

STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC)

June 17, 2025

Meeting Held Via Zoom

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DHS/DRS DHS Hillview Plaza/Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brett Glirbas, Joe Vetch, Richard Moeller, Kendra Gottsleben, CJ Moit, Matt Cain, Ryan Groeneweg, Brad Konechne, Tricia Eggers, Patty Kuglitsch, Val Beeck, Vicki Steffes and Jennifer Lewis. Members Absent: Theresa Marzahn and Julie Johnson. **OTHERS PRESENT:** Eric Weiss, Lance Sigdestad, Rhonda Erickson, and Colette Wagoner. The interpreters were Julie Paluch and Alecia Barnes.

OPENING ACTIONS: Welcome & Introductory Comments: Ryan Groeneweg, SILC Chairperson, called the meeting to order and invited everyone to introduce themselves. Review and Approval of Agenda: Ryan asked if there were any changes/additions to the agenda. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS DISTRIBUTED – MADE (M), SECONDED (S) AND CARRIED (C).** Yeas: Brett, Joe, Val, Patty, Kendra, CJ, Matt, and Brad. Nays: None. Review and approval of minutes: Ryan asked if there were any changes or additions to the two sets of meeting minutes, there were none. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE SILC MARCH 26 MINUTES AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES FROM MAY 22, MSC.** Yeas: Brett, Joe, Val, Patty, Kendra, CJ, Matt, and Brad. Nays: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There were no public comments.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Reserved for sensitive/private or confidential matters. Hearing no need, Ryan moved on.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Ryan withdrew the funding request submitted to the SILC by the Center for Disabilities for their 2025 Run, Walk & Roll Event noting that funds cannot be used for contributions or donations. He encouraged SILC members to share information with others on the event. Kendra announced the SD Conference on Developmental Disabilities Conference to be held August 26-27 in Sioux Falls. Patty shared that the SD Association of the Deaf 55th Biennial Conference will be held June 27 – 28 in Sioux Falls. There is also the 25th Anniversary of Deaf Bikers of America Rally in Sturgis, August 1st – 10th, located at the Pappy Hoel Campground and Resort.

DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (DRS) REPORT, INDEPENDENT LIVING (IL) SPECIALIST UPDATE: Jennifer Lewis provided a summary of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey Report. The Centers for Independent Living (CILs) disseminate a survey to all participants whose case has been closed; includes successful and unsuccessfully closed cases. The survey contains four rating questions and two narrative questions to gauge consumer satisfaction.

The reporting period was October 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025. The survey response rate was 20.49%. Responses to the four rating questions were positive. She also reviewed responses received to the narrative questions (what was most helpful, what was least helpful) for both CILs.

Status of CIL Contracts: The Division contracts with both Centers for Independent Living (CILs); the contracts contain funding sources of Part B funds, state match, Home Modifications and Assistive Devices (HMAD) funds. These contracts start June 1 and run through May 31st. Jennifer reviewed the status of the CIL contracts report for the 11th month period and the 12th month/end of the contract period. ILC expended 109% of their contract and WRIL expended 97%. A comment was made about WRIL and showing improvement with spending almost 100% of their contract.

Western Resources for Independent Living (WRIL) Quarterly Report for 2nd Quarter, January 1, 2025, through March 31, 2025: Charts were reviewed depicting hours of core services provided. The charts displayed hours of service from the previous fiscal year for comparison. Total new applicants this quarter was 87, with 34 new applicants who are 25 and younger. A total of 229 individuals were served this quarter. The number of individuals received the following services this quarter: Home Modifications and Assistive Devices (HMAD)/31; Telecommunication Adaptive Devices (TAD)/30 and Housing/54.

WRIL participants learned of IL services primarily from other entities (church/Hope Center/Helpline/WAVI/One Heart/Dakota At Home) and the second highest area was through family members/friends. WRIL staff participated in outreach activities in Hughes, Stanley, Haakon, Jones, Lyman, Butte, Pennington counties. (Pennington, Lyman, and Haakon were identified as less served in the State Plan). There were no open houses, however marketing was conducted through radio. The organization chart shows they are almost fully staffed.

Independent Living Choices (ILC) Quarterly Report for January – March 2025. The hours of services provided this quarter in the core service areas were reviewed. Total new applicants for the quarter were 318, of which 31 were individuals who are 25 and younger. Total number of individuals served this period was 1,111. The number of individuals received the following services this quarter: HMAD/300; TAD/139' and Housing/74.

