

Adult Career & Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) Significant Activities and Accomplishments

DSE Narrative

During Federal Fiscal Year 2017, the ACCES-VR Independent Living Services Unit (ILSU) facilitated a wide range of activities including:

- Fostering collaboration among agencies and partner organizations, including the implementation of the 2017 - 2019 SPIL in partnership with NYSILC
- The development of resources and materials to enhance independent living services
- Provision of training and technical assistance across the ILC network
- Refinements in data accountability, performance criteria and mechanisms for identifying overall program outcomes with emphasis on implementation of the third year of program and data collection in the three-year ILC contract term and strategies for a new five-year ILC contract; and

Specific details of activities noted above are as follows:

Collaboration:

ACCES-VR ILSU provided oversight on the pilot integration of peer independent living services within two ACCES-VR district offices. The purpose of the pilot was to help VR participants overcome barriers to employment with the assistance of a peer specialist who is connected to the local ILC network. There are four specialists - two in each office. The Regional Center for Independent Living was selected to work within the Rochester District Office and Westchester Independent Living Center was selected to work within the Westchester and Rockland District Offices. Considerable progress has been made over the first year of the pilot. The peer integration project's progress report shows that the goal for the number of new consumers to be served has been exceeded by 152 consumers. Some of the outcomes that have been accomplished via service provision over the past year include housing assistance, transportation coordination, healthcare self-management, budgeting and provision of assistance for reasonable accommodations.

The ACCES-VR ILSU maintains ongoing involvement in NYSILC activities and committees. During the year, nine contracts were monitored for Capacity Building for Independent Living Center Opportunity projects addressing SPIL priorities to serve the unserved and underserved populations of youth with disabilities, veterans with disabilities, healthy lifestyles of individuals with disabilities and Latinos and other ethnic and cultural groups with disabilities. There is a NYSILC demonstration project that is moving along well. A grant was awarded to Taconic Resources for Independence (TRI) in Poughkeepsie, NY with the intent that funding will be used to identify and reach veterans with disabilities in order to engage them with independent living services and/or systems advocacy. Interviews for a veteran's specialist started in October 2017, and someone was hired to fill this position approximately two months after.

The ACCES-VR ILSU continues to prepare an annual revenue chart that reflects State, Federal and resources from other funding sources available within the ILC network.

ACCES-VR ILSU continues to serve on the Department of Health's Disability and Health Council; the Office for Aging's Family Care Council; the NYSCB State Rehabilitation Council and NYSILC's Executive Committee, Outreach Committee, Needs Assessment Committee, Data Integration Committee, Development Committee, Recruitment Committee and Customer Satisfaction Committee.

The ACCES-VR ILSU continues to join quarterly meetings of the steering committee of the University of Rochester five-year systems change grant known as Partnerships in Employment Services with the

Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) made available through the Administration on Developmental Disabilities to develop new models to engage youth with intellectual disabilities in integrated employment.

The ACCES-VR ILSU continues to participate in follow-along activities initiated during a statewide Office for Aging “think group” to identify priorities for expanding legal assistance and resources to people with disabilities and seniors which has led to involvement by Independent Living Centers in the design of an online resource guide and regional planning groups to replicate aspects of New York City’s mobile legal services project.

As part of ongoing efforts to train ACCES-VR student interns, the ILSU provides a comprehensive training program for all new interns on independent living philosophy, history and New York’s ILC program.

The ACCES-VR ILSU continues to monitor the contract awarded to the New York Association for Independent Living (NYAIL), the entity that coordinates the network of 16 SSAN providers which are part of one of the SPIL objectives.

The ACCES-VR ILSU continues to monitor contracts that operate the NYSILC for a three-year period and for the NYAIL to support a statewide ILC conference planned that occurred in September 2017.

The ACCES-VR ILSU developed a self-advocacy for employment individual and group service component based on WIOA requirements as part of the next statewide application for Core Rehabilitation Services that was posted in August 2017. In addition, the unit is collaborating with other parts of ACCES-VR to issue a new procurement called Career Exploration with Students (CEIS). CEIS will target students ages 14-21 who are currently not being served by ACCES-VR and will benefit from participating in Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Training and Technical Assistance:

The ACCES-VR ILSU provided extensive support and technical assistance to ILCs on a variety of topics and issues. New ILC executive directors and staff were oriented to ACCES-VR’s CIL Standards, Performance Measures and Data Collection Guide in Brooklyn and Rockland.

