IL-NET T&TA Center's IL Philosophy and Practice Summit: Reclaiming Our Movement
Presented by: Amber Smock and Trish Seye
September 18, 2024; Session Three

MARY-KATE WELLS:
Welcome everyone! Give a moment for folks to join. Also, I see the number of attendees increasing. I am going to jump into our welcome, accommodations, and housekeeping notes. Thank you everyone for joining DAY 2 for our IL Philosophy summit. We are grateful if you came yesterday. Or, if this is your first session that you are joining. My name is Mary Kate Wells, use the pronouns she/her. For any visual description I am a white 30-year-old woman, with red short hair. I am wearing a red blue top in my home office.

Today's presentation is part of the IL-NET which is operated by ILRU in collaboration with (unknown term) and University of Montana. We are going to take a few moments for housekeeping and accommodation items for any folks that are newly joining us. We will have captioning available today in real time. You can access captions by clicking show captions in your Zoom menu. Or through the StreamText link in the chat that we will put momentarily.

ASL interpreters should always be visible. Please let us know if you check if you are unable to see the interpreters at any time. Interpreters will also be providing Spanish-language interpretation on the Spanish channel, which you can find in your Zoom bar. Click interpretation and select the language you would like to hear the summit in.

Due to some ongoing Zoom updates, we recommend people join from a desktop computer or laptop. So that they can access accessibility features. It is not always available from a mobile device. Today's presentation will be on the ILRU on-demand training page by September 23. You will have access to the recording, transcript, and material. We also ask you complete a short evaluation after both sessions today. Next slide.

This is the important stuff. How you can participate today in the summit. We are offering a number of ways to engage with our presenters. We prioritize accessibility as a core value. As a cross disability movement, we also recognize that individuals have diverse and sometimes competing access needs. Access needs or supports or accommodations a person may need to communicate, learn, and participate fully in an activity.

Today, we will be using the polling platform that we used yesterday. We will be offering multiple options on how to participate. You will have access in the chat box to the chart, host, and panelist all throughout the summit. When the chat is set to host and panelist, the folks I webinar, all of the coordination will be able to see your posts.

If a presenter references something in the chat and you cannot see it, it may be because it was sent to hosts and panelists only. We will be turning on the public chat at specific times during the session. We will announce at each session when the chat will be turned on. And give a warning to folks so you can adjust your Zoom and notifications for individual accessibility. We will also share verbally what has been shared in the chat.

As a note, we will not tolerate any discriminatory, offensive, or attacking behavior in the chat. We welcome different viewpoints and perspectives that may be challenging. Some of our existing perspectives. In the chat, we will also provide continued learning links. That will also be available in a Word document on the training page.

For the Q&A box, you can submit questions throughout the summit by clicking Q&A in the Zoom menu. And enter your question. We enter have as much encouragement as possible in our webinar format. However, we are not going to get to all of our questions during the presentation. We are using what we call parking lot system. The parking lot allows us to recognize the importance of the question or comment, but understanding that we may not be able to address it in this specific session.

We welcome folks to stay after session 4, starting at 5:15 Eastern, starting our social hour and engage in conversation with your peers. We had over 16 people stay after session 2 yesterday. It was a really great conversation we had. During the call to action pieces, we invite attendees to raise their hand with a question. At that time we will invite you to unmute and ask that you keep your question to 30 seconds.

At the end we will do two polls at the end of session 3. The instructions for that are to follow. Next slide.

We are at day two of the IL Summit. This will be session 3. The session will be 90 minutes. It will be a combination of information giving and call to actions. The goal for this workshop session is to meaningful implementation of IL Philosophy and SILC policy and culture. Next slide.

As always, we value your feedback and will put links in the cat at the end of every session. As well as on the screen and in the material. Please give us your feedback. What worked or what did not, and what you want to hear more about.

Session 3 presenters, I will take it off to our two presenters. Latricia Seye, Vice President of Independent Living for Access Living in Chicago. And Amber Smock, Vice President of Advocacy for Access Living in Chicago. With that, I will hand it off to you all.

AMBER SMOCK:
Hello everyone, this is Amber Smock speaking. I am the Vice President of Advocacy for Access Living. My pronouns are she/her. For visual disruption I am a white woman with brown blonde hair, with a black top, sitting in my office at access living. If Trish would like to take a moment to introduce herself?

TRISH SEYE:
Hi everyone my name is -- Latricia Seye, I am a black woman with a blue top on. I am also in my office at access living.

AMBER SMOCK:
This is Amber speaking, can we flip the slide to the next one? Go back one? I think there is a slide that might be missing. The title for this particular presentation is about applying independent living philosophy through dual organizations. Structure, policies, and closure. Trish and I are very excited about doing this presentation with all of you today.

Access Living has been around for a long time. There a lot of lessons learned over the years. We are looking forward to a good conversation. Let's go to the next slide.

What I would like to offer first is to understand what we are going to be doing today. There are four main things that we will do during this 90 minute session. The first is a quick overview of

Access Living, the center of Independent Living at Chicago. The second is talking about IL Philosophy, application examples from Access Living policies.

Third, we will have discussions on anything -- meaningful application of the IL Philosophy with organizational structure, policies and culture for CILs and SILCS. And we also want to engage well. You want to have conversation on next steps for how to apply/advance innovation IL Philosophy, CIL, and SILC. Those are the four main details of the presentation.

I am going to start with a quick overview of Access Living. Access Living was established in 1980. We are the Center for Independent Living for the city of Chicago. Just like many of you, we provide independent living five core services. We do peer support, advocacy, independent living skills development, we do transition, and we do information and referral. We do all five of those things. Just like every Center for Independent Living does.

We also have additional services that we conduct. One is that we have a civil rights legal team. The Center for Independent Living also happens to have three attorneys and what we call a fair housing testing coordinator on our staff. This helps us address barriers for people with disabilities. Second, we have disability inclusion Institute.

