OILP Communication- April 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Below are recent updates from ACL.

# ***In the News***

* ***HHS Announces Transformation to Make America Healthy Again:*** On March 27th, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced a “dramatic restructuring in accordance with President Trump's Executive Order, “Implementing the President’s ‘Department of Government Efficiency’ Workforce Optimization Initiative.”” More information is available in the [press release](https://url.avanan.click/v2/___https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/hhs-restructuring-doge.html___.YXAzOmJldGFoOmE6bzpiYTFhNTI2YjcwNDNjYzU4NzM0Zjg1MjJhOWE3M2Q2Njo2OjQ2ZDY6MTgyOTEzYzcyYTNiYTFjNGM5YTBiZWU3YTZiNmZkODIzOGIxODBkMjMzZWYwNWFiOTY2MDQ4MWI4YTRmNjAzYzpwOlQ6Tg). As it is early in the restructuring process, we will share additional information as it becomes available. The Office of Independent Living Programs staff is available to provide support for your grants and answer questions.

## ***Reporting and Guidance***

## 

* ***IL Training and Technical Assistance Center:*** Welcome! On behalf of the IL Training & Technical Assistance Center, we are excited to connect with you and support your incredible work in advancing independent living in your community.

The IL T&TA Center, operated by the University of Montana’s Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities (RIIC) and funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), to provide expert information, support, and training tailored for Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs), and Designated State Entities (DSEs) across the country.

Whether you’re new to the IL Network or have been engaged for years, we’re here to help you succeed!

**What to Expect**

You’ll receive regular updates about upcoming training opportunities, helpful resources, and invitations to participate in learning communities and feedback loops. Our goal is to make sure you have the tools and support you need — when you need them.

**Stay Connected**

We encourage you to get connected through [our website](https://url.avanan.click/v2/___https://www.umt.edu/rural-institute/partnership/il-tta-center.php___.YXAzOmJldGFoOmE6bzpiYTFhNTI2YjcwNDNjYzU4NzM0Zjg1MjJhOWE3M2Q2Njo2OjgzYzY6NTdhZGM5Nzk4NDM0ZDI1MmIxNDI4NWNiZjRjNWNjZWU3YTEwZGNlNzFjZGViNTI0Zjg0NTYyODFkOTkzYTM0NjpwOlQ6Tg) and sign up for updates and training.

**Submit Questions and Ask for Help**

Request Information: You can request training and technical assistance (expert help for your organization) by filling out this [request form](https://url.avanan.click/v2/___https://umt.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_daPZQalhlfFpDWC___.YXAzOmJldGFoOmE6bzpiYTFhNTI2YjcwNDNjYzU4NzM0Zjg1MjJhOWE3M2Q2Njo2Ojg3OWU6YjFjZmRmZDc3ZGUzODAzOWIyMGI4N2M3NTBmNDBjMjgyMTc1NTkyZTNkMDBhMDRjMjI5NTQxMzNjNWExYWJkNjpwOlQ6Tg) and letting us know how we can help you.

Call: You can call us at 406-243-5300, and someone will get back to you as soon as we can.

Email: You can email us directly at [ILTTACenter@mso.umt.edu](mailto:ILTTACenter@mso.umt.edu).

* ***ACL Fiscal Review Tool Available:*** We are excited to announce that the Office of Fiscal Operations fiscal review tool is available on ACL’s website for IL Programs. Please visit the page at [Fiscal Resources for IL Programs](https://acl.gov/programs/centers-independent-living/fiscal-information-il-programs).
* ***IL Network Contact Updates:*** As a reminder, if there are any contact information changes for CIL Executive Directors, SILC Executive Directors, SILC Chairs or DSE’s, please let your Program Officer know. To verify the current name and contact information for your Program Officer, please view the [OILP staff list](https://url.avanan.click/v2/___https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Facl.gov%2Fprograms%2Fcommunity-living-programs%2Foffice-independent-living-programs-contact-list&data=05%7C01%7CJennifer.Martin%40acl.hhs.gov%7Cbb9de1e85bc64e7d721408dbdee35cd6%7Cd58addea50534a808499ba4d944910df%7C0%7C0%7C638348840333464084%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=LQcxic97v80MGqaN1bel6SS1MDOr6pmyqDC4jlXlqEM%3D&reserved=0___.YXAzOmJldGFoOmE6bzpiYTFhNTI2YjcwNDNjYzU4NzM0Zjg1MjJhOWE3M2Q2Njo2OmE4YTI6NTY0NmFlY2QwZmVmMzE1ZjNlYzFjYWJiNGIwOTIxN2IxOTRjOGFhYjZhNWYyYzJlNGQzYzM4N2FlNjI2YWVmZTpwOlQ6Tg) on ACL’s website. For guidance on changes in Executive Directors, please visit [Changes in CIL Executive Directors](https://acl.gov/programs/aging-and-disability-networks/centers-independent-living) under Frequently Asked Questions.
* ***OILP Call Recordings Available:*** Thank you to all of you who attended our November and December 2024 calls. The playlist is available at [OILP Connection Call Playlist](https://url.avanan.click/v2/___https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZLMVKd8yBA0wg42OT7owmv_wjsdnLHIu___.YXAzOmJldGFoOmE6bzpiYTFhNTI2YjcwNDNjYzU4NzM0Zjg1MjJhOWE3M2Q2Njo2OjZkODE6ZTU5ZGJjMGQ1NDdiZGQyYWZjYzAyNzFkMzZhM2VjNGFmNjg0NmFiOWY1MzkzYjU2MWMxYjVmMjNlNWE0OTFiMDpwOlQ6Tg).

