

# INvision

## Indiana Division of Disability & Rehabilitative Services Newsletter

### HOPE NOTES

## A message from Director Kylee Hope

*Life is about progress, not perfection*



Welcome to 2021! When the new year comes, it brings about an opportunity for reflection and focus on what we envision for our good life. As I reflect back on my own personal and professional experiences over the years, I would like to take this moment to share how those experiences impact my vision for DDRS programs and services to empower persons with disabilities toward greater self-determination and support their path to independence.

As you may know, my brother Kurt has autism. When you meet Kurt for the first time there are many things you may observe about him. You will see a man who is engaging, kind and courteous with his words and interactions. You will see a man who is employed in a job that brings him joy and purpose. You will see a man who has his own apartment and is proud to show you around. You will see a man who enjoys going to Colts games, whose sense of humor is highlighted when he watches funny animal videos and who genuinely enjoys being in the presence of his family and friends. Kurt is all of these things and more. Looking back, there were times that this current reality didn't seem to be within reach. Whether it was through the professionals who didn't believe he was capable or the lack of skills he had yet to acquire, the vision for his future could at times feel somber. Even though, we persisted by giving Kurt every opportunity to succeed, learn and drive his own life. It was up to Kurt to determine the direction of his life and up to us to support him in getting there.

On many levels, Kurt's path to independence has been similar to my own and, I expect, similar to yours. We develop a plan for what we envision as our good life at the time. That plan usually takes into account our interests, strengths and assets. Through our experiences our path changes and new plans emerge. We fail, we succeed and we learn. When the time came that Kurt expressed a desire to have a job and live on his own, we developed a plan that incorporated all of the supports and assets available to him. As a family, we have always supported Kurt to live his best life through listening to what is important to him and thinking creatively to address those areas that are important for him to be successful. We do this by building on his strengths, leveraging technology, fostering current relationships and making new ones, having experiences in his community, and using eligibility specific supports.

Just as is true for all of our lives, plans don't always go as expected. We have had to modify, adjust and learn from the positive as well as negative experiences. My vision for DDRS is that all of our programs and supports allow for an array of experiences that foster self-determination and amplify the voice of the person utilizing our services. Life is about progress, not perfection. DDRS values and is appreciative that you invite us to be part of your progress towards your vision for a good life.

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### STORIES IN THIS NEWSLETTER

- **Bureau bits:** Updates from your First Steps, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation teams.
- **Making the LifeCourse work for you:** Tapping into decision-making supports, along with enhancing skills in decision making, can greatly benefit all areas of life.
- **News you can use:** Find the COVID-19 tools you need to stay safe and informed from the CDC and the IDOH; learn about an opportunity for individuals and families to learn more about using remote support services.
- **Featured story:** Centers for Independent Living are great assets that provide tools, resources and supports for integrating people with disabilities fully into their communities.
- **Events you don't want to miss:** The quarterly Building Bridges events create direct avenues for individuals and families to share their feedback.

## Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services

As individuals, families and teams discuss their vision of a good life, increased independence is often a cornerstone of that conversation. Remote Supports can be an avenue for a person 14 years or older to increase their autonomy while building skills. Remote supports are generally considered to be video or audio monitoring support and can be implemented in countless ways to simultaneously support privacy and safety, leading to improved decision-making skills, encouraging independence and opportunities to enhance daily living and problem-solving skills. Both the Community Integration and Habilitation and Family Support waivers include remote support services that are provided by six vendors throughout the state. You can talk to your case manager about including Remote Supports in your Person-Centered Individualized Support Plan as a person-centered solution for increased independence.

Building their competencies through family and caregiver training is another way families develop skills, leading to their vision of a good life and enhanced independence. Family and caregiver training services provide education and support directly to the family member of an individual to increase that caregiver's confidence and stamina to support their loved one. This may include educational materials or training programs, workshops, and conferences. Caregivers work with their case manager to identify and assure these educational and training activities are based on the family/caregiver's unique needs and are specifically identified in the PCISP. These opportunities can build the caregiver's knowledge base in areas such as understanding the disability of the individual, achieving greater competence and confidence in providing supports, developing and accessing community resources and supports, developing advocacy skills, and/or supporting the individual in developing self-advocacy skills, to suggest only a few. Family and caregiver training is available as a support under the CIH and FS waivers.