Disability Inclusion Institute is a training consulting initiative that we have. We train nonprofits, we train corporates on disability inclusion. We have an Expensive Advocacy team. Maybe there's someone who has a main job and also is doubling as the advocacy point person. At Access Living we have a team of 14 people involved in our advocacy team. Half of them do policy and half of them do community organizing.

The fourth item about what axis living does -- Access Living does is provided to accessibility consulting. I want to emphasize that even though Access Living has a wide range of programs that we run, the examples we will share today are really applicable for all centers for Independent Living. This is very important to keep in mind. We try to select examples that can apply no matter how big or small your organization is.

TRISH SEYE:
Thank you Amber. One of our independent philosophies as it relates to our organizational structure especially at Access Living, is our commitment to hiring, retaining, and promoting staff with disabilities within Access Living. I wanted to discuss some of the benefits as it relates specifically for our staff and the culture of the organization. One of the things it does is promote increased independence and economic self-sufficiency for our staff.

It creates additional opportunities for learning and development. We have a lot of training courses that we offer within the organization and also offer those training courses outside of the organization which is really important to our staff's professional development. And an understanding of being able to live independently as well. It creates opportunities for connection, expansion of friendships. Not only within the organization, but within our engagement with the city of Chicago. The other part of it fosters internal collaboration across the organization, an important and significant benefit to being a part of a SOLAA SILC or CIL, which is very different from many other organizations that may offer similar types of programs, but we look at the holistic culture of it. So fostering internal collaboration whether with a particular department, I can speak specifically to independent living, with the wraparound direct services that we have, or even across additional departments that Amber mentioned within the organization, it creates an unmatched, holistic approach to living independently that one would be pretty hard-pressed to duplicate in any other organization. And the other part of this is one

thing that Access Living has done is created additional committees to foster increased culture of inclusivity and that includes we started our racial equity committee a couple years ago, I am a part of that committee and so some of the racial equity work that has taken place which in 2020, we hired a racial equity consultant and she conducted 30 hours of focus groups within the organization, interviewed our staff, and consumers to understand the experiences of people of color within the organization and how it intersects also with people with disabilities. The senior leadership completed several hours of break actual equity training and also did our reading and discussion on antiracism and raise equity and then it moved over to our staff that also did 12 hours of racial equity training and then we hired a director of equity and strategy at the end of last year and she has been such a great addition to our senior leadership team which we will talk about later on in terms of some of the initiatives she is brought to the organization just in the short time that she has been here. Then also we have a compensation committee which I'm also part of, and it's made up of eight staff members across the organization as I said, I am on the committee and Amber will speak a little bit later on the wage and salary structure later in the presentation, but one thing to note that I am extremely proud of is that each year we do go back and forth on whether this will be a year that (indiscernible) is extended and when a bonus is extended the wage and salary committee we need to determine how that will be distributed throughout the organization. And so this year the wage and salary committee as well as last year, our lower earning staff received a base level bonus first and then the remaining amount of the bonus pool after distributing those base levels were distributed out equally amongst the staff. So from an equity standpoint, to be able to say "here's this base amount provided to people earning lower than maybe some of the senior leadership, some of the management, they are getting the base amount and the rest will be distributed in addition to those who received database amount so database amount so these are what we think about when we're developing the structure within our organization. Adjuster talk a little bit more about â€“ I was talking about our director of equity and strategy but as we look at the all staff cultural learning spaces with the disability lens, just in the time that we have, Carol who is our director, we have the cultural heritage month, we have disability Pride Month, Spanish -- Hispanic Heritage month, Black history month, the pride as well as Juneteenth which we actually get a day off for that with Access Living, we have the American heritage month, and also have presenters that come to speak for my disability lens, each of those particular months we speak not only about that month as it relates to let say for black history, but the way in which it intersects for people with disabilities as well. We've also had some in person visits to the Illinois Holocaust Museum, the Museum of African-American history, and one fun event we had were able to have wars are dumpling making for our Asian, native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander heritage month, so these are just some of the examples of our commitment to being intentional with our race equity in terms of all true the cultural things that we want to make important within our organization. So next slide please.

So, we also want to â€“ and this was a favorite part of mine in terms of having opportunities and providing opportunities to our staff for advancement into leadership roles, I will say that â€“ and I always make it a point to say that I am where I am because of having mentors and because of working for someone years ago that made sure that I was able to attend the right amount of trainings to get the professional development that I needed even when I didn't think I needed it for me for my future, so that something here very important at Access Living as well, opportunities for staff advancement, or managers, supervisors, our senior positions as well as specialists. One of the things that I do, although I am over a team of almost 40 now, every six months I meet with the independent living staff one on one, I discussed some of the barriers they may be experiencing but I also talk about resources that will be available as it relates to their growth, their individual growth, professional development, what are some of the roles that they have. Also it speaks to using interim management time to grow skills within our current

staff. So those who as they transition out of management opportunities, as we are looking to see who within the organization could use additional rational development training so that we can always look at promoting within. Isaac that is so important to be able to promote within, not only creates a culture that the staff know that there is an opportunity for them to grow but it also rewards those hard-working within the organization and finally, the team approach to disability lived experience and insight for reasonable accommodation. I think it's so important that when you have staff who have disabilities, the lived experience to be able to speak through reasonable accommodations, taken those requests, be able to speak with your manager on the reasonable accommodations that will be needed for you to do your job effectively, but when you go to the original point of hiring those with disabilities within the organizing organization that is how you make it a comfortable conversation to be able to talk about the reasonable accommodations needed.

And so we are going to our first call to action and this is kind of an open discussion. Where you can put something in the chat or in terms of Q&A, and so based upon what you have heard thus far in our practices that we have at Access Living, what are some of the things that come to mind in terms that you could do better in your CIL or SILC to do some of the things we have already discussed and if there are barriers, can you speak to those barriers? What comes to mind in terms of why it would be to sit difficult to implement some of the things we have discussed thus far? And Amber, do you want me to read some of the ones that we are saying?