### Sharing Your Stories

We invite you to share your stories with the IL network. Sharing your stories is your opportunity to demonstrate the important work that you do on behalf of persons with disabilities!

* ***Meet Michael: A Story of Transition to the Community, Able South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina:*** Michael, had been living in a group home for most of his life. At the home, others had often spoken on his behalf without truly listening to his personal desires. The situation had taken a distressing turn when Michael developed an infection due to a malfunctioning power chair in the group home, and regrettably, no one took the initiative to repair it. At 52, he reached out to Able South Carolina for help.

In response to this critical situation, LaQuanda Clark, our Director of Independent Living, immediately stepped in. We learned that Michael had been hospitalized. Together, they engaged in candid conversations about Michael’s dreams and the actions being taken on his behalf. It came to light that meetings had been happening without his presence or input, further compounding his sense of powerlessness.

In these meetings, Michael was often talked over, and no one afforded them the time to communicate, as he relied on a communication device for speech. Frustration was mounting, and the consumer eventually withdrew from a meeting, feeling unheard and invisible. In a moment of true advocacy, LaQuanda turned to Michael. She assured him that it didn't matter if he misspelled words or took extra time to express himself. The meetings were about the consumer's life and well-being, and he deserved to be recognized and a part of the decision-making. With a nod of agreement from the consumer, LaQuanda interrupted the ongoing conversation and firmly emphasized the importance of respecting and patiently accommodating the consumer when he needed to communicate.

From that moment, Michael felt empowered and confidently spoke up about his wants and needs for the rest of the meeting. As a result of this newfound empowerment, he successfully transitioned into his own place and out of the group home.

Today, he thrives, reveling in the joy of living independently. LaQuanda even saw him at the State Fair, where he was enjoying his independence, smiling, and immersed in the pure delight of the moment. This story exemplifies the profound impact of our work at Able SC, where we're dedicated to amplifying the voices of individuals with disabilities, ensuring their agency and independence.

* ***Sharing Julia’s Story, The League, Fort Wayne, Indiana:*** Please see a success story shared by The League, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In 2022, Julia was facing financial instability due to the pandemic and serious health issues associated with Klippel-Feil Syndrome – a lifelong condition that resulted in Scoliosis and Pulmonary Hypertension, requiring oxygen 24/7 and a ventilator at night. With support from The League’s Benefit Enrollment Center, she restructured her finances—transferring 401K savings into an ABLE account and initiating a monthly IRA distribution. This strategic shift allowed her to qualify for the Medicare Savings Program and Extra Help, drastically reducing her out-of-pocket healthcare costs. The ABLE account also provided a way to cover critical needs—such as a home generator, oxygen monitoring equipment, and a fall-detection smartwatch.

With reduced financial stress and better health management, Julia’s overall quality of life improved, enabling her to shift from crisis management to future planning. She completed the Inclusion Institute’s Leadership Academy and began using her experience to advocate for others facing similar barriers. Her advocacy helped raise awareness about the importance of internet access for people with disabilities, particularly for telehealth, social connection, and accessing services. She also joined the planning committee of the Indiana Statewide Independent Living Council (INSILC), where she contributes to expanding supports for individuals with disabilities across the state.

Julia’s lived experience and policy engagement are now informing efforts to improve systems that serve people with disabilities. By sharing her story and pushing for solutions, she’s helping others access the tools and supports they need to achieve greater independence, stability, and inclusion.

Please share this newsletter with your staff so they can use these great resources. As always, please feel free to contact our office if you have questions.