## First Steps early intervention program

Our First Steps program maintains a vision for all Indiana families to have a strong foundation to advocate for their infants and toddlers to grow and flourish to their highest potential. Fostering independence is part of that encouragement. We know that early intervention can set the stage for the development of strong independent skills.

Our First Steps service coordinators and providers guide parents and caregivers in assisting their children to be independent and able to do as much as they can on their own. When children perform simple tasks and participate in activities independently, they feel a great sense of accomplishment.

One easy way to nurture independence in young children is to embed the practice into the activities they do as a part of their daily routine. For example, while they are washing their hands or brushing teeth, you can encourage the toddler to slide the stool to the sink, turn on the water or dry their hands by themselves. Caregivers should always be patient and encouraging when helping their child to lead an activity, using words like, "great job" and "I like the way you got the soap."

The Indiana Department of Education offers a series of video vignettes called "[Mighty Moments](#)" to support independence and child development during daily routines. Mighty Moments include easy-to-implement activities that foster natural learning opportunities for young children. You may also [click here to find](#) some great suggestions from a blog posted on the North Carolina Child Care Resources to think about ways to foster independence in young children.

And remember the words of Maria Montessori, "Children are as independent as you expect them to be."



first  
steps

SAVE THE DATE!  
JUNE 10 & 11, 2021

VIRTUAL  
FIRST STEPS  
CONFERENCE

[EventMobi link](#) | [Registration link](#)

## Vocational Rehabilitation

Often caregivers struggle with the idea of letting go. It can be hard to accept the unknowns involved in achieving a more independent lifestyle for a family member with a disability.

The pathway to independence doesn't have to be a scary one. The key components are the development of a trusted support network and a good career plan that maps out a pathway for the individual to acquire knowledge needed to sustain meaningful employment, and mentors, trainers and teachers that can facilitate the progress of the employment plan.

Vocational Rehabilitation's purpose is to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to obtain gainful employment. A VR counselor will help with identifying a vocational goal and the services needed to achieve that goal. Working as a partner with the VR counselor, you may:

- ▶ Complete an application for services
- ▶ If eligible\* and determined to be an individual with a most significant disability:
  - » Develop an Individualized Plan for Employment.
  - » Participate in an assessment to identify an employment goal that matches your interests and abilities.
  - » Receive services identified in your plan.
  - » Achieve your vocational goal of successful employment.

*\*85% of eligible individuals are determined to be individuals with a most significant disability.*

Today, the employment of people with disabilities has been shown to benefit businesses by lowering turnover, increasing productivity and increasing access to a broader pool of skilled workers. For an individual who gains successful employment it can mean greater economic self-sufficiency, improved self-confidence, and an opportunity to be more active in community life.

Each year, the Commission on Rehabilitation Services spotlights outstanding individuals who were able to achieve their employment goals with the assistance of VR and other local partners. [Click here to read](#) their stories featured in the 2020 Annual Report.

Special thanks to Nikki Robinson, Alphonso Brown, Destinee Smith and Dallas Richmond for allowing us to share in their success!

### Indiana's Employment First Plan

After more than two years of research, deliberation and debate, the Rehabilitation Commission and its members are pleased to announce the approval of Indiana's Employment First Plan on Sept. 11, 2020. The commission is proud to embrace and support the principles and values of the national Employment First Movement, which, simply put, means real jobs and real wages for people with disabilities. The plan can be [found here](#).



# Making the LifeCourse work for you

## Advocacy and Engagement: Decision-making supports

The LifeCourse Framework examines many areas of a person’s life and offers many tools to assist you in living your vision of a good life. Each Life Domain has a number of questions to help you think through things that may be important in your life. With each domain, you consider the question: *Can I do these things without extra support? Do I benefit from some support?* Keep in mind that everyone, no matter if you have a disability or not, benefits from answering these two questions as we plot the course to our good life.



