

**STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
Holiday Inn, Fargo & Virtual  
August 3 - 4, 2023**

**Call to Order:** Brittney Hogan called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. A quorum was present.

**Roll Call:**

**Members Present:** Shannon Cook, Emma-Leigh Miller, Angie Bosch, Jerry Christiansen, Scott Burlingame, Nancy Lundon, Pete Yung, Brittney Hogan, Gillian Plenty Chief, Russ Cusack, Robyn Soiseth, Chelsy Sondrol, Ali Brown, Joe Yasenchack, Hope Wolbert

**Members Absent:** Jan Beddes, Leon Dietrich

**Non-Council Members Present:** Aimee Volk, LaRae Gustafson, Jana Johnson, Damian Schlinger, LaRae Gustafson

**Approval of the August 2023 Agenda:** Shannon Cook made a motion to add 2024 meeting dates to the agenda, Jerry Christiansen made a motion to approve the agenda with amendment, Scott Burlingame seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

**Approval of May 2023 Minutes:** Scott Burlingame made a motion to approve the May 2023 SILC minutes as presented, Shannon Cook seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

**Correspondence – Brittney Hogan:**

APRIL Conference is Oct 12-14, 2023, “The Magic of Independent Living” which will be in Orange County, CA.

The SILC SPIL Technical Amendment was submitted in June.

There was a questionnaire that Aimee filled out.

**Treasurer’s Report – Shannon Cook:** Reviewed the Treasurer’s Report.

**Jerry Christiansen made a motion to accept the Treasure’s Report as presented, Robyn Soiseth seconded the motion to approve. Motion passed by unanimous decision.**

Discussion was held on the April Conference and on how many to send. If you are interested send your name to Aimee by August 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Shannon Cook made a motion to send to two SILC members to the APRIL Conference in Orange County, CA for travel dates of October 11-15, 2023, Peter Yung seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous decision.**

**Olmstead Commission – Jana Johnson and Jordan Wetsel**

Jana Johnson, ND Olmstead Coordinator talked about Olmstead, updates, and protection and advocacy. The original lawsuit was filed by Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson who had mental health and intellectual disabilities. The U.S. Supreme Court found the unjustified segregation of people with disabilities is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1999. In North Dakota, Olmstead has community supports and services, housing, transportation, education, employment, and healthcare in the state of ND. Individuals must have informed choices to make those decisions. Some of the partners are Health and Human Services, Money Follows the Person, Aging and Disability Resource Link, Centers for Independent Living, and community partners.

In regard to the Olmstead Commission, it was originally put in place due to an executive order. They are continuing move forward on their plan. There is an advisory council that have members with both lived experience and those that work with Olmstead in the community. They have re-vamped the inquiry process and should be on their website by 8/11/2023 (Olmstead.nd.gov).

Jordan Wetsel talked about the Workforce and Technology program and the technology and fiscal resources. They are looking at innovative practices they are going to be working with various community partners.

### **2024 SILC Meeting Dates**

- February 1-2, 2024 – Bismarck and Virtual
- May 2-3, 2024 – Grand Forks and Virtual
- August 1-2, 2024 – Fargo and Virtual
- November 7-8, 2024 – Minot and Virtual

**Robyn Soiseth made a motion to accept the meeting dates as presented above for 2024, Scott Burlingame seconded the motion to approve. Motion passed by unanimous decision.**

### **Accessibility Projects – Jen Erickson**

Jen is with Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living Center. They are currently working with the Fargo Dome and get together a team with different disabilities to provide feedback (wheelchair users, blind travelers, amputee, etc.). A renovation and expansion to the airport, they are going to be adding a sensory room, service animal relieving area, caregiver bathroom areas, adult changing station, etc. There are a lot of good things happening in the Fargo area.

Jen facilitates the civil and human rights task force. They are looking at having speakers come in about with different types of disabilities to educate and share their stories.

### **Vision Services in ND – Aimee Volk**

Aimee educated about what low vision is, explained the difference in types of vision impairments, Vocational Rehabilitation programming related to low vision, showed devices that can assist those with low vision.

