad about saying no to a match. There's always other people that I can match. I don't want them to feel pressured. I just contact the next person on my list that would be a good fit.

So if there is a match, I sent the participant a letter. I probably instituted this maybe seven or eight years ago, because when I first took over the program, we weren't doing that and we have got a lot of folks that might have a cognitive disability or Alzheimer's or something like that, and they don't remember that they have signed up for this program. So they think they are getting a cold call and they will hang up on the person.

Or it might take me a little while to make the match and they might have forgot than they have ask PTSD for a peer visitor. I send them a letter saying, yep, your independent living specialist said you are interested in receiving peer support from a volunteer, and that's actually on the next slide, if you go to that next one, please.

So I in parenthesis, I put the independent living specialist, because that kind of gives them a heads up, oh, yeah, Amanda, I have been working with her. And then I say I have matched you with ‑‑ and I put the peer visitor's name and the city that they are located. That's all of the information that they get about who will be contacting them.

And so that ‑‑ that was a huge lifesaver. That staves off a lot of headaches. It's a reminder that they have signed up for this program. Sometimes I send out this letter and the participant says I changed my mind and I don't want a peer visitor anymore. I just let the peer visitor know that. It's been a real time saver for a lot of us, because just kind of reminds them that they have signed up for this.

And then I just let them know that they will be contacting them soon. And when the peer visitor does accept the match, I always tell them, okay, why don't we wait a few days before you contact them, just to make sure, you know, that they get ‑‑ they have enough time to get the ‑‑ to receive the letter. We have got one town here in South Dakota, it's called Watertown and I don't know what's going on with the postal system up there, but it takes everything at least a good week to get up there. So, yeah, if you know your area and know there's certain towns that the postal system is a little slower, keep that in mind.

Okay. So the next slide, is what if a match doesn't work? And sometimes they don't. So what happens is the participant might let me know. They might let their independent living specialist know, or it might be the peer visitor will let me know. And that is just fine. And we just make a different match. So yeah, that's ‑‑ it's pretty easy. We want to meet their goal, any way we can, and so if it's just not a good match, then we find someone who is.

So if you go to the next slide, please.

Okay. So some common reasons for ending the match, are hospitalizations, personality clashes. The gentleman I told you before is ‑‑ the head of umpires in Sioux Falls, you know, he can't do it during the summer. I have a gentleman who drives a school bus, and so during the school year, he's pretty busy, but during the summer, he can make up for that. I work with all of them, with anywhere schedules.

Boundary issues and finally lack of contact from the participant. And I always tell the peer visitors that if they have contacted their participant three times, left voice mails, emails, whatever, and they haven't heard back to let me know. And at that point, I investigate. And one story I have of this I mean, you just ‑‑ you wouldn't believe the scenarios that we have. We had people go visit their ‑‑ their son in Wyoming for the winter and not tell anyone. We had that happen.

My favorite is we had this gal sign up for peer support, and her peer visitor had a very common first name and a very common last name. And so she called the participant three times, and ‑‑ and wasn't able to leave voice mails. Tried three times and let me know. Sarah Jo, I can't get ahold of this gal. So I contacted the woman's independent living specialist and said will you check with her to make sure that she's home, to make sure she still wants peer support. Maybe she just changed her mind. The independent living specialist contacted her and she said, yes! Yes, please, have her call. She said, I have narcolepsy, and so I fall asleep and sometimes I just don't hear the phone. And so the independent ‑‑ or I'm sorry, the peer visitor called her again three times and this went on for months. And finally, we said, okay. We got to try something different, because this participant keeps saying she wants peer support.

And so what we did was we had the peer visitor send her a card, and then I don't know if she put her address on it or maybe just a participant saw the address up in the upper left‑hand corner of envelope or what, but immediately, she got a call from her ‑‑ from the participant. And what happened was this gal ‑‑ the peer visitor has a very common name, and it was the same name as the participant's ex‑sister‑in‑law. So here that kept coming up on her caller ID and, of course, she wasn't going to answer her ex‑sister‑in‑law's phone calls. It's just kind of crazy.

There's all kinds of scenarios. It's great thing to investigate and find out what's happening.

Okay. So the next slide, once the participant's peer support goals have been met, the info is relayed to the peer support program coordinator by the independent living specialist or peer visitor.

I have this at the end that often the peer visitors know more about them than we as the independent living specialists do. It's just crazy. They talk ‑‑ you know, basically, our independent living specialists might contact the person at least once per month, sometimes these peer visitors become such good friends that they talk daily. And so they will let us know, yeah. You know, they are in Wyoming visiting their grandson that kind of thing. So it's great. They are kind of the eyes and ears of our program.