AMBER SMOCK:
Why don't you go ahead and do some of that right now it's kind of coming through a bit slow, so I can keep up but I know the other day it was like boom, boom so why don't we go ahead and read some of the examples.

TRISH SEYE:
So we have more training policy changes, our sales could grow service of availability, -- CA Owls funding to hire trainers, which does come up in what we see different CIL's experience, policy changes and open the openness to change. Funding, equity of pay and individual sharing of resources, which we are going to get to later as well in terms of equity and pay. Inclusive cultural events, healthcare worker shortages. Developing strategies that are clear and transparent about steps for advancement for staff, how to advance in leadership in the organization, which is really important.

AMBER SMOCK:
Trish, can I make a comment? Just as we are monitoring this, what I am noticing is first of all, I want to collarbones attention to the fact that Trish has been presenting specifically on organization structure and one of the very important things to think about really is focusing on that is that one of the best ways for retaining staff some folks have been talking about retaining staff, one of the best ways is making it feel like there is a future at your organization. And so that is a lot of what Trish brought up these examples like how do we make sure that these work environments we are in, which are supposed to be majority people with disabilities, that they really offer a future for our staff? And that staff really feel like they have a say. And you know, honestly, sometimes I think that showing and doing work in those areas can actually help you look more attractive to funders, which is another common thread that people are talking about. So this is not exactly about programming, it's more about how do we make sure that in our workplace, we are practicing Independent Living philosophy with our peers and making it a really good place to work? And I think that is what we are calling you all too really focus on. Trish, do you think that sounds about right? Because I think folks are thinking about problems and I'm like there's lots of problems. Don't get me wrong, I know there's problems. But this very

specific thing of having a good Independent Living workplace, I feel like this is what you are speaking to.

TRISH SEYE:
Absolutely. I think the importance of making your staff feel comfortable in terms of having some of the conversations, being able to talk about. I will say this all the time, when I do meet with staff one-on-one, and I say "I know -- just know that I won't be offended if you talk to me about what you want to do in terms of your goals, even if it's outside of this organization, I believe in growth. And I will just say, I will â€“ I have seen tears in terms of speaking to some of the staff because I think some of the have never experienced hearing that from a leader to say "it's okay to talk about, I want to grow even outside of this role that I am in." So leaving it to where your staff feel comfortable in having those conversations with you I think is really important, and also I think it's a benefit to you as a leader if you are a leader in an organization, because when the time comes to fill positions, I can't tell you how many times I recollect those one-on-one conversations where I can say I remember this person talking to me about being interested in this position, or this person was saying there ready to move into the senior position so it makes for an easier transition and filling different roles within the organization.

AMBER SMOCK:
And Trish, another thing that is coming through, this is Amber speaking, another thing that is coming through the chat, some folks are saying well but we only have like six people (Laughs) or we only have a tiny group of folks. And you know, I appreciate that, at the same time I also think that what we are offering here is that everybody in the organization has something to say about the workplace that they are in. And if you are a frontline staff person you have stuff to say about what makes this a good workplace for me. If you are a manager, you do have the responsibility and the obligation to really take some time to think how can I grow my staff to be the best that they can be? And how can I invest in them and support them? And how do I rather than just saying no to everything, how can I open the door to saying well let's problem solve that together? And one of the things that really keeps people running to work in a workplace is feeling like they are going to feel heard and their ideas are taking seriously, but management has to set the tone for that so it doesn't early matter how big or small, just know that internal collaboration can really matter and yes there can be a boundary between management and front-line staff but collaboration will only help your organs need soon get stronger -- will only help your organization get strong will

TRISH SEYE:
I agree with you Amber. I think being upfront and honest. There been times where you have to have difficult conversations based on funding opportunities that are available, or funding opportunities that are not available. Being able to talk about here is where we are right now. Here's what I would like to happen down the road. However, we are in this particular space. The goal is as you are trying to continue developing professionally, if this is available we will look for additional funding opportunities to move the into this in the future.

I want to be as honest as possible as it relates to someone's tenure in an organization. I found staff will appreciate you being as upfront and honest. In a big or small organization, I think it is beneficial.

AMBER SMOCK:
This is Amber. I absolutely agree. The other thing I want to point out is internal cooperation on organizational structure issues. Getting up close and personal with your colleagues is one of the most important ways to get past bias. We all have various biases that we have to deal with.

Whether it may be a racial bias, disability buys, or another kind of bias. Nothing will help people work through that better than having something to work on together.

These kind of projects can be extremely helpful. Trish, I do not know how long we want to spend on this Call to Action? I am single that were coming through. -- I see a lot more coming through.

TRISH SEYE:
It is up to you.

AMBER SMOCK:
It seems like things are slowing down. One thing I notice is clearly articulated values have helped our organization filled, maintain staff. Here's what I think about that. Values also drive your structure. To think about our organization, how it works, who reports to who, whether there is internal collaboration or not. How does what we do make it stronger or weaker? Are there opportunities we have not done before?

I see another comment that says how many employees at our organization? Trish, are we at 95?

TRISH SEYE:
We are in the 90s.

AMBER SMOCK:
The flip side with a big organization is that people can get lost in the shuffle. Making these opportunities available for people to be more present with each other. To feel seen and talk about their lives as a whole, not just I am a little worker bee. No one wants to be just a worker bee. Center for independent living, this organization has potential for people to build community and not just be a place to work.

TRISH SEYE:
I see that someone brought up burnout, which is something we have been talking a lot about within our organization. I have definitely been talking about within Independent Living. When you look at independent services that is something that is very important to keep as a point of discussion. That as a rolling agenda item within our Independent Living department meetings. It is also in rolling agenda meeting within the manager and supervisor meetings. To speak with staff about ways to avoid burnout.

It is something that can happen regularly if it is not a finger to the pulse on that particular thing. Very important.