ILC participants learned of IL services primarily from other entities (county services, DHS, Vista Care, Union Gospel Mission, medical personnel) and the second highest area was family member/friends. ILC staff participated/organized events or activities in Minnehaha, Brookings, Brown, Davison, Roberts, Coddington, Grant, Sisseton, Martin, and Mobridge. There were no reported open houses or developed marketing materials. Two success stories were submitted. ILC staff participated in a meeting with

Southeastern Directions for Life. Discussion included coordination of services, housing, transportation, and advocacy. The organizational chart showed the majority of positions filled.

IL Funding Sources: Budget pages for SFY 2025 and 2026 were reviewed. Funding sources utilized to support IL services in the state were outlined (Part C, Part B, Part B match, Social Security Reimbursement Funds (SSA), and other state funds). Columns displayed funds from the Division including Part B Funds, Part B match, SSA funds and the Home Modifications monies. Part C funds are based on the federal year, October 1st through the end of September, and Part B funds are based upon the state fiscal year, June 1st through the end of May. Part B funds utilized in the SILC's resource plan support SILC member travel, SILC meeting expenses, SILC's strategic planning and CIL staff training. A question was asked about contract funds that are not expended, and the response provided was funds are redistributed to other VR or IL services/programs outlined in the Rehabilitation Act.

Last year the Division added funds through separate contracts with the CILs to support ramp projects. This line item, now termed Home Mods, was expanded to include Home Modifications (bathroom remodel, installation of grab bars, widening of doorways). These contracts are renegotiated annually with each CIL as the funding level is dependent upon available funds through the Division. The SFY 2026 contract does not include funding because additional funds are not available.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CILs) UPDATES: Matt shared updates from ILC. This summer, ILC will host transition classes at 7 office locations for 52 youth with disabilities (ages 14-21), covering IL skills, employment, housing, interview skills, and peer support. The now completed MYCIL program served 22 out of school, minority background youth from tribal lands. The program goal was to increase awareness of IL services and peer support services. Something learned from conducting this program was the number of youth who were not school connected. Peer support services will continue to be a focus.

ILC conducted an accessibility assessment at Lief Erickson Camp in Sioux Falls and is working with the YMCA to improve full access to all services and programs. Since October 1st, ILC has spent \$788,000 on Home Modifications and Adaptive Devices, and has served a total of 1,623 individuals to date. ILC partnered with the City of Sioux Falls and the Home Builders Association for the Repair Affair Day, assisting five households with critical home repairs. ILC recently completed an ADLS Medicaid Claims Review and there were no errors found.

WRIL: Staff will obtain an update from Codi and share with SILC members.

STATE PLAN FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (SPIL) MONITORING AND

EVALUATION: The SPIL is 3-year plan covering federal fiscal years 2025-2027, with an effective date of October 1, 2024. The state plan outlines how federal, state, and other funds support IL services throughout the state. The SPIL speaks to the working relationships and collaboration between the centers for Independent Living (CILs); Designated State Entity (Division) and the SILC.

The SPIL outlines the mission, goals, and objectives to be conducted during the plan's timeframe. SILC staff gathers information from SILC members regarding attendance or participation of a SPIL related activity pertaining to a goal or objective and this information is included in the Program Performance Report (PPR). The most recent PPR was submitted to ACL/OILP in January, and we are waiting for approval. The next SPIL cycle will cover 2027–2030, with submission due by June 30, 2027, with an effective date of October 1, 2027. Work on this next SPIL plan will begin later this year or for sure in early 2026. Additional SPIL details will be covered during the New Member Orientation on August 7 at 1:30 PM (Central), which will be held via Zoom and is open to all members.

BOARD OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (BVR) UPDATE: Eric provided this update, noting that the BVR is an advisory board for the VR agency. VR assists individuals with disabilities find employment. BVR responsibilities include advising the Division on the VR program's performance, developing goals and priorities, and evaluating consumer satisfaction with the services provided. The BVR met in March and agenda items included a Project Search presentation and an update from the Workplace Disability Network of the Black Hills. Other agenda items included updates on VR program initiatives, SILC update and BVR staff report. The next meeting will be held on June 26th. Eric shared the state's boards and commissions portal and demonstrated how to navigate the site, locating the BVR and SILC. The site can be found at: <https://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/>

DIVISION OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED (DSBVI): Tricia needed to leave the meeting; staff will obtain an update from Tricia and disseminate.