The ACCES-VR ILSU and Manager of Rehabilitation Service Delivery continued to arrange site visits to the Southern Tier Independence Center, Finger Lakes Independence Center, Staten Island Center for Independent Living, ARISE - Syracuse and AIM Independent Living Center.

Onsite data verification and case record management reviews were conducted at the Staten Island Center for Independent Living, Westchester Disabled on the Move and AIM Independent Living Center.

Additionally, over the course of the year, the ILSU oriented many in-house ILC staff responsible for mid-year and end year report preparation on the many facets of narrative and statistical data reports.

Beginning in November 2010, a select work group of representatives of ILC member organizations and ILCs with experience in data driven decision making were invited to participate on the 21st Century Data Collection Work Group. NYSILC drew from the work of the 21st Century Data Work Group to establish a Database Work Group that developed a comprehensive proposal to inform Objective 9 of the 2014-16 SPIL to develop a universal, inter-relational database for the ILC network that can identify trends, service patterns and service impact. Better identification of trends, patterns and impact would further assist providers in reaching unserved and underserved populations. This database project is becoming more of a reality with collaboration and diligent efforts between NYSILC and ACCES-VR. A project vendor has been identified to execute the project in 2018.

New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) Activities and Accomplishments - Fiscal Year (FY) 2017

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) uses a portion of its IL funds to provide independent living services to individuals who are legally blind. The individuals served through this program are not eligible to receive services through other NYSCB programs. For this reason, the services provided with independent living funds fill a significant need that would otherwise not be met. NYSCB district offices provided IL services to 345 individuals in FY 2017. Of this number 198 have met their independent living goals during FY 2017 and have had their cases successfully closed. Services are provided in accordance with an Independent Living Services Plan (unless waived by the individual), after a determination that the individual is eligible to receive services. The individuals receiving services span a broad range of circumstances including: individuals who are not able to achieve a vocational goal due to the severity of their disability or disabilities, but need services to maintain their independence; individuals who for other reasons choose not to pursue an employment goal; and individuals who live in group homes who require limited services for a specific need to maintain independence in their group home/or community. Generally, individuals served have self-care, communication, personal resource management and mobility goals and receive rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility, adaptive equipment needed to support the training received through rehabilitation teaching and orientation and mobility services, low vision and social casework services.

Collaboration with ILCs

Independent living centers provide an array of services to consumers working with NYSCB. These can include: home modification evaluations, job seeking skills/job development, vocational evaluation, job coaching and job placement assessment services, computer software training, interpreter (sign language) services, Medicaid Waiver and benefits advisement. Specific new initiatives are listed below.

NYSCB has further developed relationships with several ILCs this year. NYSCB continues to cultivate and appreciate the necessary and unique services provided by ILCs. NYSCB staff met with and/or partnered and/or collaborated with the following ILCs:

- NYSCB Albany District Office (DO) staff are collaborating with the Massena Independent Living Center (MILC) and the MILC Malone outreach office to review programs and share space when appropriate for consumer meetings. The Albany DO has also met with the North Country Center for Independence (NCCI) in Plattsburgh to increase collaboration and introduce new staff. Albany DO staff refer consumers to the Independent Living Center of the Hudson Valley (ILCHV), Troy support group.
- NYSCB Buffalo/Rochester DO staff have visited with the IL-Genesee Region Center (ILGR) to discuss continued collaboration of services. The Buffalo DO staff continue to work on planning for the Disability Pride event with the Western New York Independent Living center (WNYIL) and WNYIL has been approved as a vendor to provide Benefits Advisement services. Rochester DO staff collaborated with the Resource Center for Accessible Living (RCIL) to review programs and services.
- NYSCB White Plains DO staff attended the Westchester Disabled on the Move, Inc. (WDOMI) Spirit of Independence awards. They also attended the Rockland Independent Living Center (BRIDGES) name change and logo event.
- NYSCB Harlem DO staff attended the White Cane Awareness day at the Harlem Independent Living Center (HILC).
- NYSCB Syracuse DO staff participate in activities with the Youth in Transition program and the Taskforce for Increasing Disability Employment with Access to Independence (ATI) Cortland.

These meetings gave staff at the centers and NYSCB staff a chance to re-acquaint themselves with services provided by both entities. Follow-up regarding service needs in each territory and ways that ILCs can provide fee based services for NYSCB consumers in the future is anticipated.

NYSILC Activities

A NYSCB staff person participates in the NYSILC Emergency Preparedness Committee.