### **Committee Breakout**

**Friday, August 4, 2023**

Call to Order: Brittney Hogan called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

**Roll Call:**

Members Present: Shannon Cook, Angie Bosch, Jerry Christiansen, Scott Burlingame, Brittney Hogan, Chelsy Sondrol, Jan Beddes, Ali Brown, Leon Dietrich, Gillian Plenty Chief, Nancy Lundon, Joe Yasenchack

Members Absent: Robyn Soiseth, Peter Yung, Russ Cusack, Emma-Leigh Miller, Hope Wolbert

Non-Committee Members: Aimee Volk, LaRae Gustafson, Beth Larson-Steckler, Wendy Dahlberg, Jana Johnson, Damian Schlinger

**Youth Homeless Development – Pathfinder – Beth Larson-Steckler and Wendy Dahlberg**

The Continuum of Care Program is a housing and urban development program developed to promote community-wide goal of ending homelessness. High populations of youth homelessness are in the Williston and Devils Lake/Fort Totten areas. The most common reasons for homelessness is tension in the home, being kicked out, not having money, being evicted, escaping violence, unemployment, transitioning out of residential or incarceration, and aging out of foster care.

The eligibility criteria for unaccompanied youth/youth adults 24 years old or older who:

- Are experiencing homelessness
- Are at imminent risk of homelessness
- Are fleeing domestic violence
- Are fleeing other life-threatening situations (trafficking)

There are four groups that are part of the program: Youthworks (project type: joint transitional housing-rapid rehousing and supportive services), Grand Forks Housing Authority (supportive services), Pathfinder Services of ND (supportive services), and Fraser, Ltd. (rapid rehousing).

They went over the programs that are around the state.

**Quarterly Director's Report:**

Angie for Freedom.: See attached.

Royce for Dakota Center for Independent Living: See attached.

Scott for Independence, Inc.: See attached.

Randy for Options: See attached.

**Committee Reports:**

Governance Committee – Royce Schultze: Full council.

Internal Affairs – Nancy Lundon: See Grid

External Affairs – Angie Bosch: See Grid

**State Rehabilitation Council – Damian Schlinger:** Mark Heinert and Beth Larson-Steckler gave a presentation on the Youth Homelessness Project. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is working with the Department of Corrections. VR gets 15% of parking fees and they are currently looking at proposals on what they can do with the dollars.

**Traumatic Brain Injury Council – Shannon Cook:** The last meeting was in May and the next meeting will be next week. There are three bills that were discussed as they pertained to the Traumatic Brain Injury Council.

**Committee on Aging – Royce Schultze:** No report.

**Olmstead Commission – Scott Burlingame:** The Department of Transportation recently gave a presentation. Currently they are working on the Olmstead revision. The next meeting is August 9<sup>th</sup>.

**NASILC – Leon Dietrich:** No report.

**Public Comment:** No Comment.

The next SILC meeting will be November 2-3, 2023, in Minot, ND and will have the virtual option.

**Scott Burlingame made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Shannon Cook seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.**

## Freedom ND SILC Director's Report – August 2023

### MFP/ADRL Updates

#### Fargo

- The ADRL program continues to be very busy. We were so busy we hired an additional staff to work with transitions for the ADRL program. We are receiving referrals for people residing in various shelters as well as in the community that are needing diversion. Most people have moved out of the YWCA, New Life Center, and Centre Inc. They have successfully found apartments or other various living arrangements and the ADRL grant has helped to secure them housing and furnishings for their home. Gibb continues to work with this program, and this is his primary focus. Gibb and Erin have completed **18 ADRL** transitions in the past quarter and opened **60** new referrals looking to begin the process of transitioning into their own place in the community.
- MFP referrals in the Fargo office have been picking up. Irina and Tricia have received **11** new consumers on their caseload. Another **6** have completed the transition into the community and we will follow for 365 days. Several of them are in active transition stage, we are in constant communication regarding discharge planning, purchases for household goods and Durable Medical Equipment that will be needed, getting supports in place, securing the apartment, and planning the timeline for transition. Each consumer is different and the things they need to make their transition successful vary from one person to another. The people Irina and Tricia have transitioned are very happy to be living in their own apartment in the community of their choice!