Submitted information: Sandy Neyhart, IL Program Manager, officially retired on June 6th. Her successor, Kama Kwiecinski, started on May 9th, allowing time to train with Sandy and gain insight into the program. Kama previously served as a counselor at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Sioux Falls for two years.

In May, Sandy, Kama, and IL Rehab Teachers from Western South Dakota met with Dr. Bucknall—who runs the low vision clinic in that region—to strengthen referral collaboration.

Also in May, a new Visually Impaired Support Group launched in Watertown, led by two former SBVI IL Consumers. They plan to work with the Brookings group to learn best practices.

The IL Program Manager is currently working with the Media Specialist to update the *Time to Be Bold* website, which is managed by the Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC) to connect people with vision loss to resources and services.

BOARD OF SERVICE TO THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED (B/SBVI): Ryan reported that the B/SBVI met last Friday at the new One Stop Center in Sioux Falls. The board is fully appointed now with new members Allison White and Dana Stillman. Officer elections were held Ryan Groeneweg (Chair), Richard Crawford (Vice Chair), and Cherie Gerry (Member At Large).

SBVI and DRS and the boards will begin work on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), conducted by Black Hills Special Services Cooperative. Board members also serve on several committees, including the Governor's Awards Review Committee which will meet soon to review nominations. B/SBVI financially supported the Center for Disabilities' Walk, Run & Roll event, which will highlight Usher's Syndrome, a genetic disorder causing both hearing and vision loss. The next quarterly meeting is September 12th.

ABLE (ACHIEVING A BETTER LIFE EXPERIENCE) ACCOUNTS: Rhonda Erickson, SD Benefits Specialist, presented on the Benefits Specialists Network and ABLE accounts. ABLE accounts allow individuals with disabilities (onset of disability before age 26) to save without losing eligibility for federal benefits like SSI, Medicaid, and Waiver Services. (Disability onset age is expanding to 46 effective January 1, 2026). Annual contribution limits are \$19,000 annually, with an additional \$15,060 for employed individuals not in employer sponsored retirement plans.

ABLE funds grow tax-free if used for qualified disability expenses and do not count against the typical \$2,000 asset limit for needs-based programs. Account balances can range from \$300,000 to \$529,000 depending upon the state. SSI is suspended once the balance exceeds \$100,000, but Medicaid remains intact. ABLE and Special Needs trusts are the only places where people who receive needs-based SSI and Medicaid are allowed to have more than \$2,000. No matter where you reside, you can open an ABLE account in any state that accepts outside residents into their program. South Dakotans have access to 29 ABLE accounts, because South Dakota does not have an active program.

Funds in the ABLE account can be used for qualified disability expenses. These expenses include education, food, housing, transportation, employment training and

support, assistive technology, personal support services, medical, prevention and wellness expenses, financial management, administrative services, legal fees and other expenses. There is a Medicaid Payback Provision that stipulates any assets remaining in the ABLE account when a beneficiary dies, subject to outstanding qualified disability expenses, must be used to reimburse a state for Medicaid payments made on behalf of the beneficiary after the creation of the ABLE account (the state would have to file a claim for those funds). Information can be found at: <https://www.ablenrc.org/> on eligibility, how to open an account, 3 state comparison, and managing the account.

SILC STAFF UPDATE: New member orientation will be held August 7th via Zoom, new members are encouraged to attend, and other members are more than welcome to attend. The Champion of Independent Living Services Award recognizes individuals, organizations, and businesses that have made exceptional contributions to supporting people with disabilities in living independently within their homes and communities. The call for nominations was released in mid-May, and submissions are due by June 27th. Eligible nominees can include individuals with disabilities, family members, disability rights professionals, or community entities such as businesses, schools, or organizations that offer inclusive and accessible programs.

For National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), 11 communities received funding earlier this year to support local events, with a total of \$48,575 awarded. Funding contributions came from the SILC (\$5,000), the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (also contributing \$5,000). Most communities are currently planning their events, including selecting topics, speakers, and dates. Sioux Falls has confirmed its speakers who will present during the Fall Conference. Jana Burke will provide sessions on *Self-Advocacy in the Workplace*, *Neurodiversity in the Workplace*, and *Business Benefits of Disability Inclusion*, and Parker Hanson will deliver the luncheon keynote. NDEAM event details will be shared with SILC, BVR, and B/SBVI members once finalized, and SILC members are encouraged to attend events held in their communities.