One of those domains that is often difficult to address is Advocacy and Engagement. One of the important supports that can be addressed in this domain is decision-making supports. A quick examination of all domains reveals that tapping into decision-making supports, along with enhancing your own skills in decision making, can greatly benefit you in all areas of life. A tool that may be helpful in exploring what types of supports you need when making decisions is called the Life Trajectory Worksheet. Whether you are considering buying a

house, creating a budget, maintaining a healthy diet or choosing a new doctor, we all use supports to help us make these decisions. Those supports can include friends, family, professionals, technology, the internet, smart phone apps and community programs.

A Life Trajectory, as outlined on this worksheet, always begins with where we are. We assess our skills as they appear today. Then we imagine what our dream for a good life might be. It is important when completing a Life Trajectory Worksheet that you and those supporting you are working together to envision your dream and develop steps to get there. As an example, I want to be able to make decisions so I can be independent. We begin by listing some of the important steps towards that independence:

- ▶ Make decisions about budgeting.
- ▶ Make decisions about shopping purchases.
- ▶ Make lists for shopping so I can make good decisions on how I spend my money.

You can see how every large life goal might have smaller steps along the way. In this way, we climb the trajectory of life towards our vision of our good life. A tool like the LifeCourse Trajectory makes it easy to organize our thoughts and our efforts toward our good life. For more information about LifeCourse tools, [check them out here](#).



**Daily Life and Employment:** What a person does as part of everyday life – school, employment, volunteering, communication, routines and life skills.



**Community Living:** Where and how someone lives—housing and living options, community access, transportation, home adaptation and modification.



**Safety and Security:** Staying safe and secure—finances, emergencies, well-being, decision making supports, legal rights and issues.



**Healthy Living:** Managing and accessing health care and staying well—medical, mental health, behavior, developmental, wellness and nutrition.



**Social and Spirituality:** Building friendships and relationships, leisure activities, personal networks and faith community.



**Advocacy and Engagement:** Building valued roles, making choices, setting goals, assuming responsibility and driving how one’s own life is lived.

For more information on the LifeCourse framework and principles, [visit: www.lifecoursetools.com](http://www.lifecoursetools.com).



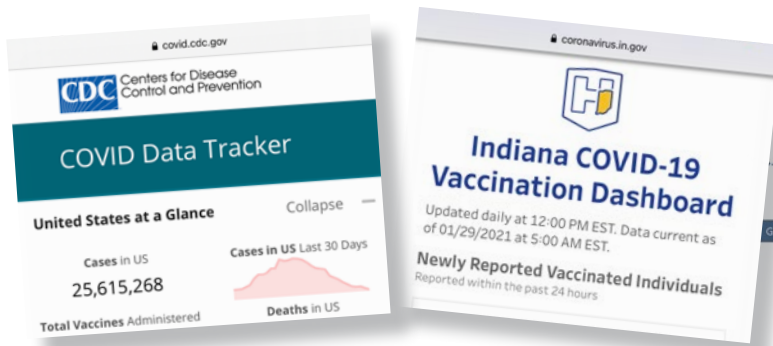
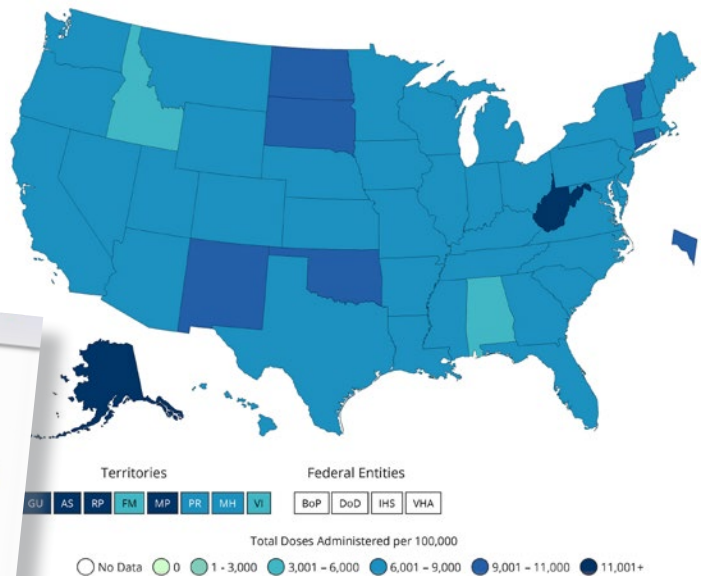
# COVID-19 resources

*Find the tools you need to stay safe and informed from the CDC and the IDOH*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a number of easy-to-read [resources available on their website](#) as you continue to navigate life during a pandemic. You can find information specific to people with developmental and behavioral disorders, children and teens, stress and coping, daily activities and going out, travel, pets and other animals, and much more! You can also find information on vaccines.