AMBER SMOCK:
That is very important, I agree. One thing I want to point out about burnout and organizational structure. Organization structure will have frontline peeper and whoever is the supervision folks. I sometimes feel like managers need to help with burnout by assisting employees and predicting when schedules are going to be too much. When they have to dedicate time to specific projects etc. Management can really help the people they supervise with burnout by helping them figure out, am I going to have enough bandwidth to do five projects or three projects?

When joined to take some time off? Really helping people in managing their time is a really important part of burnout. I agree, you cannot be so burned-out that you are unkind to the people around you. And you do not have as much to offer as you otherwise would. It is

important.

Trish, if it is okay I am going to switch to the next slide. On this slide I want to make a note for you folks that the title needs to be IL Philosophy and Organization C. We are switching to the component of this presentation where we had about organizational policies. We just talked about structure, who reports to who, how does the organization work?

The set amount of policies that you have, that your board has approved etc. those can also be a reflection of Independent Living philosophy. I will walk through a few examples we have. One that everyone is on board with, reasonable accommodations. Not just civil rights requirement, they are an important reflection of IL Philosophy. We hire lots of people with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are part of disability practice.

For us, it is important to have a clear process with commitment to equitable access and problem solving. When I say problem-solving, I am going to emphasize problem solving. One of the things that tends to demoralize people in want is when they ask for reasonable accommodation, and somebody goes "No." I think it is a lot better to partner with the person to problem solve options for ways to make it happen.

It is really important to have a problem-solving approach, not just a compliant approach. That is important with policy. Another Independent Living policy reflection is going to be in your organization environment. To that extent, Access Living has policies about being in drug-free workplace, being a smoke-free workplace, and be a fragrance free workplace. All of these have to do with disability access means. We want to make our organizational environment as accessible and inclusive as possible with policy.

The next item there on the slide is about the work setting. I realize this is a complicated subject. What Access Living has found to be the best reflection of IL Philosophy and how we do our work is to have a hybrid work policy. What that means for us is that in general, except for reasonable accommodation requests, our staff work in person two days a week. The building is open four days a week. He continues I can choose which today they want to come in.

Friday is a day we work from home. We have a hybrid option. We also have a hybrid video setting where we can do hybrid video meetings in the building as well. I say this is an important reflection of loss of school, -- IL Philosophy is that this work opportunity is what is available -- disabled people need to work. Having a hybrid environment is provided a lot of flexibility for things.

People are the reality of being parents, providing care for others. This activity more flexibility to take care of our personal needs while we do the work we need to do. The last policy we will talk about a bit more is actually about wage and salary. Going back into that. We will talk more in depth about that one. Trish is going to take over and talk more in depth about the work policy. That is a very important example of a policy that reflects Independent Living.

TRISH SEYE:
We are going to take a closer look at the Access Living hybrid work policy. One of the things that Access Living prides itself in is being able to get top input within the organization. Any time a major project takes effect through Access Living, this was no different in comfrey within the hybrid work policy and what I was going to look like. -- What that was going to look like.

We discussed misconceptions that go through a hybrid plan and working remotely. Prior to the

pandemic, it was not as prevalent as we see in different organizations now. You wanted to speak to what are some of those misconceptions. And how are we able to work through those work misconceptions and ensure our staff are working efficiently even when we are remote.

One of the common misconceptions is decreased productivity. Also difficulty and collaboration because everyone is remote. We were able to talk about what that looks like. Amber mentioned it is two days in person. Also speaking to being able to be intentional and collaborative when we are in the office. You need to have meetings when we are in the office. Having special days when we do come together for department meetings. Being intentional throughout the process is really important in building a hybrid work policy.

When you look at decreased work productivity, before there was this notion that as long as you see someone in the seat, you know they are working. We found that is not always true. Being able to keep in contact with your staff, the vehicle to have conversations on how the workday is going, where we are in the process or project. Those are ways to make sure that productivity is actually taking place.

As opposed to seeing a physical person being in a seat as it relates to working. Based on the staff wide discussions as Amber mentioned, it did result in two days in person. One of the other great benefits is that we have what we call 25 remote days per year. With those particular bank days, even with the two days in person, you can choose one of those bank days. Just let your supervisor or manager know.

If I was supposed to come in two days this week, but I can only comment once, I will use the bank day. It is use it or lose it. It is not go over to the next year. It is 25 bank days. It improves the reasonable accommodation process. Sometimes we involved with discussion in terms of speaking with your manager, submitting reasonable accommodation request to HR. Working with your manager in terms of coming up with best practices for reasonable accommodation and what would be most helpful on an individual basis when we look at reasonable accommodations.

What is helpful on a case-by-case basis? Not getting this whole umbrella look on reasonable accommodations. I think we were talking about communication earlier. Having these conversations with your staff. Even initially in the hiring process, when you are on board and talking through what's this particular position will entail. But also having the conversation of what will be beneficial in terms of reasonable accommodations for that particular staff member.

Then, feeling comfortable not only having the conversation with the manager or supervisor, but also whoever is needed to the HR department. I think it is important in terms of having that collaboration from the manager all the way to the HR department.

And then clear communication in terms of communication. I believe that is the next slide. Clear communication in terms of implementation. We do check INS once we implement the big change. We do a couple of chickens and also surveys in terms of seeing how the hybrid policy plan is going within our organization. Are there things that need to be tweets? Are the things that are not working? If there are things that are not working, what are some things we can do to change it? Are we seeing people saying they are working but they're not actually working? How can we better have these sometimes difficult conversations to make sure we can keep with the program because what we find sometimes is we will take away an entire program one something may not be working instead of having conversations about what barriers exist and how we can have further engagement and productivity if we do see those barriers. But as I

mentioned earlier, I think it's really important to take advantage of those in office days in terms of collaboration, in terms of engagement, I will say there have been times where managers or supervisors will need to have staff come in that may even be outside of the date that they may have plan to come to the office but having conversations early on to say we will have this particular presenter or presentation on this day and we would like our staff to come in on that day, and what I have found, I don't know Amber if you would agree to, we really have had push graphic -- pushback because communication is high in terms of letting people know ahead of time, in terms of making any arrangements, there are many parents within organizations, so to give them enough time to make the accommodations even at home so they are able to come in on those particular days.