The matches may last days, months or years. And after the independent living peer support goals are met, they are welcomed to continue their friendship. We have a ton of people who still tip to talk but it's the end of their independent living, peer visitor, participant relationship once that file is closed.

Okay. We can go ahead to the next slide, please.

Okay. So for supervision, I have monthly contact with the peer visitors and, again, that's either by email, phone, or mail. If there are complaints by any participant, I try to provide additional training for those areas in need. And, again, if a peer visitor doesn't have the time or they are burned out or something, I offer the option to take a break, and most eventually return. I have just had two in the last month reopen files and they say, I want to resume peer support. I want to become a visitor again. So that is awesome.

Grounds for suspension and dismissal include breach of confidentiality, failure to show up for the participant appointments without rescheduling and inability to carry out program and policy reporting procedures. And procedures for dismissal include verbal warning and written warning and termination.

But, again, with a vast majority, we just ‑‑ we take a break and they usually come back. So ‑‑ all right. Next slide, please.

Okay. All right. So retention and recognition. Like I said before, I'm sure those of you in my position have the same problem. There's never enough money for peer support, and so recognition is really hard. So some of the things that I do, you know, the monthly support, every ‑‑ every month when I email them, call them, send them things in the mail, I'm always telling them thank you. And ‑‑ because that's ‑‑ it's just huge. They are giving of their time, and we just ‑‑ we appreciate it so much. I try to give them information about what's going on and provide additional training for them. I send them handwritten cards for national volunteer recognition week in April. And I think that's usually ‑‑ maybe the third week in. April. Around there.

I utilize other volunteer groups to help create and assemble recognition items. And so the handmade cards are usually made by other volunteers. And that's where the 211 helpline comes in. They are constantly sending out emails saying, okay this group is going to be in town for a week, or this school is looking for a volunteer project. Do you have anything? And so we're very lucky that way. And so I will give them all of the supplies and then the instructions on what I need and so usually it's thank you cards, get‑well cards, sympathy, and birthday, that kind of thing. And that's just been awesome to utilize those groups.

I do purchase holiday gifts but, again, since our budget is small, I try to get creative. I have done note cards before, from, I don't know, you guys is Hobby Lobbies in your cities or not, but necessity have got little packages of cards that are super cute and they ‑‑ you can get them on sale for like $5. The 211 helpline, again, they had a volunteer opportunity where people made bird houses and they had a bunch leftover. And so I was able to provide bird houses one time and people loved those.

Occasionally we have done tumblers and that kind of thing, from promotional websites and everything is gone over well. What is great about our volunteers is, you know, they all say we don't care what we get. It's just nice that you recognize us and appreciate us. So that's wonderful.

And finally, say thank you any chance you can get. Every time I talk with one of our volunteers, I'm sure they are probably sick of it, but I'm always telling them thank you. Without them, we wouldn't have a program. So ‑‑ all right. Well, we will move on now to our groups.

Okay. So, again, we begin with one cross‑disability peer support group in Sioux Falls and we have now expanded to 30 groups in multiple counties throughout South Dakota. Most of you are groups are led or organized by an ILC staff member, usually an independent living specialist. But the overall goal for our groups is for peer leadership. And, again, of them are disability specific, like traumatic brain injury, Parkinson's, that type of thing and some are age specific. We have several youth groups. And like, with my youth ‑‑ I have five groups here in Sioux Falls that run monthly, and one of my groups is a youth group, with an age of 16 to 25. But I have since taken that 25 age limit off, because a lot of my youth, they might be in their 30s now, but they are not necessarily ready for that adult group, and they still love coming.

Most of the groups meet monthly, but some of them meet quarterly or they might not meet in the winter or they might not meet in the summer or some meet bimonthly. It just kind of depends. I'm actually going to be starting a new group here in Sioux Falls. I have had ‑‑ they have been asking for it for a couple of years and so I'm finally able to deliver. And it's something I have never thought of myself, but our groups are participant driven and they have been asking for. So what it's going to be is a dining out group. They all say, you know, I don't want to go out for supper by myself. And I ‑‑ you know, it's just ‑‑ I never thought about that before. I wouldn't want to go out for supper by myself either. And so since that's ‑‑ it can be an expense. They are paying for their own. It's a go Dutch thing, just like our individual peer support program, but we're going to do quarterly, just because I have so many groups already. So we will start out quarterly and they are going to decide where they want to go and then the one that's really been pushing for it, I'm going to put her in charge, and she will be in charge of contacting the places to make sure that they are disability‑friendly and accessible. So that's kind of something exciting here in Sioux Falls.