#### Jamestown and Wahpeton ADRL and MFP

Jamestown has had **6** ADRL referrals and Wahpeton **1** referral for ADRL. **One** person successfully transitioned from Jamestown with the assistance of ADRL grant funds. For referrals, MFP in Jamestown has received **4** referrals and Wahpeton has **2** new referrals. Jamestown has transitioned **1** MFP consumer back into the community.

#### Lisbon

We interviewed an applicant for the Lisbon position on Friday. Merri, ADRL/MFP Assistant Program has been providing transition support to several consumers in the Lisbon area. She has been working with both MFP consumers and ADRL consumers in local nursing homes. Of these **4** consumers have transitioned either back to their homes or into new homes in the community.

#### Consumer Stories

Gibb, Independent Living Advocate in Fargo was shopping with a consumer at Walmart. She was an older lady, and she had her son in law and grandson along. They were friendly but kind of followed behind as we did the shopping. The consumer told me how exciting it was to go shopping. She said that she has a representative payee, and she doesn't have much say in how her money is spent. She was thrilled and said it was very fun to be shopping and to be able to pick out her own things, as it is not something she gets to do often. Since she was moving to a new place, she picked out some cooking items and had fun looking for various household items.

#### Fargo

- A Young Adult gathering was held at a park in West Fargo in July, there was low attendance. Another gathering will be planned for the fall.
- A trip to the Red River Zoo took place in July, a few new people attended and enjoyed being outdoors on a nice summer day. An FM Red Hawks game is the FIA event in August.
- All of our Fargo positions are filled! Tricia McNamee began employment on July 10 as an Independent Living Advocate/Transition Coordinator for MFP.
- Decluttering Independent Living Class will be offered in August.

## **Wahpeton**

### **Office Updates:**

- An art and craft event is the plan for Eric's first FIA in Wahpeton in August.

## **Jamestown**

- Decluttering Independent Living Class will be offered in August.

## **Event Planning**

- We are in full swing planning for a few different events.
  - Giving Hearts Day is coming up February 8, 2024. We have just started the planning for this but looking to keep our same theme as last year: "Nothing about us without us." – Judi Chamberlin.
  - Appreciation Luncheon is back! After a few years of trial and error, we have decided to go back to having our annual awards event as a luncheon. This will involve giving awards to people in our communities that are advocating and improving the lives of people with disabilities. Community members can nominate a person, business, group, or organization for our awards that will then be gone through by a panel of judges to determine who will get the 2024 awards. We will also include a Silent Auction that will be online a few days before the event starts and will end after the event is over. This event will take place on May 16<sup>th</sup> from 12-1:30.
  - Lastly, we are in the beginning stages of planning activities and themes throughout 2024 around our 35<sup>th</sup> year of Freedom Resource Center!

North Dakota State Independent Living Council  
Quarterly Reports – August 4, 2023  
Independence, Inc. Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

Community Services:

We have been working with a group of parents to do some accessibility surveys in Minot, specifically accessible parking. These parents have created a plan for looking throughout the community at parking issues and collecting all the data. Once the data is collected, we are hoping to use that data to bring awareness to our local governments as well as providing information to individual businesses to improve their parking.

We had our sixth annual Celebrating Independence Event on 7/21 at the Scandinavian Heritage Park in Minot. We had over 100 people attend. We gave out the following award:

Brandon Rowenhorst of Minot for his work with getting an accessible taxi ordinance in Minot and his continued work on community accessibility. Our Youth Advocate of the Year is Anna Schloesser of Burlington. She is very active in our Youth Ambassadors of Disability Awareness Program and has worked very hard to bring awareness to issues facing youth with disabilities like herself. We also had a new award this year, it was given to Adam Stute of Bottineau. Adam is 8 years old and has volunteered for hours in our community garden in Bottineau. He has also served as an unofficial mentor to a young person who has been working with our office. He also did a presentation to his third-grade classroom about disability awareness and the community garden.