Next slide, please.

AMBER SMOCK:
This is Amber picking up. Just know that we will have an opportunity for chat feedback about the hybrid work routine, right after I finish talking also about wages and salaries, so we will have an opportunity to dig into your feedback about both of those things but Trish talked about the hybrid work policy that we have, the other policy we wanted to give you a closer look at is our wage and salary philosophies. Just a refresher member just a refresher, we have a committee that connects people from across Access Living, some of them are managers, some of them are front-line people and they are the ones that get together and make key decisions about certain aspects of how we compensate people at Access Living. And let me, I'm just going to go ahead and talk about what they did was they got together and they wrote an actual philosophy document which is something that we can share if people are interested. But what I wanted to do right off the bat was first just be clear about what kind of workplace we are trying to aim for. So what the wage and salary committee came up with was they said Access Living strives to be a leading mission driven organization that is a sought after place to work. We want to compensate staff fairly and competitively and provide a robust array of benefits. To create an environment that encourages an appropriate work life balance and respects employee’s time and lives as whole people and to build a diverse and equitable workplace." So that is what the committee came up with. We'll go over to the next slide.

They followed that by also saying by making a statement about the kind of culture that we want to see. Access Living culture embraces integrity and accountability, respectful relationships, equity and diversity. As we create a community that challenges ableism and promotes disability inclusion as well as intersects with all other identity groups. We believe the best way to achieve our mission is to attract, train, retain and support a committed, talented, diverse team of employees.

Next slide. And then they said: (Reads)

so, what they did, Trish mentioned the example earlier of the bonuses. So the wage and salary committee does decide how to do our bonuses. Our finance CFO works with the wage and salary committee to also talk about the different wage categories that we have at Access Living etc., but one of the most important ways that we try to advance equity in hiring people for Access Living is we have some adjustments that we made to starting salaries that have to do with that lived experience and other items. So just know that Access Living's wage and salary system is not merit-based system is because merit-based systems can really open themselves to favoritism subjective judgment about who gets paid more, and then before you know it what happens is a range of salaries that are not always appropriate to the people and they don't feel fair and that sort of thing. But for starting salary, some very specific suggestions we wanted to

make to you all is we actually offer an increase in starting salary of somebody identifies as living with a disability. We offer a $750 increase to the starting salary if you live with a disability. We also offer $500 if you are fluent in Spanish or American Sign Language which are the two often use non-English language is that we see at Access Living. So we offer extra money for those who are fluent in Spanish or ASL. Then we also make other adjustments related to experience in certification. So for example if you have a graduate certificate or a bachelor's degree there is those, but we also wanted to make sure we were recognizing that people are bringing value as employees through their lived experience in terms of disability or speaking different languages were cultural competency. Next slide, please.

So this is actually where I think Trish, we have some poll questions for you also we will talk about both the (indiscernible) and the wage and salary but I will turn it over to Trish for the first.

TRISH SEYE:

MARY-KATE WELLS:
This is Mary Kate, I am launching the first
I am launching the first pole. I am just want to share the screen and the instructions come on the screen as the poll on the first question which is does your organization offer a hybrid or remote work policy? You can participate in two ways, you can answer the poll with your web browser so if you open your web browser and go to poll Pollev.com/disabilityled
you will see the response. You can also text your results to two three in the body of the text you can type the keyword DISABILITY LEAD you will get a conference confirmation that you join the session and confirm your response. A is yes and B is now. So based on yesterday we will just pause here Trish, but if you want to describe what you are seeing on the screen in terms of response and we will give folks a few seconds.

TRISH SEYE:
So the current poll is does your organization offer a hybrid or remote work policy? I'm really encouraged to see the amount of people who do have "yes" which is really great and also curious in terms of for those who do not offer it, are there any particular barriers that you are seeing or just hesitancy in implementing it within your organization? In this particular call to action it would be great to have this discussion to and what that would look like in terms of implementation within your organization. Is it a technology thing? We found that as well in terms of technology, is it just developing a policy? Is it thinking through or looking through additional examples at other CIL's organizations as to how to and fomented? So very curious and looking forward to that discussion as well. Looks like it is not moving as much I think we received the majority of the responses.

MARY-KATE WELLS:
I'm going to switch to the next question. And folks, you can use the same link that you are just using, give me one moment. And I will read the question

Lots of buttons to get us there. One moment. All right, and the question is ha the question is has your CIL or SILC and permitted an unbiased wage within the organization? A is yes, B is no, and C is I don't know. We also have the chat open for folks. To engage in the call in action.

AMBER SMOCK:
So it looks like we are hovering at about 45% for people who don't know. And of the remainder, about 20% are saying that they know for sure that the SILC or the CIL hasn't implemented an unbiased and equitable wage or salary structure, 30% said no, this is a tricky one because

figuring out how to answer you know, just if you are somebody who is not in management, it's possible that maybe your managers are working on this but you don't know it yet. There is not factor. -- If you don't know because nobody has really talked about it, that's also a possible reason you might not know. But I just want to say that it really has taken years for Access Living to arrive at the process that we have right now. And it's not like we spun on a diamond said one day that we are going to be equitable. It actually took a lot of looking through our records to understand over time how much we would be paying people, how much our starting salaries were four different positions, people that have been there for a long time, where they making â€“ were they getting increases in a way that also reflected their value to the organization or not? And we did find that there were there was some subjectivity in the practices. And so anyway, it was decided that group thinking from people with lived experience or different life experiences was going to be at the was going to be a better way to figure out what to do. Then Trish came in (Laughs) and we had the wage and salary discussion. But I don't know Trish if you want to say more, I'm just giving some background.