All right. The next slide, please. Just keep in mind each group is completely different. And they are participant driven. So my five here in Sioux Falls, I have a youth group and that's all activities. They don't want any speakers. And, you know, you just have to try a bunch of different activities and see what works. And something might work one year and then the next year, be an epic fail as my nephew would say.

And but I have got a youth group. I have got an adult group that wants speaker and activities both. But they have two groups that meet in apartment complexes and they are both your traditional support group. They just want to talk. And then finally, I have another group that meets in an apartment complex, and they only want to do art therapy and crafts and that type of thing. Yeah, just poll your audience is what I would recommend.

All right. And then again, recreation activities for the youth groups. That's a big winner.

Okay. So the next slide, the size varies. One of my apartment complex groups, we only have three attendees, but they know each other so well. So that's wonderful. Others, there's 25. So it just totally depends on your group. Food works! So for my cross‑disability group here in Sioux Falls, sometimes I will only get three or four people for a certain activity, but we put on a Thanksgiving dinner in November every year and that's always full! So just remember that food works.

If your budget is small, utilize free activities and events. I do that as much as possible. We are lucky in Sioux Falls. We have a ton of outdoor concerts and entertainment during the summer and so we do a lot of outdoor activities during the summer. And then a lot of places are great about coming to speak for free as well.

So we're very fortunate here. The average amount spent on a monthly group is between $5 and $15. And usually, you know, it's just on food for the group, if ‑‑ if, you know, you have speakers or it's a group that just wants to talk. It's a treat that type of thing, cookies and coffee.

And then let's see, if money remains in our budget at the end of the fiscal year, I divide it up amongst all of the groups and the group itself decides how to spend it. And so we have had somebody buy a bingo game. They have taken field trips to a local Hutterite colony. They had ice cream socials and pizza parties. I a lot of times will buy craft supplies for my group that likes crafts. So that's been great to have.

Then finally, with starting a group on the next slide, okay. You want to consider specifics such as disability, if you want it to be a cross‑disability or disability‑specific group. Consider your ages if you want it to be a youth group, you know, or topic specific, and then your budget. And then, again, poll your members to determine what kind of group you want it to be, what the focus should be. Consider collaboration with other agencies. We ‑‑ we do this quite often. I have been asked by different apartment managers to start groups in their buildings. We have been approached by family support 360, which is a local waiver, Medicaid waiver in our state. So we collaborate with those coordinators, with the services for the blind and the visually impaired. They want to start a group. So, yeah, its ‑‑ collaboration is wonderful.

And finally, if a member tries to dominate your group, consider using a ball or other object for people no hold when they are speaking. I found this to be especially useful.

All right. Next slide. I know I'm kind of going through quickly, but I just want to make sure we get it call in. Choosing a location. Which choosing a location for your group, consider the following: Do you have an apartment complex where a bunch of your participants reside? If so, that would be a great thing.

Use your center if you have the space. We're very fortunate to have a great‑sized community room here, or conference room, I should say, and so my cross‑disability group meets here at the center.

Other locations, we have used churches, community centers, senior centers and libraries. Be flexible.

One of my apartment groups, we have ‑‑ we have moved, because their apartment complex is being torn down. And it will be rebuilt in 18 months, but we had to find a different place to have it. And so we're currently just meeting where one of the residents has moved to a new apartment. And so it's kind of in limbo but we have to be flexible. This is a listing of our spear port program and some of our groups. It's actually like three pages long with all of our groups on it, but I could only fit the one.

So it starts with Aberdeen and it just lists ‑‑ so you can see that some of them have a specific day of the month and a specific time. Others don't. With my youth group, we usually meet 4:30 to 6:00. But the day of the month always varies. It's usually near the end of the month, but ‑‑ yeah. Just depends on the group. And the activity for the month and that kind of thing.

And we'll go to the next slide, please.

Okay. And so I make this up every year. And this is just what I plan to do for the month. And so this is my youth and young adult group. I also do this with my cross‑disability group. And you can see here in January, we did a winter craft and we had a hot chocolate bar. In February, we attended a dance class. And March we did board games and in April, we did rock painting. And in May, they viewed the show "born this way."