Individual Services:

So far this year, we have transitioned 10 people from nursing homes into the community. We have about 20 people who are currently working on getting out. We are very happy to be working a lot with Trinity homes in Minot to get some people transitioned to the community.

We are often asked by service providers if we can assist people with improving their overall appearance. This has often proved difficult as it is a hard subject to approach people about, and it is not the type of service people normally want.

In order to address these issues, we have had some luck by inviting people to attend some classes and offering them personal hygiene items for coming. For example, we had a class at Milton Young Towers in which we got donations of soap, towels, toothpaste, and other similar items for those who came to the class.

Overall, our individual services have hit a point of being very self-sustaining. Our consumer numbers, across the age groups have remained very consistent despite the fact we have done very little outreach over the past year. We have a lot of people who come to use for help with Social Security issues and help with finding the proper medical coverage.

We have entered into a contract with NDCPD to provide financial literacy training to youth with disabilities and their families. Our staff have went through the training, and should begin providing the services soon. We are also finishing up another project through NDCPD to provide skills training at middle schools.

We are looking forward to providing Pre-Employment Transition Skills training through a joint collaboration with VR and both the Peace Garden Special Education Unit and the Northern Plains Special Education Unit. This project took a long time to work out, but we are ready to roll with it as

schools begin to re-open. Through this program, we will provide opportunities to youth to enter the workforce, both in a classroom and individual setting.

#### Staffing Update

Our Nursing Facility Transition Coordinator in our Bottineau office resigned in July. That position was filled by Michele Anderson, who has worked for us for the past two years as an Independent Living Specialist. For now, we will staff the IL side of the Bottineau office out of Minot.



## Options RCIL SILC Report August 4, 2023

### **Cavalier Office Closure**

Gaining and retaining employees was found troublesome so Options decided to conduct a salary survey where it was found that the Organization's Benefits Package was severely lacking, namely its cost sharing for Medical Insurance. Options was the lowest reimbursor of any Center and organization included in the Study. Because of this Options Board of Directors at the recommendation of the Management Staff decided to close both its Cavalier and Roseau Offices. Both Offices had position openings where the money used to pay for the positions could be applied to increasing Options cost share for Health Insurance. This was done due to the lack of State funds keeping up with inflation, the only way to be competitive was to cannibalize open FTE's.

### **Program Manager Position**

We continue to search for the Program Manager position as LaRae retires 9-15-23.

### **Direct Service Position Openings**

Options has recently received notice that its long time Devils Lake employee, Heidi Gustafson will be leaving this month. Additionally, our Direct Service Employee based within our main office, Sarah Beniek, will leave in Sept. We continue to look for an individual to work providing transition services through ADRL funding; it would be Options preference to hire someone based from Devils Lake.

### **New Hires**

Two additional Transition Coordinators have been hired bringing Options' full complement of MFP staff to four.

### **Relocations/Diversions:**

Options has facilitated the transition of twenty-three people from institutional care back into the community and through its intervention has prevented another twenty-two from entering institutional care. Funding for these efforts have include MFP, ADRL, and Title VII.

### **Direct Service scenario:**

Got an ADRL referral from Dakota Center for IL for an individual who is diabetic and has a wound on the bottom of his foot. He has lived in a tin shed since 1984 in a small community with no medical services. His shed had no bathroom or running water.

Staff helped him apply for Section 8, find an apartment he can afford and that is close to a clinic and hospital for his medical care. We helped him apply for food stamps, the Homestead Tax credit (for property tax he still owed from his Lot in Martin), fuel assistance (for outstanding debt he owed). He now has moved into his new apartment, got his voucher so his rent is subsidized, got help with his security deposit and first month's rent from ADRL, and has gotten needed furniture from ADRL. He is a very happy camper!