Governor's Awards: The nomination period for the Governor's Awards opened in March, with submissions due in May. A Governor's Awards Review Committee, comprised of representatives from the BVR, Board of SBVI and the SILC, will meet via Zoom on June 24th to review nominations and make recommendations, which will then be forwarded to the Governor for final approval. Once approved, planning will begin for the awards ceremony. Committee representatives include Jolleen Laverdure and Chris Olson (BVR); Kendra Gottsleben, CJ Moit, and Joe Vetch (SILC); and Cherie Gerry and George Seamon (B/SBVI). Nominations for the Governor's Awards are accepted year-round through the Division's website at: <https://dhs.sd.gov/en/rehabilitation-services/governors-awards>.

The 2025 Fall Conference will take place in Sioux Falls at the Ramkota Hotel from October 14–16. The event will feature a range of speakers and topics, including Dr. Lester on personality disorders, sessions on Trauma-Informed Care, Technology & Artificial Intelligence, Homelessness & Addiction, Call to Freedom (focused on supporting survivors of trafficking), Disability Determination Services, and Home Again. SILC members are welcome to attend, with expenses covered through the BVR/SILC staff support agreement. So far, Vicki, CJ, Val, and Lance have expressed interest in attending. Brett asked to add his name to attend.

Budget Update: Support services for the BVR and SILC is managed through a contract between the Division and Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, which began on January 1 and runs through December 31, with the possibility of four one-year renewals. The budget report shared on June 4 shows expenses through May, including costs for the Zoom subscription (shared with BVR), March meeting related costs and support for Disability Awareness Day in February. Most expenditures are expected later in the year, from September to December, covering the Governor's Awards Ceremony, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) activities, and member expenses for the Fall Conference. It is important to note that SILC has committed up to \$5,000 in funding to support NDEAM events.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Ryan provided special recognition to Patty for her unwavering dedication and outstanding service to the SILC. She has been a tireless and passionate advocate in both personal and professional life working on issues impacting individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, and other critical disability related issues. As she approaches the conclusion of her term at the end of June, heartfelt thanks were extended in acknowledgment of her many contributions and steadfast commitment to the SILC's goals.

Ryan passed the gavel to Eric, asking him to speak on behalf of the Executive Committee. SILC's officer positions consist of Chair, Vice Chair, and two (2) Members At Large. Eric introduced the proposed slate as Brett and Kendra/Members At Large, Matt/Vice Chair, and Ryan/Chair. All have indicated an interest in serving as officers again, if elected. He emphasized that nominations can be made from the floor, noting that each position will be taken one at a time.

Eric started with the position of Chairperson. He called for further nominations for the Chair position in addition to Ryan's name, two times. Hearing none – **MOTION TO CEASE NOMINATIONS AND ELECT RYAN AS CHAIR – MSC.** YEAS: Brett, Joe, Val, Richard, Patty, Kendra, CJ, and Matt. NAYS: None. Eric moved onto the position of Vice Chairperson. Eric called for further nominations for Vice Chair, twice. Hearing none – **MOTION TO CEASE NOMINATIONS AND ELECT MATT AS VICE CHAIRPERSON – MSC.** YEAS: Brett, Joe, Val, Richard, Patty, Kendra, and CJ. NAYS: None. Abstain: Matt Cain. Eric moved to calling for further nominations for the

position of Member-At-Large, twice. **MOTION TO CEASE NOMINATIONS AND ELECT BRETT AND KENDRA AS MEMBERS-AT-LARGE – MSC.** YEAS: Joe, Val, Richard, Patty, Kendra, CJ, and Matt. NAYS: None. Abstain: Brett Glirbas.

Eric expressed his sincere appreciation to the officers, commending their continued dedication, time, and willingness to serve in leadership roles for another year. Their commitment to the mission and work of the SILC was noted. Following his remarks, the gavel was passed back to the Chair.

OTHER BUSINESS: There was none.

CLOSING ACTIONS: Vicki joined the meeting at this time. Staff will send the meeting recording to those who were absent. Future Agenda Items: please share agenda items/topics with staff. Next Meeting: is scheduled for September 30th via Zoom, based on the Doodle poll. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 11:52 am.