MARY-KATE WELLS:
Sorry, I just want to say, based on the poll it looks like it stayed the same since when Amber described it looks like we will switch the slide. And folks, the chat is open, just select the drop down "respond to everyone" so folks can see.

TRISH SEYE:
I just wanted to acknowledge I see in the Q&A they has been some questions in terms of just salary for an attorney position, and it kind of goes back to what Amber was saying, there has been research in setting those particular salaries so it is within the industry standard when we are looking at hiring those who would be within our organization. So that is always a goal in making it equitable and bringing on additional staff (indiscernible) within the organization. But I want to make sure because I know this is kind of discussing this from a call to action as it relates to the wage and salary as well as the hybrid remote program that we have here at Access Living, I'm just looking at some of the questions, I want to make sure we can get to either questions or even comments as it relates to implement in the hybrid either the hybrid plan or even the wage and salary. Amber, if I am missing anything let me know.

AMBER SMOCK:
No, I just want to say, I am double checking the Q&A box and my attention has been very much in the chat, but I see that there is a question about increases for a language other than ASL or Spanish, Trish, I don't know if you can speak to that about other language is besides ASL and Spanish?

TRISH SEYE:
I don't believe there is additional outside of that.

AMBER SMOCK:
The way things work with the Access Living wage and salary committee, part of the reason having this committee is people were not on the committee know they can reach out to the folks. To say "Hey, can you bring up this issue and have it be approved?" That is part of it. There are not as many gatekeepers on composition of wage and salary. I want to know if so and so speaks Chinese and is fluent in Chinese, as an example. Can they get money?

There is definitely an opportunity to have that discussion with the committee. And to also consider things on a case-by-case basis. The second question was how are you paying for attorneys to be unstoppable for board certification? I will say this about the attorneys. There are

certain grand streams we have that do help pay for legal services. But, honestly what pays for attorneys is also financial settlements from lawsuits.

We also rely on pro bono legal assistance as well. I think the question about how we pay for attorneys is a big one. It is a deep one. I would suggest reach out if you want to have a big conversation about that.

TRISH SEYE:
I know there is a comment I wanted to address. It does come out a lot in terms of the work we do. In working with direct services, human services that we have. Speaking with and collaborating with our community is very important. One thing I will say which is definitely important at Access Living. It is something that came up in developing the hybrid work plan. However be able to still engage with our community if we will have some staff who are out, some staff working at home on a particular day, some staff who are in?

Intentionality in building that in continuing to keep with our in office meetings, with our consumers. I will speak directly to our housing department. We have a lot of requests that come in for housing. We find they use a lot of the remote days to do administration. A lot of the paperwork and filing work is being that a lot of the times when they are working remotely. In office days are days that are planning to meet with the consumers, to talk over the different housing issues that may come up. In terms of training that we have, we have a technology program.

Similarly, they are able to do a lot of the administrative part from home. The recruiting, marketing, those are things that can be done remotely. However, when it is time for the training classes, to be able to come in office. To have office hours. I know we have specific walk in office hours, especially for our technology program. I say in terms of intentionality, if you can look at the different programs whether within Independent Living. If it is advocacy. Looking at how to keep that community feeling with the consumers.

Ultimately to the point that is made, that is the most important thing. There are ways to also still implement the hybrid plan in doing that.

AMBER SMOCK:
Trish, I am also seeing a little bit in the chat box - for some people work from home is great. Other people work from home is challenging because you cannot focus well enough. If we understand Independent Living Philosophy as giving people the chance to have self-determination. And have dignity of risk. And presuming competence. All those values I talked about in our first session.

If people want to come in four days a week and work at Access Living, they can. Or if we need to work fewer days, we have a conversation about that. There's a lot of flexibility for that. If you have it paired with intentional time for the team to be together and have been able to get to know each other and learn together. You want to pair it with those intentional times. That is the secret of the success.

Tricia speaks to the Independent Living act Access Living. For my people the organizational and policy staff, they need time to practice being disabled together. We have people with different disabilities in the same room, everybody learns a lot about each other. That helps build team togetherness, to morality, etc.

Trish, Emily (unknown name), did you want to say anything to that?

TRISH SEYE:
I was just reading that. There are some difficulties logging on from home. Whether it is a particular area they may live in. For some of those we have offered hotspots if need be. We have talked about the case-by-case basis in terms of implementing these things. Being able to have a conversation to see if you have access to the Internet. We do provide the computers, of course through Access Living.

But as often we have to deal with on whether or not the person will be able to use a computer at home. I want to make sure I answer the full question. (Reads) I will say the goal is for it to be similar. If you have a hybrid plan, the goal is to get the same service if you were in an office or working remotely.

When we say working remotely, some people have a very strict work from home, you must get home in terms of working. With this means working remotely, we have some people who have to go out of town and they are still working. We also talk with our staff, we put the intentionality on our staff. You have the ability to do the work that is seen for your particular job. Even if you have to go to a different state and using your motives during that time, that you will have full access.

It varies in difficulty in doing that. Having a conversation with your manager prior to. You may need to take a day off. I'll have some people who say "I am not going to have a check for two days." Is I need to take a vacation or personal days that we can keep with the policy we have in terms of the expectation of still being able to work remotely? I hope that answers the question.

TRISH SEYE:
I think so. First, there are some extra stuff here. The last few comments. Whether we offer stipends to cover the cost of Internet? I know we cannot help cover the cost of Internet. We do have laptops for people. There are certain office supplies that will pay for.

TRISH SEYE:
I will give an example. Some of our staff require lots of printing. If that is a staff member that will need a printer, a printer is provided. We have the conversations even in terms of if you need a bigger monitor, we have accountants that might give you three screens. Having these discussions about what is needed for your remote office to still be able to keep with the work as if he were in the office. Having those discussions is important. Two Amber's point, there's not an additional stipend to cover the cost of Internet.