And June moonlight movie in the park. And July we went fishing and in August we had outdoor theater. And September we will be bowling and October we will have our Halloween party. That's most attended youth group of the year. They love getting dressed up and we just do a bunch of different games. We have them do the mummy game where we wrap them in toilet paper and we have a scavenger hunt and all kinds of fun stuff. They ‑‑ that's a favorite.

We play Thanksgiving bingo in November and in December we watch a holiday movie of their choice and have a pizza party here at ILC.

So ‑‑ and then I also am fortunate enough to be able to rely on our other independent living specialists to help me, because my youth group is very well attended. And so I can't ‑‑ there's not enough of me to go around. I always need help from them and they're really good about taking turns and helping me out. Sometimes I will have two or three of them with me. So they are awesome.

Okay. And then the next slide is an example of our monthly flyer. So this is my cross‑disability group, and this was in May. And we had a presentation by Big Claws Canines. They train service dogs for service members. This is an example that you can feel free to use, if you are just starting a group. We just send them out in the mail. Some independent living specialists will call their people if they don't have very many, but I prefer to do flyers.

Finally. The next slide is the Facebook peer support group. That was started in September of 2008 by our Mobridge staff. It's a closed group. Again, open to South Dakota residents with disabilities. They must answer three questions in order to be admitted and they are what is your disability? Where do you live? And do you receive services? And then I share disability‑related info and we have discussions about living with a disability and we also do challenges, like a kindness challenge, where for 30 days, they ‑‑ they participate in ‑‑ in random acts of kindness and that sort of thing. It's especially useful for those in rural areas.

Next slide, please. So this is our new phase of peer support. We'll be to focus on Tribal Nations. We don't have any groups going yet, but we are working on that. Many of the folks in the Tribal Nations is already participated in individual Pooh err support. And I'm very fortunate that we have both native and nonnative peer visitors that have provided peer support to those folks, and finally, we might need to modify the traditional group structure. We might have to call it a talking circle instead of a peer support group.

And then incorporate feathers and talking sticks, kind of like ‑‑ you know, how I talked early about a ball if somebody is dominating. Usually in the talking circle, they will use a feather or a talking stick and that means they have the floor. They can talk about what's on their minds.

All right.

Finally, our last slide is 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 and just coordinating and collaborating with any other agencies and your independent living specialist as much as possible and finally, good luck.

>> TIM FUCHS: All right. Great job, Sarah Jo. Thank you so much. And we're right on time.

So we have got about eight minutes left for questions. So let me remind you all one last time, you are welcome to type your questions out in the Q&A tab in Zoom or email them to me at Tim@NCIL.org. And if you are using the full screen CART, I'm logged into the chat there and you can type in your questions there. I will start with the questions we didn't get to. Karen asks, what is your biggest expense to administer the program? So I know you shared that your budget amounts for each group are very modest. What is the biggest expense for the peer support group programs you all run?

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Well, I would say our biggest is the holiday meal that we put on here in Sioux Falls, our Thanksgiving meal. Yeah, that's a big one. They have also gone to a concert in one of our other cities, and that was a very big expense as well. So, yeah, I would say just ‑‑ just big things like that. One group goes to the circus every year. Yeah, just ‑‑ not our monthly events but our random events like that.

>> MATT CAIN: And my answer would be a little different. Mine is that Sarah Jo is probably the biggest expense. Having someone like that in the budget is not cheap, but it's well worth the ‑‑ well worth the expense to get back what we get out of peer support and the amount of people we provide services to and that service.

>> TIM FUCHS: Absolutely. It's a core service. Excellent. Thanks, all.

All right. So Renee is wondering if you require background checks or fingerprints for your peer visitors. I know you had some questions on the ‑‑ not intake form but on the application form. Anything beyond that, formal background checks, fingerprints?

>> MATT CAIN: We don't at this point. It is definitely an ongoing discussion here. Thus far, knock on wood, we haven't had an issue with it, but that is also why we require the public meeting and not in people's homes. And we kind of try to do the best job we can of screening that we can, but that's not saying we get everything.

>> TIM FUCHS: Right. Okay. Great.

All right. Miesha is wondering how you ensured confidentiality for group members when you are using Facebook LIVE. What does that look like?

>> MATT CAIN: Sure. When we do Facebook live, it's just our IL specialist that's doing the live video. The other people are joining in. They are not on screen. So they can just comment. And it was a private group, and everybody that joined the group signed off on confidentiality, in who was in the group and understood that whatever was mentioned or brought up in the group was then not brought out after the group. So, you know, it just stayed within those boundaries, I guess.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. All right. Great.