### **Direct Service Scenario:**

Marcia worked with a consumer from Sacramento, CA who was living in New Rockford, ND in his ex-wife's house. He lived on \$281 in food stamps a month. He occasionally got some spending money from out-of-state family members. Once a month he got a ride from Eddy County transit to go to Devils Lake to get groceries. The house he was staying in became infested with mice and rats. Options staff assisted this individual to get a refund he was owed by the IRS for over a year which he used to pay bills. Next, we helped him apply for fuel assistance and renew his healthcare coverage. Once this was done and processed, he was able to go to the doctor to address some medical

concerns he had. We also applied for and worked with Social Security to get him back on SSDI. This took 1 1/2 years and he still hasn't gotten all of his backpay owed to him.

We then applied for Section 8. We travelled to three different communities he was interested in looking for appropriate housing. There wasn't a lot available that interested him. He ended up choosing an apartment in Harvey, ND.

Over a period of five months, he got a voucher, an apartment, moved in, is getting his monthly social security, still gets food stamps, has bus transportation, auto pays most bills, has bought some furniture, and has met with VR to see if he can participate in the ticket-to-work program.

### **Options Annual Deer Hunt**

Options has started to solicit for applicants and volunteers for the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Deer Hunt to be held Oct. 12, 13, and 14<sup>th</sup>. The accessible deer hunt is held at Rydell National Wildlife Refuge south of Mentor, Minnesota. This year's hunt will provide a hunting experience for up to 20 hunters over three days. Almost every type of disability has been represented in the last 27 years including persons with blindness, full quadriplegia, and Downs Syndrome. The hunt is open to any person with a disability including persons with physical, mental, and intellectual disabilities. During the three day event Options will enlist the help of some sixty volunteers and through their help will be able to accommodate almost any type of disability and provide two meals a day to participants.

### **Accessibility Surveys**

Brooke Peterson, Options Accessibility Specialist completed the number of training credits needed in order to write the ADA Coordinator Certification exam which she took and passed.

Options staff have recently received training on two pieces of equipment designed to objectively assess the accessibility of Outdoor Developed Areas. Through funding from the Minnesota SILC Options was able to acquire a Rotational Penetrometer (RP) and HETAP machine. The RP can measure the firmness of a surface in order to insure it fulfills the definition of firm for accessible routes and accessible parking spots, carpet to insure the pad is not too thick, and also below play equipment to insure it fulfills the specs for softness in case there is a fall. The HETAP is designed to travel along a trail and divided by GPS readings will measure the slope, cross slope and elevation of the trail. As the machine is being used the assessors can take pictures along the route, document the trail width, surface conditions, and significant waypoints such as benches and interpretive data. This data can then be used to mark the trails giving a potential trail user the information needed to judge whether they can navigate the trail based on their disability, individual stamina, and adaptive equipment they are using. The first trail assessed was Fisher Trail within Turtle River State Park located by Emerado, ND. The results of this assessment will be provided to the Park Manager.

Options Accessibility Specialist has initiated a survey of various Apartment Complexes found in Fargo and Grand Forks owned by the Hampton Corporation as part of a settlement between the United States Government and the Corporation when it was found they were not complying with the Fair Housing Act and Americans with Disabilities Act. This is being conducted with representatives from the Department of Justice. The results of the survey will be used to insure the corporation is fulfilling their obligation as defined by the Court.

### **NCIL Conference**

A contingent of Options Staff attended the Annual Conference of the National Council on Independent Living in Washington DC. As part of the event staff were able to attend training sessions by national speakers, participate in a march to the Capital, and meet with many of North Dakota's delegates in Congress.

Dept of Justice staff Micheal Spanier, Tara Vavrosky Iversen and Margaret Girard visited Options for their quarterly meeting. It was good to put a face to the names and meet in person. They also visited Borg Memorial Home in Mountain ND and an adult foster home in Leeds ND. These visits should have brought info on alternative living arrangements within the region that individuals have chosen to move to. Options staff shared barriers within the region which mainly highlighted the Ft. Totten reservation.