AMBER SMOCK:
There is a comment in there about whether there is documentation about remote work, confidence and confidentiality. You want to say something about that?

TRISH SEYE:
We talked about that in the past. I will give an example. If we have someone that may be working from (indiscernible). Having the discussion that you should not be bring up information that may have a consumer's information, Social Security information. Being cognizant of what you are pulling up when you may be in the public space working. The goal is to not be in the public space.

Let us say for instance for an hour yet to go to whatever location that you need to. And that will

be somewhere where it is private information. Being cognizant of what you are pulling up on your screen during those times. I look at it any position when you are hiring someone, you are putting responsibility in their hands that all the onboarding you are giving, all the expectations you are providing. Whether it is remote or in person, is still having that thought process that you have given them the responsibility to adhere to those particular things.

To enter the question in terms of privacy, that is of utmost importance. We have discussed that in terms of the information you are pulling up when you are working remotely and what that looks like.

AMBER SMOCK:
There is one last comment I can speak to and maybe we can move through the organizational culture then. Something in the chat box, I do think it is important to have structure in the hybrid work structure? Here is my answer for anyone wondering about that. And Independent Living Philosophy, we know is important for people to have a say in what works for them.

My question to anyone who wonders about this is wondering if structure is important in hybrid work environments. My question would be, is it important to you? You do not get to speak for everyone else (Laughs). Is it important for you? To be honest with my staff, remember I have several. For several of them, having a lot of structure is very important. For others, that structure is a good idea. It has a lot to do with their disabilities.

It has a lot to do with how they work best. The question of rather than thinking what better hybrid is, or in person? The question of what sets up each individual person for success? How do we set up our stuff for success? How do we have enough options so that everyone can arrive at success together? That is what hope people will think about with this.

Let's talk about organizational culture, Trish?

TRISH SEYE:
The first tenets that is mentioned is disability representation in senior leadership. I will stay at Access Living, probably 90% of our senior leadership identifies as a person with a disability. It is important even terms with our staff to be able to see representation within the senior leadership. As we talked about earlier, even having discussions for reasonable accommodations.

It is important to be able to see this particular person has a disability in leadership. Even in terms of acquiring for additional leadership opportunities for our staff. To be able to see that it does happen and their success in being able to do that. On boarding, training, and coaching, which is very important. One of the most important parts of bringing in new stop is the onboarding process. Setting expectations early on. Talking about the culture within the organization.

Talking about the importance with promoting independent living for consumers. Even with our staff, we found some of our staff took the trainings available to our consumers. It is really important to talk about the significance of the independent living movement. What we found is a lot of our staff may have, outside of that particular umbrella, but they are bringing their expertise whether it may be in housing, technology, and advocacy.

That onboarding and training process is going to be what is really important in incorporating in the Independent Living philosophy for those who are coming in with that type of experience. That comes from having some of the particular trainings. The ILRU training, make that available

for staff as they are coming in and being onboard into your organization. Also using lived disability experiencing, authentic relationship to add to our work.

I was before myself. Although I do not identify as a person with a disability. I live by the mantra of nothing about us without us. I will stop to speak on their own behalf. I allow them to speak about what it means to them in terms of the work they do. In terms of the work they do for our consumers. And to be able to allow that particular space. It is important that with knowledge and respect the individual experiences and abilities. And that we foster a culture of admiration from those steps that may not have a disability. So that our staff feel comfortable in terms of communicating openly, in terms of requesting reasonable accommodations. All those things are very important. The other part is the intentional recruitment of disabled People of Color. One of the things I do love about Access Living and I joke to Amber about this all the time, she is a human Rolodex because she's a person who knows and keeps up with so many different people within the disability community but it is so needed because as we look at recruitment of our staff, as we look at continuing to grow within Access Living, it's important to use those particular resources, it's important to engage with those in the disability community, so when we're looking to hire, we can talk to those particular people, we can collaborate with the other organizations, say hey we are hiring and we need additional staff to come in and build from those types of connections intentionality of being able to do that as well as disabled People of Color, so we talked about whether we are going to HBCUs and recruiting, we are going to particular college campuses and recruiting, within certain neighborhoods of Chicago, all of that is equally important as we look to recruit and retain the talent within our organization. Using the interview process to make our people feel welcome to the disability community. One of the things we talk about is speaking to the culture within the organization, even during the interview process and that is whether or not that candidate will be someone who will be joining our organization but we talk about this is what it looks like to work at Access Living. And I really love when we do have candidates who ask why you work here, what do you enjoy about working for Access Living? Because that's the time you really speak to that culture and working for our consumers and being able to provide those different services. And so even asking during those particular interviews "are you a person that has any type of lived experience?" As it relates to a person with a disability, and a lot of times being able to engage from that, getting an understanding of maybe if we do hire them, what that would look like in terms of accommodation that will be needed or just how they will be a benefit to our particular program. I know one of the new programs we have here at Access Living has been such a great stash we brought in three new staff members and to be able to talk about some of the things they will bring, some of the great lived experience that they are able to bring in and cultivate in this new program has been just such a great experience and talking and collaborating with the other new staff that have come in and feeling comfortable and being able to do that. And then lastly, supporting one another in hands-on activities away from the office. I think that Amber is one of those fun people who is always having something, she's always looking to have a mariachi band, I do know that, and being able to talk about some of the hands-on things that we talk about with our staff in terms of what we will be doing in the community and what are some of the things we will call to action in terms of bringing in those from the community where they feel welcome, where they feel like if we are having an event that if that we are inviting our consumers to commit and also participate, that we are going out into the community and participating without commuters as well. -- With our consumers as well