For information on the COVID vaccine specific to Indiana, you can visit the [Indiana Department of Health webpage](#).

Total Doses Administered Reported to the CDC by State/Territory and for Selected Federal Entities per 100,000



## Remote supports webinars

*Hear how remote supports has worked in a variety of scenarios*

The Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services is excited to share an opportunity for individuals and families to learn more about using remote support services. One of six Indiana remote supports providers, Night Owl Support Systems, is offering a series of webinars that began in January and continue into February for individuals and families that are interested in learning more about how remote supports can assist them in their vision of a good life.

There will be two different topics, each being offered multiple times throughout this series. Please note, Night Owl Support Systems is hosting this webinar series and Bureau of Quality Improvement Services will continue to share information from our other approved providers as they offer similar opportunities. This is not meant to be an endorsement or recommendation of

Night Owl Support Systems over other remote supports providers and is only intended to share an opportunity for individuals and families to learn more.

**Topic:** Remote supports: Who it works for

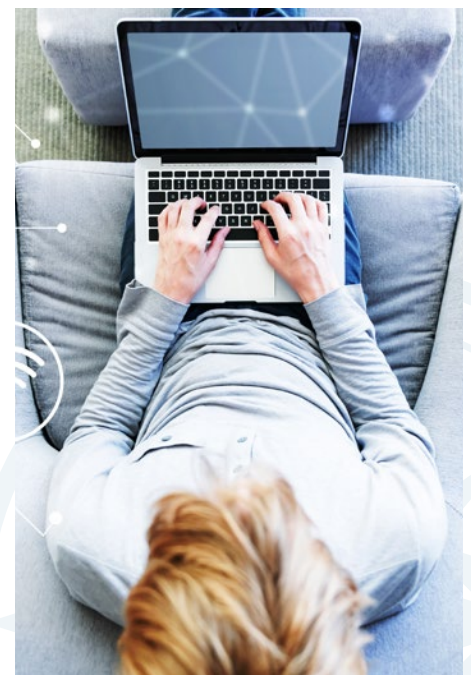
**Description:** Join us to hear personal success stories and how remote supports has worked in a variety of scenarios, along with lessons learned over the years.

**Dates/Times:**

Feb. 10 at 5 p.m. EST

Feb. 16 at 10 a.m. & 5 p.m. EST

**Meeting Details:** [Zoom link](#); Meeting ID: 822 6427 3202; Passcode: 559714



## FEATURED STORY

# The independent living philosophy

*To empower people with disabilities with the freedom to make personal choices*

The pathway to independence for an individual with disabilities can be difficult to navigate. Individuals often face difficulty in finding relevant information, in connecting with the appropriate governmental and community-based agencies, and in obtaining the needed services, assistive technology and skills training to live independently. People with disabilities can face discrimination and lowered expectations which also hinder independence.

Centers for Independent Living are great assets in navigating the path to independence. CILs are non-residential organizations that work with and alongside individuals with all kinds of disabilities to create and live the life of their choosing. According to the Administration for Community Living, the federal agency that provides oversight for the community living programs, centers for independent living “work to support community living and independence for people with disabilities across the nation based on the belief that all people can live with dignity, make their own choices, and participate fully in society. These programs provide tools, resources and supports for integrating people with disabilities fully into their communities to promote equal opportunities, self-determination and respect.”

The independent living philosophy believes that people with disabilities are the best experts on their own needs. Centers seek to empower people with disabilities with the freedom to make personal choices and with the goal of making communities places where all people can live, receive an education, work, play and participate in community activities.