And the folks from the CIL Toronto are wondering, is there any kind of liability considerations in terms of the organization related to the support the visitor provides the participant?

So what kind of conversations have you all had about that and how do you protect yourselves as an organization?

>> MATT CAIN: Yeah, I would just suggest if you don't have it and you are going to go out and start to provide that service, I would say to sit down with your insurance company and have a conversation about that service.

As we all do, any time we provide services, whether it be volunteer staff, definitely there's liability. Somebody walks in your parking lot, there's liability. One thing we added, we beefed up our volunteer insurance policy to make sure that if something happens like that, and we covered for that type of thing.

>> TIM FUCHS: That's great advice. You do. Want to wait until you file a claim and have it denied. Just find out up front what you need to get covered. Great. Great.

Okay. Final question from the Q&A. Karen is wondering, How do you establish Facebook users that join your LIVE chat as consumers and I'm kind of curious to expand on that? For all of your groups, do they do an ILP? How do you report them on the 704, et cetera?

>> SARAH JO JORGENSEN: Well, all of them are participants of independent living choices. So they may have an ILP, they may have a waiver, but, yeah, they are members of Independent Living Choices.

>> MATT CAIN: So we open a file on everybody. They choose a plan or a waiver. They all go through the same intake paperwork that anybody else does. One of the big things that I'm sure with all of you as well, in order to be ‑‑ we're on a fee‑for‑service with the state of South Dakota. In order to be reimbursed for providing that service, we have to have all of that paperwork and the intake done. So whether its Facebook LIVE, whether it's face‑to‑face group support or peer‑to‑peer group support, at some point, they have met with staff and filled out paperwork.

>> TIM FUCHS: Okay. Great.

And Craig was wondering, What are ‑‑ what's the disability demographics of your participants? So, you know, what's the spread like? What does it look like? Do you have data on that? Any thoughts?

>> MATT CAIN: So as I said, South Dakota is not a big state, 900,000 people. We serve approximately 75 to 80% of the people served in South Dakota with services. Geographically, probably 70 to 75% of the state and we serve about 21 to 2200 people a year. So of the 900,000 that reside in South Dakota, our ‑‑ our average person, per se, I guess, that receives services whether it be peer support or IL Skills or home modification, adaptive support devices, about 65% of the people that receive services are female. I think that's probably female. Females are more apt to ask for help than a male is probably.

Also, that age group, the average person is 55 or over. So in that 55 to 65 range, and then the average disability is multiple disabilities with physical disability being second.

>> TIM FUCHS: Thanks, Matt. That's the last question I had. There were a few people asking in the chat if today's presentation was recorded or if they could access the PowerPoint. And the answer is yes. So Sharon has been entering the link in the chat. But I want to confirm that, we record all of these calls. We always post them within 48 hours, usually much sooner. And if you can't see the link in the chat for any reason, you can go to ILRU's home page, that's ILRU.org, select training and then go to on demand and you will see it at the top under recent events.

So that archived version includes a null video of today's webinar, with captioning, and the PowerPoint. And then don't forget all of you that are on today's call, you received a confirmation to participate. That also included the PowerPoint attached in a couple of different formats. So if you don't have that for any reason, let me know and I can always forward it to you.

And that is the end of the presentation. We have responded to all the questions and I see that it's 4:30 here on the East Coast. So we will go ahead and begin to close the call. Matt and Sarah Jo, fantastic job. I can't thank you enough for putting this together and sharing it with us. You gave us a great overview of the program that you all run ‑‑ programs I should say. I'm really impressed with the extent of both individual and group‑based support that you all have. And I can't thank you enough for taking the time. You know you all are busy to put this presentation together and share your expertise with us.

And I want to thank all of you too for taking the time to join us today. I mentioned in addition to today's presentation in the archive, we have got literally years of presentations and resources that we have done on peer support. It's core service. Please check out the on‑demand page and if you are not finding what you need, reach out to me. I would love to hear from you. I'm at Tim@NCIL.org or call me, the phone number is on NCIL's web page. I would love to hear how we can support you as you all work on this.

I will go ahead to slide 42. You can see the link there. That's not a live link to the eval, but when I close the webinar in a moment, it will pop up on your screen. I hope you will fill it out. You can also access it on the confirmation email that you received yesterday or this morning, if you don't have time to fill it out now. Please let us know what you think. We would love to hear from you.

Okay. With that, he will close. Thanks everybody. A hope you have a wonderful afternoon. Good‑bye.