AMBER SMOCK:
This is just a quick look at some of the types of things that Access Living will do to grow staff

cohesion. Grow the disability community and our center for independent living, so if you examples that we have certainly done with Access Living is visiting other centers for independent living, we certainly exist as a network and understanding what our fellow independent living centers do is very important but it also helps staff to understand they have counterparts at other organizations and they can work together and problem solve and add happens frequently in Illinois. So visiting other centers is a great activity, just to day trip, no overnights. We have done some overnight trips and not for conferences, but Access Living has done a couple of what I call road trips where we have organized a group of staff to go visit multiple centers of independent living over the course of a few days and people certainly know a lot about each other on these overnight trips, they learn what is life like to get ready in the morning together, what it's like when someone's car break down, what is like trying to make sure that where we stay at night is accessible for everyone. So they are very good life learning experience and across disability way. Then there are other things that can be done to help build staff understanding and knowledge of the Independent Living life. Which you can do picnics, you can do accessible picnics with each other, take your staff to an accessible playground, and let them loose. (Laughs) Set up a community events where people can really have some joy in what they do. Where your staff are not the ones having to work the event but your staff are the ones that just get to play. That is also part of growing people, growing the resilience but also really looking and learning who we all are that work together. So I just want to say that about hands-off activities away from the office â€“ my cans on -- hands on activities away from the office

TRISH SEYE:
This is another call to action and I think based on what we have talked about I'm curious to find out just going over some of the last points that we went over, disability representation in senior leadership, what does that look like within your CIL or SILC, do you have a set onboarding retraining for new staff that are coming in? What does it look like in terms of ally ship within your organization using the disability lived experiences, as well as recruitment of additional staff and disabled People of Color, and I know Amber is speaking to even outside of our organization and away activities. You have that within your prostatic alert CIL or SILC? -- Do you have that within your CIL or SILC? If you could drop your comments in the chat please.

AMBER SMOCK:
Can feel people typing (Laughs)

(Laughter)

Hopefully we will see some responses in a second.

Is there an issue with the chat? Everything that is coming through is coming to Houston panelists only so I don't know if the regular chat is working.

MARY-KATE WELLS:
Hi everyone, you have to select "everyone" there should be a little drop-down and then if you want your comment or question to go to everyone you can do it that way.

TRISH SEYE:
I did see a question that says do you do calm visits, are they schedule an office days or are they schedule for remote workdays? So I can speak to that in terms of the home visits that we do

have within the independent living department. They schedule is based upon the need for our consumers. And outside of that those days that they aren't going in a particular home, those would be there remote days. So they kind of look at here's the schedule for visiting with consumers, they reach out to consumers, they set up the appointment times and then outside of that is how they are able to look at what they are remote days might be. I don't know if I may have mentioned this earlier but those days may change week by week, it's no set day to say Monday and Tuesday are my in office days, those will change based upon the business deed. And our employees are comfortable enough in terms of being able to change.

AMBER SMOCK:
Can I just say somebody said continuing to hold people accountable and folks partaking in actions and behavior that don't follow IL philosophy in principle" so I want to say none of us are perfect. But I really appreciate when people rather than saying "let's hold people accountable" let's invite people to learn something new" let's invite them to have some support. What's invite them to think differently. And the thing is that we really all do need each other. So I just want to urge people to try to work with folks through what is happening and the other thing I want to say is coming in on private messages, public messages, for those of you who are in management, your staff really want you to hear them out. This is really coming through that there is something â€“ it sounds like some of the practices Trish and I deal with at Access Living these are something that your staff might want to do, and you know, there's a way to make things happen. So if you are kind of nervous about making the change, but your staff are insisting on it and you are like I don't know if this is going to be good, then reach out and support each other to figure it out.

TRISH SEYE:
I also see and I wanted to give just a suggestion, I did see that sometimes there are barriers to exit these -- barriers to activities outside of the office in terms of funding and Amber gave some really good free actions that would be available in Terms of Participation with your staff or even googling something like that as a manager, what are some cost-effective activities that you are able to do with your team and what does that look like? And having that discussion. So I think that there are sometimes ways in which to get that accomplished where it's not overly expensive in terms of being able to do it but you are still able to engage with your team.

AMBER SMOCK:
Yes. I mean, at the end of the day independent living philosophy is seeing people the way they really are and what they want to be and looking at people's strengths, presuming competence, allowing dignity of risk, and picking about how society around us disables us and that can sometimes apply through organizational policies and structures but there are ways to move past those because at the heart of it, Independent Living is supposed to be about helping people be their best selves. And that should be your goal at work. Helping people helping everybody be their best self and being a best self. Setting everybody up for success, so just want to say that. As a sort of overall comment.

More chat box.

TRISH SEYE:
I see a question in terms of is it encouraged to have the board interact with the staff? I think that's a really great professional development tool. One of the things I know Amber and I have both done is some of our board meetings we will incorporate some of the staff to attend to speak to some of the programs that are going on, answer any questions particular to particular program and it's both a way for our board to be able to see our staff as well as staff feeling

comfortable to speak about their programs, and Isaac it's a great professional development tool, of course you can't always have the entire staff attend but be strategic in terms of when you they are able to attend and speak with the board.

AMBER SMOCK:
Just one comment about somebody was saying â€“ I think multiple people have said we need to spend more time teaching about Independent Living philosophy, and let me just say this. People learn in many different ways and for some folks having the conversation or webinar about it, that's good, but I just want to challenge people to put yourselves in position of what people have to work the independent living philosophy way. Sometimes people learn by practice, hands on, let's do something together, how do we make it accessible together? How do we open up opportunities together? Independent living is not just one extra, it is definitely an everyday practice. And welcoming people who are new newer to that practice and to situations or activities where you can work together, that really is a growth opportunity. So I just want to encourage people to think about it.

MARY-KATE WELLS:
This is Marie Kate. I see there are more questions and comments so Sharon if you can advance to the next slide? We are going to add all of these to our kind of parking lot and we will have the opportunity to come back to them during the social hour. But I did just want to say thank you so much Trish and Amber! We will transition into our break.  But are there any final comments that you want to share?

AMBER SMOCK:
Thank you! It is great to be here.

TRISH SEYE:
Thank you for having us!