### People with disabilities and older adults have the same opportunities as everyone else to:

- ✓ Choose for themselves where to live
- ✓ Earn a living
- ✓ Lead the lives they want
- ✓ Make decisions about their lives

- 🏠 People prefer it
- 💰 It usually costs less
- ⚖️ It's a legal right
- 👥 Everyone benefits when everyone can contribute



In Indiana, there are ten federally and state-recognized Centers for Independent Living. Like their counterparts across the nation, these centers are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential, private nonprofit agencies that are designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities. At a minimum, 51% of staff are persons with disabilities and 51% of each board of directors are persons with significant disabilities.

Each of Indiana's CILs serve a defined area of the state and structure its services based on the needs of the local communities. However, there are five core services that all CILs provide:

**Information and Referral:** Centers assist by providing information and referral on the variety of issues affecting people with

disabilities such as direct services, community resources and available options.

**Peer Counseling:** Peer counselors or peer advocates, who have achieved independence and community integration, share knowledge and experiences. By virtue of their disability-related experience, people with disabilities are uniquely qualified to assist their peers in problem-solving and living independently.

**Independent Living Skills Training:** This service helps individuals to gain the personal living skills and service supports necessary to overcome obstacles that could prevent them from remaining in their homes and communities. Learning to cook from a wheelchair, finding and using accessible adaptive technology, money management and employment readiness classes are all examples of Independent

Living Skills training.

**Advocacy:** Teaching people to advocate for themselves is critically important to independent living. Teaching advocacy empowers individuals to act on their own behalf and to move past the accepted norms of dependency. In addition, centers advocate for systemic change so that communities, states and the nation become barrier-free and enable all people to live, work and play as they choose. Examples of systemic advocacy include petitioning for lifts on buses, accessible buildings and businesses, and laws to prevent discrimination.

**Transition Services:** Centers work to transition people with disabilities out of institutions (if that is their choice), work to keep at risk people out of institutions and work with young adults as they transition from school to work.



## Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration

Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services

402 W. Washington St., W453/MS 26  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

You can sign up to receive this newsletter by [clicking here](#).

For updated meeting information, as well as agendas and past meeting minutes, visit [the DDRS Commissions & Councils page](#).

The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services is a program of the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration. If you have questions about DDRS programs and services, [visit us online](#).

Did you know that families can sign up to receive text messages and email updates from First Steps? Families will learn more about policy issues, how to become an effective advocate, how to be involved in your local planning and coordinating council, how to connect to events and groups, how to tell your family story and more. Go to [this site to sign up!](#)

## EVENTS YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS

Following are the current commission, council and public meetings that you may be interested in learning more about and/or attending in the future. To find the most current information, including next meeting dates and locations, [please click here](#).



## Building Bridges

These meetings are an opportunity for families and self-advocates to meet and speak with the Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services state staff. These sessions are an important part of the Bureau's efforts to create direct avenues for individuals and families to share their feedback. These meetings are solely for families and individuals with disabilities to provide a forum for constructive and valuable conversations on successes or concerns, as well as suggestions or input regarding BDDS programs and services. Keep an eye out for notice of the next scheduled meeting!

## INSILC public meeting

The Indiana Statewide Independent Living Council provides oversight of the Indiana State Plan for Independent Living and assists the Centers for Independent Living with the SPIL's implementation and coordination of services. For more information, visit [the Statewide Independent Living Council webpage](#).

## DDRS Advisory Council

The DDRS Advisory Council was established to assist the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services in ensuring that individuals with disabilities are as independent and self-sufficient as possible. For more information, visit the [DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).

## ICC meetings

The Interagency Coordinating Council for infants and toddlers with disabilities is the state's federally mandated early intervention council. The council is charged with advising and assisting DDRS in its responsibility to develop an early intervention system of the highest quality, balancing family-centered services with fiscal responsibility. The council is comprised of parents, state agency groups, early intervention service providers, legislators and others. The meetings are open to the public and the next is scheduled for March 10, 2021. For more information, visit [the DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).

## Commission on Rehabilitation Services

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services works with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services' Vocational Rehabilitation Services on matters such as the effectiveness and customer satisfaction with the services provided to individuals participating in the VR program. The commission is also involved in matters affecting VR policies and procedures, goals and priorities, and the state plan. For more information, visit the [DDRS Commissions & Councils webpage](#).